

This newsletter contains a collection of relevant educational articles.



## ♥ Staying Calm in the Midst of Chaos ♥

♥ Today, many schools are running lean and tend to be crisis-driven, overburdening an already highly stressed staff. Using these few tips will keep you organized and calm in the midst of daily chaos. ♥

♥ **Prioritize.** It's easy to get overwhelmed by different priorities that come up during the day. Make a master list of tasks you must do today, what projects are time-dependent, and what jobs can wait. List each item that needs to be completed on a sticky note and place them on a white board or other surface in order of the time they need to be completed. ♥

♥ As the day progresses, toss out the current note and rewrite the list adjusting the priorities as needed. The process helps clear your mind. As you discard the note for a completed task, you will enjoy a sense of accomplishment and also maintain control over the swirl of the day's events. ♥

♥ You can also make good use of online tools. One easy way to handle "can you remind me next week" requests is to use predated email cards. You can use them to remind yourself or others of upcoming obligations (Museum of Modern Art cards--as well as many others--allow you to predate). ♥

♥ **Use voice mail.** If you are in a position where you need to answer and direct calls, avoid taking messages on paper. Gently and diplomatically send callers to voice mail. You will save time and eliminate the risk of losing handwritten messages. ♥

♥ **Start your day the evening before.** At the end of the work day, you will want to tidy up your desk. Neatly put paperwork for tomorrow's tasks in a prominent place. Organizing your work for the next day clears your mind and prepares you for a fresh start in the morning. ♥

♥ Try these simple ideas and you will manage your work day in a calmer and more organized fashion. ♥



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## Student Success Starts in the Home

You probably know that a student's academic success is affected by many factors. When it comes to achievement, activities outside the classroom, especially at home, can be just as influential as what happens inside the classroom.

Following are five important areas to emphasize to ensure the success of your children:


- Establish a daily routine by providing a quiet time and place for your children to study. Be firm about bedtimes so the child is well-rested and alert in the classroom. Having dinner together as a family is also important, because it gives you an opportunity to talk about your children's daily school activities, projects, and expectations. Encourage communications through conversation and questioning.

- Monitor your children's extracurricular activities closely. Whenever possible, arrange specific after-school activities or supervised care, always monitor television watching, and install computer software to block inappropriate websites. Also be mindful of video game content. If you can't be home right after school, call or email frequently to check in with your children, or have a trusted neighbor, relative, or friend stop by. Search out after-school programs and association activities that could serve as alternatives for children going home alone after school.

- Reading books, magazines, and newspapers and talking about what is learned from them is another important aspect to pursue at home. Discussing current events and/or the day's activities is a good habit to develop. Tell stories, share problems, and write letters, notes, and messages to one another. These types of communication bring families closer together, especially today, when everyone is busy with his or her own individual activities and commitments.

- Stay in touch with teachers and school staff, and express sincere interest in your children's progress at school. Work together with your children's teachers to set age-appropriate goals and standards, and to recognize and promote special talents. Compliment your children and share school success stories with family and friends.

- Be a positive role model. Demonstrate ways that achievement relates to hard work and dedication. Discuss the value of a good education to possible career options, and explore ways your children can turn their true interests into satisfying career possibilities.

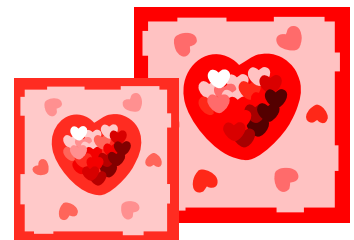
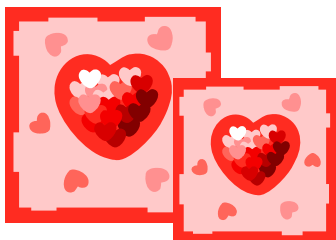




## Draw in More Volunteers

It doesn't matter what event your school is sponsoring, it takes volunteers to get it done well. But often it seems to be the same small group that comes through in a pinch. You need a longer list of those willing to pitch in and help. Following are helpful hints in attracting more parents, community members, and even school board members to your school events:

- Make a list of all the things that volunteers can do in one hour to help the school, the students, or upcoming events. No one likes to dedicate a whole weekend or hour after hour to one project. Never-ending commitments cause people to shy away from signing up. If they know that their volunteer obligation is for just a one-hour time slot, it won't seem so overwhelming.
- Publicize your list wherever you can. Include it in your weekly newsletter or email to parents, or even send it home with the students. Make sure the descriptions of the volunteer opportunities are clear. Specify the talent needed, the time allotted, how many people are wanted in that area, and exactly what times they should show up. Also make sure to include contact information so they can sign up.
- Don't be afraid to ask parents and others to help out. Sometimes they don't know they are needed. If you need a poster designed for an event, call one of the students' parents that you know has artistic or computer design skills.
- If you have some great volunteers already, ask them to call their friends and their child's classmates' parents. People volunteer more often if someone they like or know is involved.
- Respond quickly to those who reach out to you. If you send out requests for volunteers for an event that's a month away, don't hesitate to contact those who responded positively right away. Thank them for signing up. Make the connection now instead of waiting.





## Save Your Energy

Waste is a worry in any household--wasted money, wasted energy, and wasted resources. You can conserve all three without sacrificing efficiency, though. Here are some low-cost solutions for your home:

- **Buy in bulk.** Don't buy 10 one-pound bags of coffee if you can purchase one 10-pound bag. Buying in bulk reduces waste in the form of energy required to transport goods, and it cuts the amount of packaging to throw away. You'll save on the price per pound, too.

- **Compact your garbage.** Break down boxes so they take less space in dumpsters and recycling bins. You'll be able to reduce the number of trips needed to transport discarded items to their final destination.


- **Take a cool approach.** Keep windows open so you can take advantage of breezes and seasonal temperatures. Use fans instead of air conditioning as much as possible during warm weather.

- **Be smart with paper.** Photocopy on both sides, particularly for internal documents and drafts. Buy lightweight paper that eats up less energy in shipping. Choose recycled paper, and recycle the paper you use.

- **Control energy use.** Install thermostats that can be programmed to heat and cool your home at specific times of day. Motion detectors and timers can instruct lights to shut off when a room is empty. Unplug equipment and appliances when they're not being used to keep power usage to a minimum. Maintain your heating and air conditioning systems annually to keep them running efficiently.

- **Buy efficient computers.** Laptop computers are built to run on less power, and many laptops offer all the features of a desktop computer. Their portability also makes telecommuting easier.

- **Watch your light.** Blinds or shades on your windows can make a difference in how much light, heat, and air conditioning you need. Energy-efficient light bulbs manage your electricity use more effectively. Consider putting in skylights for more natural lighting.



Happy Valentine's Day! 



## Practice Consistency to Get Results

A study has found that adults can dramatically increase the compliance of preschool children who don't obey by following a three-step compliance program.

David Wilder, the lead researcher of the study and psychology professor at the Florida Institute of Technology, says that when the regimen is followed consistently, children are much more likely to follow adults' commands.

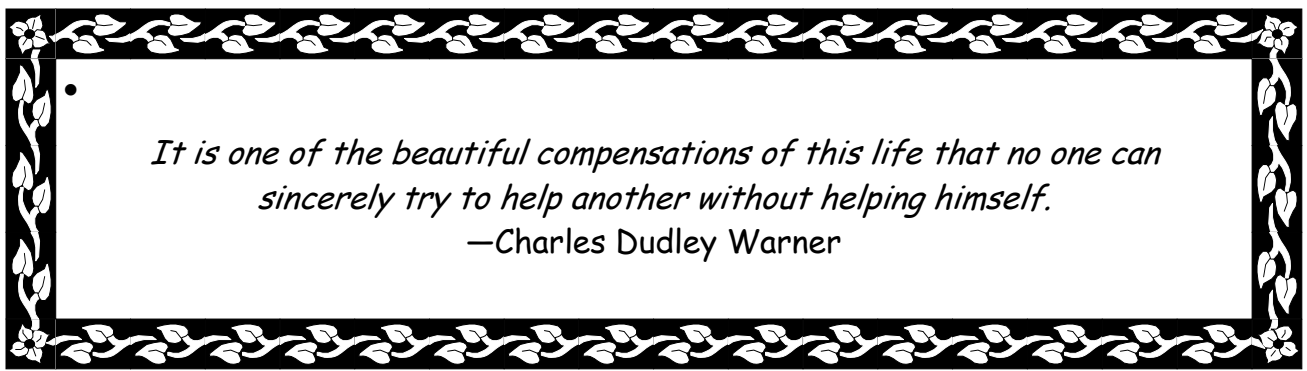
Even though the procedure may sound simple, Wilder says, it won't work if it is not applied with consistency.

In the study, preschool-age children were given simple commands such as "Give me the snack item" and "Put the toy away" and "Come here." If the child responded on the first request, the instructor responded with brief praise. If the child did not comply, the instructor made eye contact with the child and said his or her name and briefly and gently touched the child's chin.

The instructor then went on to repeat the command and model the behavior he or she desired from the child. If the child complied, he or she was rewarded with brief praise. If the child did not comply, the request was made again while being guided by the instructor to perform the activity.

Instructors were assigned to perform at 100 percent consistency, 50 percent consistency, and zero percent consistency for the study.

Wilder's study found that when the instructors were 100 percent consistent, compliance improved dramatically; at 50 percent, compliance improved somewhat; and at zero percent, compliance did not improve and sometimes decreased.



*It is one of the beautiful compensations of this life that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.*

—Charles Dudley Warner

## What to Do with a Chronic Complainer

While most of us do our share of complaining, some people seem to go overboard in this area, says Bonnie Lowe in the *Career-Life Times* newsletter. You know the routine: The boss is stupid, the pay is low, the offices and classrooms don't cut it, the coffee in the break room is terrible, and on and on.

Everyone whines at least a little in the workplace from time to time, Lowe says. That's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about those people who make you tense up as soon as you see them, because you know the first thing out of their mouths is going to be seething with negativity. They seem to feel it is their job to complain.

If you're a helpful type, Lowe says you might be tempted to listen and offer the poor complaining soul assistance. But don't, she warns. It's usually a waste of time. Instead, you can tell the person that complaining is a real downer, and you don't really want to hear it anymore. Or you can say that you realize he or she is unhappy about things, but you'll only listen if the individual offers up solutions for whatever is being complained about.

Lowe says most chronic complainers usually don't really want to stop complaining; they're sort of in love with their complaining. And they find it hard to let go of the habit.



• *Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has in life as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed.*

--Booker T. Washington

## Signs of a Child in Distress

Sometime in the course of the school year, it might become obvious to you that a certain student is in emotional distress. Signs of emotional distress aren't always easy to spot. Emotional distress can manifest itself in many different ways in different people. The following are a few of the signs that a student is having a tough time:

- Is tense, cautious, paranoid, and mistrustful.
- Sees a minor oversight or someone's unintentional putdown as significant personal rejection.
- Overreacts to small occurrences.
- Feels as though he or she is the focus of everyone's behavior.
- Feels as though everything that happens has a special meaning to him or her.
- Is overly concerned with fairness and equality.
- Blames others for anything bad happening in his or her life and will express anger indirectly.
- Feels worthless and inadequate.

It might be helpful to express concern and compassion without being overly friendly or familiar. Be aware of your own anxiety about how the student is acting or communicating. Always pay attention to your personal boundaries and space when dealing with the student. Keep a comfortable distance, both physically and emotionally.

You don't want to be overly warm or sympathetic or even flatter the student or use humor. Always remain firm, steady, punctual, and consistent. Don't be ambiguous in your response, either. Don't challenge or agree with the person. Send a clear, consistent message regarding what you are willing to do and what you expect.

Assure the student that you are there to help as an advocate. Don't hesitate to refer the student for additional professional counseling if appropriate.

