

# Firm, Fair & Consistent<sup>®</sup>

Guiding Students for School Success

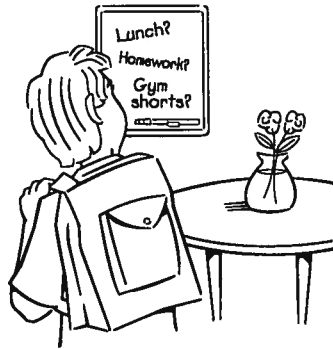
St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic School

Shirley R. Sandusky, Principal

## Give your mornings a makeover

The school year is half over, and you've probably established some good after-school routines, such as homework time, dinnertime and bedtime. But are your mornings still rushed? That's a common problem—and it can hurt a child's school success. To make your mornings calmer:

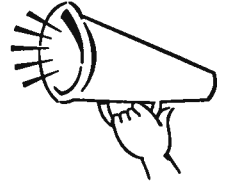
- **Start at night.** Pack lunches, snacks and backpacks before bed. Refrigerate anything that must stay cold. Choose outfits and shoes, too. Check the calendar to verify commitments for the next day.
- **Wake up early.** When parents get ready first, it helps everyone relax. If possible, factor in a few minutes for some calming activities. Being calm and prepared for the day will make it easier to encourage your child.
- **Simplify tasks.** Brainstorm solutions to everyday challenges. Give your child a spray bottle of water for taming hair, for example. Or wrap ponytail holders around a brush so they're always available. Consider keeping some ready-to-serve foods handy for breakfast.
- **Post reminders.** You can probably name one or two things your child forgets regularly, such as his glasses. Instead of nagging, have your child make a checklist to review before leaving. Make one for yourself, too.



Source: Ann Matturro Gault, "Manage Morning Mayhem," Scholastic.com, [www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=11619](http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=11619).

## Be a 'homework coach'

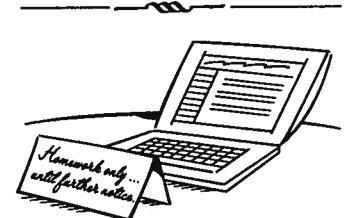
Does your child still need your help with homework? If not, keep in mind that she *does* always need your support.



To provide support without too much hovering:

- **Think of yourself as a coach.** You're there to offer guidance, not to do the work for her.
  - **Don't give her the answers.**
  - **Offer help only when asked.**
- If your child wants you to look over an assignment, fine. If she doesn't, don't.

Source: Dr. Judi Craig, "Getting a Handle on Homework Hassles," Family TLC, [www.familytlc.net/preteen\\_homework.html](http://www.familytlc.net/preteen_homework.html).



## Make the punishment fit the 'crime'

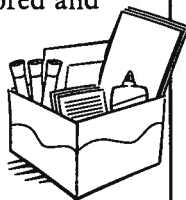
What should you do when your child acts up in class? Along with supporting any penalties he faces at school, enforce your own logical consequence, such as:

- **Making him apologize** to the teacher and own up to what he did wrong.
- **Taking away** one at-home privilege for each at-school offense.
- **Restricting his playtime** for a day or two.

Avoid last-minute scrambling, frustration and tears during school-project time! Keep a "supply box" filled with:



- **Extra paper** (colored and white).
- **Markers.**
- **Report covers.**
- **Poster board.**
- **Index cards.**
- **Glue and a stapler.**



Having these items on hand might save you from a frantic trip to the store the night before.

## Now hear this!

Stop repeating yourself! To get your child to listen the first time:

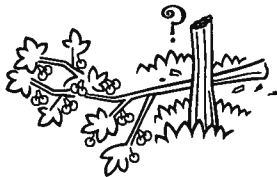
- **Show her what you expect.** Model good listening skills.
- **Be respectful.** Don't criticize, judge, threaten or nag when you speak.
- **Get her attention first.** Don't start speaking until you know she's listening.
- **Speak softly.** It's more effective than yelling.
- **Keep it brief.** If you lecture, she'll probably tune you out.

## Promote telling the truth

Children face plenty of situations that tempt them to lie. For example, they have homework, but it feels overwhelming. (“I don’t have any homework.”) Or they misbehave, and the consequences are daunting. (“I didn’t do it.”) The key is to encourage honesty—not to trap kids in lies.

Start by being honest yourself. If you know what your child did, say so. “I spoke with your teacher about what happened in math today. I’d like to hear the story from you. Take some time to think about it, and then we’ll talk.” (If you’re still worried he’ll lie, you can present what you were told.)

Although occasional lying is normal for children, help your child feel as comfortable as possible with telling the truth. Your calm reaction—no matter what your child says—will show that honesty is a great policy.



Source: Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D., *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12*, ISBN: 1-889140-16-3 (ParentMagic Inc., [www.parentmagic.com](http://www.parentmagic.com)).

## Questions & Answers

**Q:** My fourth grader seems awfully casual about disregarding the rules sometimes—both at home and at school. How can I teach her to be more respectful of them?

**A:** The answer is simple: By demonstrating respect yourself! Remember, when it comes to nurturing your child’s character, actions speak much louder than words. So *showing* her what respect for the rules (and anything else) looks like will be much more powerful than telling her.

- To model respect for your child:
- **Follow your own rules.** Do you insist on no swearing at home, but then start cursing when your favorite football team fumbles the ball? Stop. Your child won’t take the rules seriously if you don’t.
- **Support her school’s rules.** If your child’s school has a dress code, be sure she follows it. If there’s a “no gum” or “no cell phone” policy, insist that she not bring those things to class. Show her that you and her school are partners in her education.
- **Obey traffic laws.** You might not agree with the rules of the road, but that doesn’t give you the right to break them. So the next time you’re tempted to ignore that “no turn on red” sign, reconsider. Your child may be watching and, if so, she’s getting the (wrong) message loud and clear.
- **Be honest.** If the kids’ fare only goes up to age 10, but your child is 11, don’t lie about it. Doing so tells her that it’s okay to break the rules when there’s a payoff in it for you.



## Dads can make a difference

Many dads feel out of place at school, but that shouldn’t be the case. Father involvement is linked to better learning, discipline and enjoyment of school!

Getting involved doesn’t have to be complicated. It’s as simple as having lunch with your child, attending an event or volunteering when you can. Support the school and your child—and be proud that you’re making a difference.

Source: “Men Working: A How-to Guide on Promoting Father Involvement,” National PTA, [www.pta.org/Father\\_Involvement\\_How\\_To\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.pta.org/Father_Involvement_How_To_Guide.pdf).

## Use routines to build responsibility

When something happens regularly, it becomes second nature. Routines work the same way for kids. Here’s how to help make this happen:

- **Involve your child.** You might say, “It’s no fun to argue about homework. Let’s work together to figure out a schedule.”
- **Write down a plan.** Decide when and where homework will be done, for example. Post the schedule for your child to see.
- **Don’t give up.** It generally takes 21 days to develop a new habit. Review and improve the plan if necessary.

