



Teaching the Way of Love

Because humanity passes by way of the family...

September, 2013

Prayer of the Month

Strong & Faithful God,
Keep our family safe
from injury & harm.
Make us blessings to
all we meet today.
Amen.



School Readiness Involves More than School Supplies

School is back in session! As the parent, you are probably relieved to have your children back in the classroom. But let me ask you a question. ***What did you do to get your child ready for this school year?***

If you followed the lead presented by the media this fall, you probably spent most of August racing from store to store, coupons in hand, getting your kids the "right" jeans, the "right" backpack, the "right" smartphone, the "right" (fill in the blank). While it is important to send kids to school with adequate supplies, we have to stop and ask ourselves - **does all of this equipment really help our children learn and develop?**

In reality, **school readiness** has little to do the items that are found in a trendy backpack or the color and fabric of one's clothing. School readiness **is actually based on a child's ability to receive the instruction** that will be presented in the classroom. And the ability to learn can't be purchased from a store or ordered on-line. It has to be developed in the child.

Parenting Tip of the Month

The best way to ensure school readiness is to share a daily family meal together. Read more about connecting with your kids at:
<http://goo.gl/EesCzp>

Educational researchers tell us that **educational success is built upon concentration, eagerness, alertness and patience.** These are the cornerstones for a child's readiness to

learn. When parents become responsible for the formation of these elements of learning, the school can meet its responsibility to advance the child's knowledge within a given subject. Conversely, if parents do not do their job at home with the development of concentration, eagerness, alertness and patience, then the school will have limited success at expanding the knowledge of the child. Let's look at practical ways that parents can ensure their child is ready for school. *(Read more on flipside.)*



Parenting with the Heart of Christ

Concentration is the ability to focus. Kids who have the power to focus are more confident learners, have improved self-control, and demonstrate better perseverance. To improve your child's ability to concentrate, try the following activities. **Limit your child's time in front of mindless media** where the programming is rapidly changing scenes, camera angles and audio settings. This type of media trains the brain to "jump" around and may lead to a shortened attention span. Next, **play board or card games** that require your child to think and strategize. And, do your very best to remove everything that serves as a distraction when your child needs to focus. Depending on your child, this may mean turning off various media sources, closing the drapes, or finding a quiet place where the child can attend to the activity at hand.

Eagerness is the capacity to find excitement and joy in learning. The best way for parents to increase a child's eagerness is to remember that they are the child's most important teacher. When parents **demonstrate a love for learning**, the child is likely to do the same. Show your personal enjoyment to continue learning as an adult. Read for enjoyment. Spend less time watching mindless media. Ask questions about what your child is learning so that they can "teach" you what they are being taught. Discuss current affairs. Take classes to increase your own knowledge base.

Alertness is a crucial part of learning. Parents have to make sure that their child is receiving adequate rest, nutrition and recreation every day. In a culture of 24/7 access to the media, the first and most important way to improve alertness is to **establish bedtime routines** that ensure a minimum of 8 hours of sleep. This must be paired with an expectation that all media is turned off from the time one goes to bed until arising in the morning. In some cases, this will require that parents **dock the child's smart phone outside of their bedroom** before retiring. In addition, parents must be careful not to sign a child up for too many sports activities. **Over-scheduling prevents a child from legitimate "downtime"**. Finally, parents should provide a nutritious breakfast each and every school day.

Patience is the final quality that children need to learn at home. **Patience is the ability to wait calmly, without agitation.** A child becomes patient when his or her parents **expect patience**. Believe it or not, there are many parents who do not believe that their child can wait. They expect a tantrum each and every time the child is asked to wait. Instead of riding out the possible tantrum, parents quickly jump into some sort of action that will let the child off the hook. This leads to whining not waiting.

The most effective way that a parent can get their child to wait is to **slow up** their response. Instead of "jumping", **pause for a moment and then calmly ask the child to wait**. As the child sees the parent slow down and pause, they will likely do the same. Overtime, the parent can continue to slow down their response and that will increase the child's ability to be patient. Here is one more practical tip that involves the formation of all four qualities of learning. Structure your daily life to include regular family meals (NO MEDIA ALLOWED) where everyone in your home gathers together to share their day. **Eating a family meal together improves school performance.**

Pencils, notebooks, awesome shoes and jeans may be what your child thinks they need to get ready for school. As the parent, you know better. **Real school readiness comes from concentration, eagerness, alertness and patience.** These are the real supplies every child needs. Do your best to **make sure your child takes these to school each day.**

Following these recommendations can help your children be better prepared to really learn and develop during their time in school. But this is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies for helping your children become the best they can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.