

So Your Child's in School!

You can greatly promote your child's education if you will follow these simple principles.

By Joan C. Bogdanchik

Rr-r-r-ring goes the school bell, signaling vacation's end.

The important, much-anticipated event is now a reality. Your child has taken his first steps away from home. He has entered the new realm of school.

If the truth were known, Mother and Father are probably more anxious than their new student!

Mother has inwardly looked forward to, and yet dreaded, this day, for with it comes a new experience for *her*. Her baby will now be in the hands of another for many hours of the day. Her child will get to know — and love — this new personality in his life, and Mother will hear statements such as "But Mrs. So-and-so said to do it *this way!*"

Also, if he is the only or youngest child, Mother will now be alone for the first time in years.

The parents' responsibility

But is the parents' responsibility for their child's education finished when the child enters school? No!

Both Mother and Father should realize that going to school is a step of growth in their child's life — a step all the family should be taking together. They should be encouraging their child to look forward to this new venture, and should support him and his school.

Parents should try to put aside

any feelings of jealousy as their child speaks highly of this new personality in his life, the teacher, for it is with and by this love that a child thrives in school.

After all, isn't a good education what you have been attempting to give your child during the pre-school years?

In my experience as a teacher, I have found that a child does best who has a love for his teacher. Love causes one to want to please the one loved. This mutual love and encouragement between teacher and student makes for tremendous academic strides. Don't hinder it. Look how pleased the teacher is as she beams at the child's good work!

Alas, some parents unwittingly damage the relationship between the teacher and their child. How? By resenting assignments a child may work on at home. The parent may say: "She wants you to do it *that way?* I know another way."

Fine. There are many ways to do many things, and parents should tell their child so, but he has been given an assignment. He wants to please his "boss." (How does Father carry out his supervisor's instructions?)

Encourage your child to complete assignments as he has been directed. Back up the teacher's instructions with your support.

Often, giving the child "another way" to do it is confusing to him. Children are not capable of making intelligent decisions without guidance. They feel more secure when home and school are

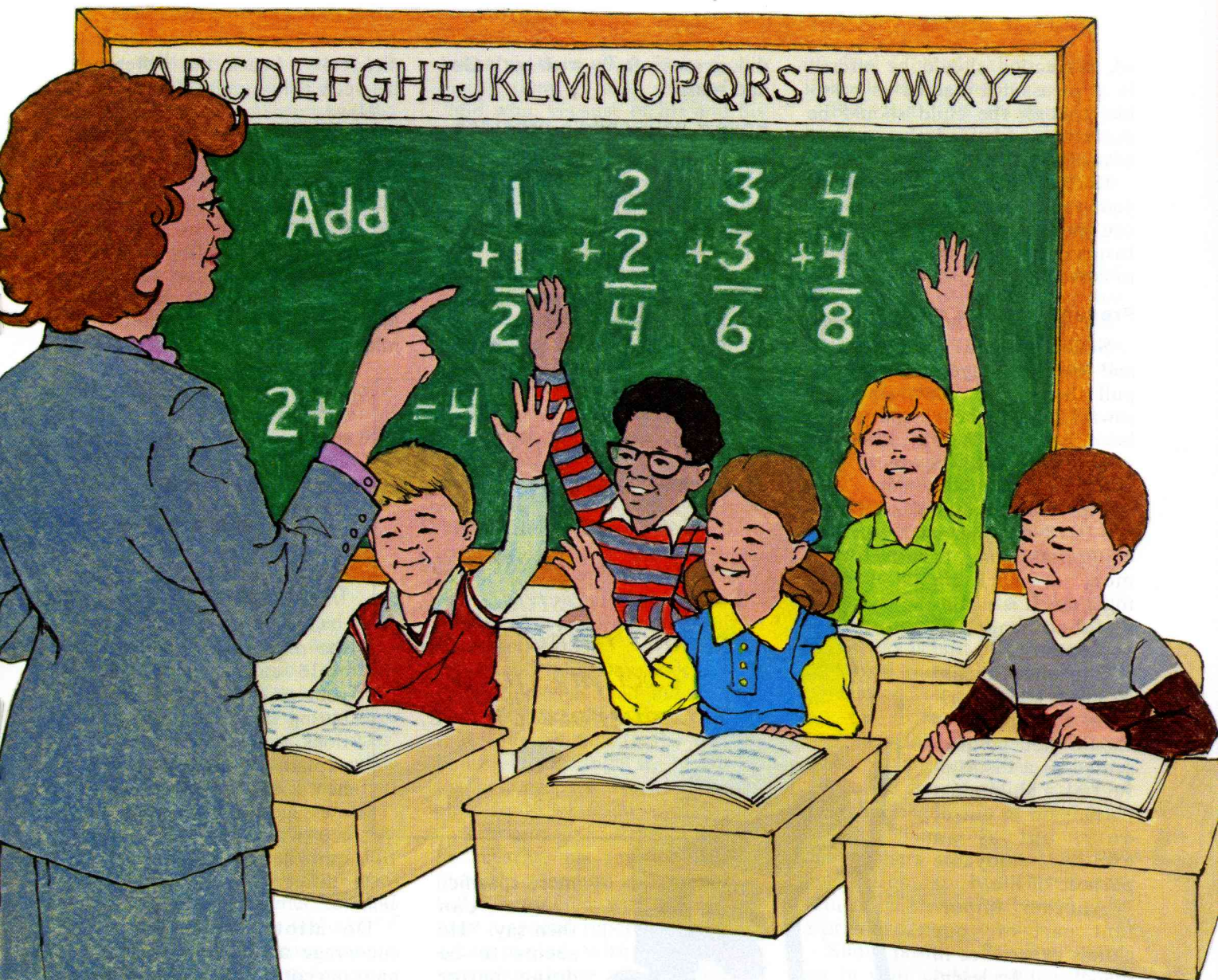
unified, and they blossom in this security. A harmonious, positive relationship between student and teacher is essential in education.

Of course, the unhappy fact is that many of the educational systems of this world do not provide satisfactory environments for learning. Unfortunately, while the vast majority of teachers may be perfectly competent and sincerely interested in giving your child the best education possible, some few teachers have misunderstood or shirked their responsibilities in various ways.

With this in mind, you should encourage your child to obey and cooperate with his teacher, and yet you should always be alert to negative signals your child gives you about his schooling. Sad to say, in some few cases teachers may be "off the track" and can harm your child and, in these extreme situations, you may have to investigate and act to alleviate the problem.

Occasionally both your child and you may have to sacrifice time to see a job through, but that is not bad — it's developing character for other life situations. Education is not always an easy process — it often takes plain, hard work. Expect this and do not be surprised.

When the opposite approach is taken at home, it is reflected in the child's attitude toward his work the very next day. He doesn't put his full interest into it. Why should he? Daddy doesn't agree with the teacher's



way. He may have heard other negative comments about the teacher, too. Academic problems now appear, and they may accelerate rapidly.

Take an active interest

Parents should take an active interest in all assignments and papers children bring home. These assignments are your window into the classroom — the biggest continuous link between the school and home.

What these papers reflect is

how your child has done at school that day. Through them you can see where you need to give your child more practice and encouragement.

Don't let the hours spent in the classroom be all the education your child receives. Your responsibility has not ended. It continues — and grows! You must constantly be aware of how your child is doing. Education must be a cooperative venture between parents and teachers — home and school. How many parents seemingly forget this!

How gratifying it is to a teacher — and how advantageous to your child's growth — when a parent reviews his child's papers. The parent should spot at a glance what the child's difficulty

is and have him do the example or problem over. Then he could give the child a few more problems of the same type.

For instance, if the child makes spelling mistakes, have him write the word several times, then ask him to spell it out loud. When the child returns to class, he'll be on top of that situation.

"Where will we get the time to do that?" parents may ask. "And is that *our* responsibility?"

Well, parents should be spending time with their children in the evenings. Is a few minutes spent on educational pursuits too much to ask? Isn't education for life?

Without parental involvement, a child is prone to start a deadly downhill slide.

When a child must be correct-

ed, correction should be offered in as pleasant a manner as possible, though the child should be made to understand the seriousness of the situation.

Don't jump on your child in your vanity and ask, "How could you make such a silly mistake?" Instead, lovingly show him how to correct it.

Present work as enjoyable

School should bring parents and children together, not pull them apart. How sorrowful it is to hear (and I have heard), "You'll lose your child when he starts school."

This should not and need not be. Now you and your child, if anything, have even more to work on together. It is a wonderful challenge and opportunity.

Education should be given high priority in the family. It should not be presented as a distasteful task a child must participate in out of duty, but as an exciting, enjoyable purpose of life.

Another important part of your child's experience in school will be learning to cope with other children on his age level. After all, won't he be working with like individuals at a later time in God's plan?

Working with other children helps to train him — helps him to become balanced socially. Shielding him from learning to cope is not a help to him, but a potential hindrance. That's why mixing on a social level is an important part of his education.

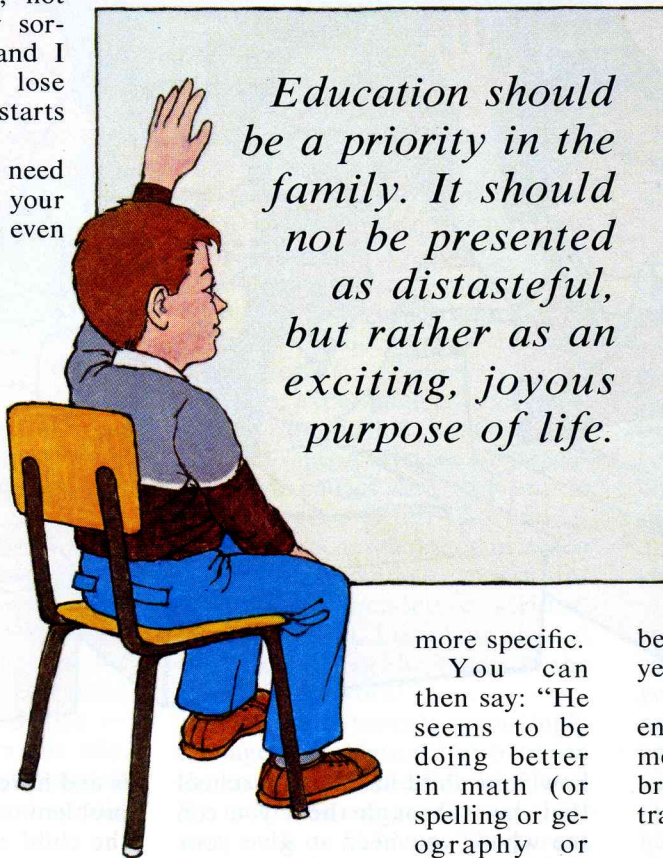
This is why you should have daily discussions with your child. You should help him in his approach to others — show him how to mix with peers while, at the same time, not diminishing from the godly principles you are teaching him. He should, as Jesus

did, grow in favor with both God and man.

Follow your child's progress

If you regularly work with your child, you will have a fairly good idea of how he's doing.

Then, when you do converse with his teacher — and you should do so regularly, especially during the early years of his education — you won't have to ask general questions. You can be



more specific.

You can then say: "He seems to be doing better in math (or spelling or geography or penmanship),

according to his papers. Are there other areas we haven't noticed in which we can help him at home?"

This shows you have been watching his progress and want it to continue. What an advantage this child has!

But be careful. Helping doesn't mean doing. Have your child work independently after you help. Do not do his assignments for him. He'll be looking for you at his right hand and will flounder at school in your absence.

Besides, doing his work for him helps him as much intellectually as eating his food for him does

physically. Learn the difference between helping and doing.

Have a quiet, well-lit corner for him to do his work in, or a desk and lamp in his room if possible.

He can keep his work organized and perhaps file his papers according to date in a box or drawer. This is useful education in organization during his early years, and a fine way to see his growth over time. It can also minimize report card surprises.

If your child uses the kitchen table as his desk, do see that it is wiped first. Too many papers each morning are handed in looking like used dinner napkins or serviettes. This lowers the pride a child takes in his work.

Teach concentration

Concentration is one of the most important skills a child can develop. Have your child work on remembering the teacher's instructions, not expecting you to explain what you haven't heard. Have him deliver all messages to you faithfully. He will most times, and quite accurately, if you have

been diligent in his preschool years.

Do allow for errors, but encourage and lovingly praise a message correctly and completely brought home. This is part of training to listen.

In this regard, have him remember his school bag, lunch box and jacket or sweater. Using the lost-and-found service should be an infrequent necessity if good preschool and early school training has been done by parents. Have him remember what he takes to school daily, and to return the same. When your child finishes his homework, have him place all his books and material in his school bag and put it, closed, by the door he'll be exiting through in the morning.

What an organized home is reflected in homework coming in each day without fail, and how it saves a parent having to make an extra trip, wasting time and ener-

gy, to deliver a bag or lunch left because of irresponsibility!

Of course, all of us forget on occasion, but we're talking about the rule, not the exception.

Keep reading to your child before bedtime. Often, at bedtime, in the warmth and security of family love, other details of the day not mentioned or remembered earlier spill forth, helping the parent see where he can help his child cope with life and overcome difficult spots.

Use this information judiciously and lovingly, for it flows from the heart in confidence to his parents. Don't abuse it, or your child will learn not to confide in you.

Encourage steady attendance

Daily school attendance should be encouraged. Do not let your child get away with feigned sickness or provide excuses for him.

Each day is important. Getting behind is discouraging and frustrating to a child, and disrupts the progress of the rest of the class. Have your child ask the teacher for work the class has done when he was absent.

Also, have you ever wondered what happens at school when children are instructed by their parents, "Tell your teacher to send you home if you don't feel well"? In numerous cases, from minute one the child asks, every few minutes, to go home.

If your child is ill, keep him home. If he is not, do not put the idea in his mind. After all, he reasons, it is easier at home than working here, and Mother doesn't mind if I come home.

Remember: If a child genuinely becomes ill during the day, the school will contact you.

How much sleep should a young pupil have? Far too many are sent to school with far too few hours of it! They are hard to stir to action during the first hours of school and wilt after lunch.

Do your children get sufficient sleep every night? Coming to school half asleep results in spotty learning.

An attentive and diligent child should have far less difficulty

obtaining days off to keep God's Feasts than a lazy, disobedient child who, because of his and his parents' actions, is already behind others in the class.

A light in his school

Teach your child that we have priceless knowledge that no one else in his school has at this time. Explain to him how his good work shows the teacher what God says a child attending His Church should do. Tell him what a wonderful helper of God's Church he is by showing the teacher what good work he can do.

Be sure, however, to make your child understand that he should not preach to classmates or think he is better than others. This will only arouse other students and teachers alike against him. Teach him that he should rather let his good example represent his religious beliefs.

When Holy Days occur, tell your child that God indeed says we must take these days off, but that you will talk to the teacher politely to arrange it. Have the teacher prepare work for your child to do while away.

Reassure your child that when he returns, his teacher will be pleased to see him and his beautifully completed work (and perhaps a special report on the trip, accompanied with post cards, mementos, maps and souvenirs to show to the class).

Upon your return, encourage your child to find out if he missed anything else and to do it that evening and the next. What a fine example he'll be!

But if a child, as a matter of course, has a lazy, disobedient attitude toward his work, a teacher naturally will be distressed at his taking time off.

Having instilled good work habits in your child before he starts attending school will be a big plus in his favor when you request days off and other exceptions, such as no involvement in worldly holiday observances.

With a reputation of work quickly and completely done, asking for days off for Feast attendance becomes easier. Children

of God's people then shine as lights in their schools.

But can you imagine what impression of God's Church a teacher receives when a surly child demands time off and then comes back with work unfinished or carelessly done? This should not be the case.

Ask yourself: Is your child's work always completed, no matter when during the school year? Homework is an important opportunity for a child's character development.

Unfortunately, of course, no matter how polite you are or how diligent your child is about his work, your child may still occasionally have a teacher who expresses a negative attitude toward him simply because of religious bigotry.

You will need to help your child understand that, while God's way is best, not everyone in the world knows this now. In such a situation you will need to do all you can to encourage your child and focus his mind on the wonderful world tomorrow.

A child should not go to school speaking negatively of it, no matter what. This is disheartening to his teachers and contagious, by suggestion, to his classmates. Education should be looked at as a privilege, not a burden.

Show positive, involved interest in your child's education. Be present at school functions, performances and award ceremonies in which your child is involved. Don't miss an open house, and when you are there, take a sincere, active interest in your child's work and displays. Give him the praise and encouragement he needs.

Don't minimize the part the home serves in your child's education. Help your child achieve his highest potential! □

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