

TIPS AND TIDBITS FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS



Celebrating
50 YEARS
in the
Classroom
and
Sharing
What I
Have
Learned

PAT KOZYRA

Tips and Tidbits for Parents and Teachers

*Celebrating 50 Years in the
Classroom and Sharing
What I Have Learned*

by
Pat Kozyra



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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my wonderful mother, Mulvina Nykorchuk, who had an exemplary teaching career. Mom was my grade one teacher, and I have only good memories of being in her class of twenty-two students in the living room of our home. (There was a shortage of schools at that time in our township.) Many of mom's students kept in contact with her for years after graduating and visited her during their holidays, bringing gifts, which were always proudly and prominently displayed. When I began teaching, my mother gave me much guidance, advice, and assistance, along with many "tips and tidbits" which I am still using to this day. I hope in some small way that this dedication to mom helps me deal with the regret I still have in waiting too long to tell her that I loved her and what a good mother she was to me. Unfortunately, I spoke these heartfelt words to her while she was already suffering from advanced Alzheimer's disease and confined to a facility, where I visited her routinely most days after school. My mother died at age 84, November 2, 1999. I just wish she could read my book to see how much of what I learned from her is in it—maybe she can! Thank you, Mom.

Acknowledgments

Thank you, thank you, thank you, to the thousands of children I have taught who were really the stimulus for this book, and for giving me the best job in the world. It is no secret that I love teaching! How heartwarming and gratifying it has been, through the marvels of things like Facebook, to have students from all over the world contact me after twenty or thirty years to say “thank you,” to say how I have affected their lives so positively, and even to say what specific things they still remember learning. I still have every lovely note and letter that parents and colleagues sent me with thanks or gratitude over the years. This has all been extremely rewarding and really appreciated!

Thank you to my husband, Taras, senior English specialist, for his insights, suggestions, and contributions, all gleaned from a multitude of experiences in an exemplary teaching career. Thank you to my two beautiful, intelligent, perceptive daughters, Tara (Life Coach) and Tana (Real Estate Agent), who also provided me with so much to write about in this book, not only through raising them but also by watching them and their wonderful husbands, Tim and Joel, raise our six beautiful grandchildren, Max, Theo, Josephine, Charlotte, Penelope, and Simon. They give real purpose and meaning to my life!

Thank you to my many friends whose advice I have also quoted in these pages. Thank you to the many colleagues and principals I have had the pleasure to work with and who shared their valuable knowledge and expertise with me. I have, on occasion, regretted not getting my principal qualifications, but back in those days, as I now recall and realize, I doubted my abilities and talents, but that’s for another book!

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to so many parents from whom I learned so much over the years, sharing their joyful, insightful, and yes, sometimes heartbreaking experiences. It really is not easy to be a parent! More than once in my career, when I have seen parents perform their role as

parents so poorly, I have said, “There should be a test you have to pass before you are allowed to have children!” Sometimes when I think with guilt over some of the ways I raised my girls, or perhaps didn’t raise them, I myself may not have done so well on that test.

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Foreword

This book has so much credibility because it is written by someone who has been in the profession for fifty years, is well respected, and has had a varied and exemplary career. Pat has devoted most of her life to educating children to the best of her abilities, along with teaching teachers as well. She has conscientiously, over her fifty years of teaching, gleaned, bought, borrowed, researched, copied, and saved what she felt were informative and useful documents, resources, handouts, booklets, leaflets, texts, and books to help her teach her students, to help her learn about her students, and to help her hone her craft. Pat has accumulated, saved and stored all of this information over many years. She says some of her principals over the years had concerns over taking up so much cupboard space, and encouraged her to cull and to throw out. Now, in her fiftieth year, she fully intends to do just that.

This storehouse has become the treasure trove of gems into which she has delved to help write this useful book to share with her readers, be they parents, new teachers, friends, or family. These will be readers who will want to learn more and have key information at their fingertips to help understand how their children learn. Parents can learn so much about their child from reading this book and put the puzzle pieces together as to what special needs their child might have, what their next steps should be to help their child, and be motivated to look at their child's issues further. It can be the impetus to get things moving and progressing for the betterment of the child. Parents can actually take the initiative to use the checklists, diagnostic tests, surveys, questionnaires, and lists of characteristics to help discover how their child learns, and thus armed, can go to the teacher or to a professional expert for more assistance and further guidance, because they have become more knowledgeable and more aware. Add to that, all the hints, tips and suggestions they will read in this book will help them help their child

at home. Having this knowledge can also mean money well spent if professional, psychological, or educational assessments need to be done.

The motivational and inspirational section of this book is for anyone who picks up this book to read, smile, laugh, cry, get spurred on by, and appreciate what it takes to raise a child and to educate a child. This section of the book is last, but certainly not least. To bring up a child is often a daunting task, which takes sacrifice, patience, courage, commitment, and unconditional love from both parents. For single parents, needless to say, the job is twice as hard! As you will read, Pat comments on the fact that there are no compulsory courses that one must take before having a child. She talks about “babies having babies.” It does no good to regret, or to ask “why” or “if only” or “what if.” It is what it is—you don’t give a baby back—you bring that child into the world and give it your very best. It is not rocket science, but young parents do need help in educating their child. This book certainly provides that help.

This book is written by a veteran educator who knows standards and aspirations spanning two centuries. Like well-matured wine, this priceless volume strengthens the virtues of seasoned and reasoned good taste and maturity.

Happy child rearing! Learn and enjoy!

Mr. Edwin Epstein
Retired Head of Carmel International
School, Hong Kong, 2001 to 2010

Preface

“Teachers plant seeds of knowledge that will last forever.”

Dear Parents:

Please know that the intent of this book is not to lecture or to preach, and that I do not consider myself an expert—far from it, as I am still learning every day. Believe me, I have made my share of mistakes or misjudgments as a teacher and as a parent. Perhaps this book will help you as a parent to avoid making some of the same blunders I did. I merely wish to give suggestions and ideas that I have used, or tell about things that I have seen work, or share what I learned, often through trial and error, from studying, from reading and from expert advice I have gleaned both at home and at school. Therefore, these ideas may also work well for you in your situation, at home or at school, as you try to raise your child in the best way possible. If you are helped by these tips and tidbits, or you use even one of what I call “useful little nuggets” to help with the raising of your child, this book will have been worth the time, the thought, and the effort that I have put into it. Remember, this is my fiftieth year of teaching, so I am speaking from experience, and these are the things that have helped me to teach successfully and joyously for so long. Children don’t learn through osmosis. We have to teach them. By the same token, there are no mandatory courses on parenting that we have to pass in order to be able to have children.

Sometimes it is really “children having children” and that is not easy either. Sometimes children come into one’s life unexpected or unwanted, making the task of raising them even more onerous and challenging. It is my wish that this book will somehow fall into the hands of parents who can benefit from some of the suggestions, and thereby make a significant difference in their child’s education.

Dear Teachers:

Perhaps you are a new graduate who is just starting out in this profession. Meeting your very first class in your teaching career can be overwhelming, not only on that first day but also throughout that first year. Let me tell you about mine. I had the unbelievable good fortune to be given the very same grade that my own mother was teaching that same year. I was still living at home and my mother simply walked me through that whole first year. I really feel it set the tone for the love of teaching for the next fifty years. So, when other first year teachers were burning the midnight oil, preparing lessons for the next day, I was able to go out at night with my fiancé to a movie or to the local bingo hall and know that mom would carry me through. Some mornings she would just say, “Do this, this, this, and this today,” and off I went to Queen Elizabeth School in Port Arthur, Ontario, Canada, to be the best teacher that I could be. On my very first day of teaching, a little flower arrangement was delivered to my classroom with congratulations from my parents, although my mother told me it was from my father (I could never figure that reason out), and that night, when I arrived home, they asked me for my first month’s rent.

I cannot remember being more shocked and upset about anything until then. However, I must be fair and tell you that they actually saved the rent money for my wedding costs so the resentment disappeared with that explanation a year or so later.

Consider this book like a cookbook with “tried and true” recipes. Consider me the mentor you can ask for advice. Wondering about what I would do in your case? Consult the book, check the table of contents, and hopefully something will be written about that topic. Do I have all the answers? No. No. No. But perhaps what I say in this book will encourage you to do further research on the web or in bookstores or a library. In this book I am sharing with you the materials I have saved, gleaned, and used over the years—the materials I have found helpful, interesting, stimulating, or inspirational,

and I had no need to go beyond my many boxes for the contents of this book. I suppose if I had written a little book, you would think I hadn't learned much over fifty years of teaching. Perhaps that justifies the size of this book. The fact is, there was too much in those boxes and in my head, and I had to make difficult choices about what to include and what to leave out. A second book? Perhaps!

This will not be the only place in the book where you will hear me say that I am still learning each and every day. It never stops, and this is an important message to get through to our children. I always tell my audience when I am giving a workshop that if they go back to their classrooms and use even one good idea they have learned from my presentation, then it will have been worth it. Hopefully I have included in this book many good ideas that you will be able to use and apply in your classroom setting and in your teaching strategies, ideas that perhaps you even knew before and just forgot. Sometimes it is comforting to know that a certain technique really works if you try it. You may get reassurance from this book that the things you are doing in your classroom are worthwhile and will work well, given the time and energy you put into them. Best wishes as you strive to change the lives of young people each day, helping them to become productive contributors to society some day in their future.

Sincerely,
Pat Kozyra

CHAPTER 1

Do's and Don'ts for Parents (Just My Opinion!)

Now let's jump right into this book! Notice that I have mixed all the do's and don'ts up randomly—I think you know why.

- **DO** encourage your child to make good eye contact while speaking to family members, teachers, and friends. You want your child to have a good interview someday with a potential employer, and this training begins now.

- **DO** teach your child how to shake hands properly. This can be combined with learning left and right.

- **DO** have routines and consistency for your child, for yourself, and even for your pets. Routines and consistency are so important for helping your child to cope with getting ready for school, doing the assigned homework, and learning to be organized. If this means putting up a check-off list for your child, then by all means make that list. Your child should be in charge of getting the school bag ready the night before so that he or she knows what is in it and what is not (homework, library book, signed permission slips, communication book, change of underwear if necessary, snack and water bottle). Teachers get so tired of hearing, “My mother or my helper didn't put it in there, I guess” or “I forgot it at home” or “I don't know where it is.” Your child should know where all school things are placed to be ready the night before. The morning is just not the time.

Homework should always be done at a proper desk with good lighting and proper writing utensils (sharp pencils), away from the TV and computer. The noise level in the house should also be monitored, and the homework should not be left until the child is too tired and ready for bed. That is just too late!

- **DO** discourage your son from grabbing his penis whenever he asks to go to the washroom. Just say, “Don’t hold your penis. Just use words when you have to go.” It just isn’t necessary or appropriate and can easily become habit-forming.

In the bathroom, washing hands should not have to be monitored—it should be automatic with soap and water and the advised rubbing together for about ten or twelve times before rinsing off.

- **DO** take your child to the doctor for a checkup when the teacher says that the trips to the washroom are more than frequent each day. They can’t be that bored with every teacher’s class, so something is definitely wrong.

DO talk to your child about “playing the game.” Students must learn to “play the game” at times, especially at college or university. Wait until you have that certificate in your hand before you get yourself into trouble by criticizing professors or lodging complaints. This just is not the time or place in light of all the money put out to attend. I had a friend whose daughter was attending a community college studying for child care work and came close to being asked to leave when she decided to “set things right” as the expression goes. She learned a very important lesson that there is a proper time and place for everything.

- **DON’T** voice your displeasure about your child’s teacher in front of your child. Children can surprise you with excellent hearing when we least expect it, and the walls in your house become very thin when you find out what they heard you say. I would not advise discussing politically sensitive things about the school, the school administration, or the school board in front of your child under any circumstances, no matter how involved you are. I am telling you the truth when I say that I cannot believe what I have heard my students say. The most shocking to overhear was a small child in Canada, whose parents were very involved in school administration circles, announce to

another child that a certain teacher in the school would not be invited back to teach next year before the teacher herself even knew! Please know that your bedroom walls are very thin and your child has no problem listening carefully when he or she shouldn't be.

- **DO** try to limit the use of profanity in the home in front of your child, as these words are hard to shake, easily copied, and habit-forming. Yes, your child does use them at school. Monitor the TV programs your child is watching and limit the time spent. How close is your child sitting to the TV set? Is your child being exposed to those harmful UV rays? Has your child had a chance to socialize with friends or have a play date instead of watching TV? Is that program really suitable for your child to hear and watch? Have you invested in a parental lock or chip to prevent your child from seeing inappropriate programs? Is this taking time away from the child's reading or your reading to your child? Yes, choices are good and your child should be allowed some choices occasionally for appropriate programs, but limits are a must as well and that is the role of the parent. Do you have times when the whole family sits in a quiet atmosphere to read? What a good role model parents are when this happens!

- **DO** discourage little ones from Facebook and chat rooms. All hell can break loose here and everyone knows enough horror stories that have really happened.

- **DO** encourage your child to give a small gift to the teacher along with writing a thank-you card—a good habit to learn early—of appreciation, showing love and expressing feelings for the teacher. If you don't agree with giving the teacher a gift, give one to the next-door neighbor or a friend or relative.

- **DO** enjoy music with your child. Music and its benefits at home and at school cannot even be measured! Kids love rap songs with the snapping and clapping and tapping, and they learn so quickly through music. Is a variety of music often playing in the background at your house? Do you

have times when the whole family listens to music of various types with choices for each member?

- **DO** discourage school-age children from playing with their genitals, especially in the school setting, and explain why it is inappropriate behavior for school. It makes other children uncomfortable and can even gross them out, as I have experienced in my classroom on occasion. A six- or seven-year-old masturbating at circle time and exposing himself is just not right! It must be dealt with no matter how sensitive or how much opposition parents can give. This is not normal behavior no matter how you look at it. Appropriate behavior is a must to avoid being mocked or laughed at by boys and having the girls “grossed out.”

- **DO** check out your child’s outdoor play habits if he or she screams constantly at a very loud pitch. Talk about indoor voices and outdoor voices. In my teaching career I have seen a teacher in Thunder Bay actually have to leave teaching because of losing her voice completely, and I have seen children actually suffer from nodules on their vocal chords, which by the way can be damaged from yelling too much.

- **DO** remember to be your child’s parent and not your child’s friend. Does your child understand the difference? Are you afraid of your child? If so, this has to change so that respect, courtesy, and love are not misdirected. For severe punishment, make your child take a favorite or expensive toy or gadget and give it to the poor; make him earn getting a replacement, or do not allow a replacement.

- **DO** make sure you know the family well when your child goes to their home for a play date or a sleepover.

- **DON’T** send your child to a toilet in a public place by himself or herself. Gone are those days when we could be sure they would be safe. My youngest daughter was allowed to go by herself to a washroom in a restaurant once, as we were trying to foster independence and she could not get the door unlocked. She was truly traumatized over it. We heard the screams but did not believe it was our own child and did not react fast enough. I really believe incidents like that can

cause fear of abandonment. Only my daughter can really say what lasting or permanent effect it has had on her.

I am not even sure if there is such a term as “fear of abandonment,” but I well recall waiting at a crap table in a gambling casino in Las Vegas while my husband said he was going to the washroom. I waited and waited and when he finally came back, I was absolutely hysterical. (He had stopped by the roulette table, chose red, and just kept winning for a while.) When he asked, “Did you really think I got into the car and drove back to Thunder Bay without you?” I cried, “Yes, of course!” and that is how real this is when it takes over you.

- **DON’T** send your child to school with a red, inflamed eye as this could be conjunctivitis and can be spread to other children.

- **DO** teach your child how to blow his or her nose properly. Practice how to fold the tissue, where to put it, how to blow hard, and what to do with it after. I heard someone once say they practiced by trying to blow out a little birthday candle with the nose, making it into a game (of course, not too close to the hot flame) so that they understand how the air moves and how much force it takes. Parents often tell me this is a very frustrating aspect of their child’s having a cold and they feel helpless. Teach your child how to cough or sneeze away from others, and to do it into the arm area rather than in the hands to avoid spreading germs. I teach my students this little poem:

Colds and sneezes spread diseases,
So whenever you cough, or sneeze, or sniff,
Please do it in your handkerchief.
Kerchoo!!!! I use my hanky, don’t you?

- **DO** try your best to stop your child from picking his or her nose and even eating the dried nasal mucus.

- **DO** something concrete and specific about your little one constantly not telling the truth. Try rewarding him or

her for honesty when you know it has been difficult to speak the truth, probably because of fear of punishment. Try also to find out why the lying is so prevalent, if it is. Is the child insecure, wanting to please, or wanting to impress and be right all the time?

- **DO** tell your children, especially if they are in high school, about plagiarism, and how important it is to give credit to those you are quoting. This is very helpful information they should learn early.

- **DO** help your teenager learn how to dance a traditional dance like a waltz or polka in case they should be at a wedding or other family gathering and be put into the embarrassing position of not being able to dance.

Do encourage your child to try first before you rush to assist in making the bed, tying shoes, buttoning buttons, dressing, brushing teeth, combing hair, or pouring the juice or the milk, depending on the age.

- **DO** seek professional help when you cannot find the answers to your child's health problem.

- **DO** use the word "game" with your child and he or she may be much more amenable to learning something or practicing something you are trying to teach. Kids love rap songs with the snapping and clapping and tapping that can go with them. Make up a poem or sing stories instead of reading them. Children learn so quickly through music. A case in point is: How did your child learn the twenty-six letters of the alphabet so fast? By singing the ABC's! If you want to learn something fast, just sing it!

- **DO** encourage independence. How do you handle your child when he or she is hurt? I hope you say if it is not serious, "You were brave, or you didn't even cry (much), or that must have really hurt you, or I can see you are in some pain, or where does it hurt the most, or do you think a Band-Aid or plaster (Europe and Asia) will help you?"

- **DON'T** call your child lazy or use that word around your child. Experts say that no child is lazy. There is always

a reason for the inertia, lack of motivation, lack of focus, or a weak effort, and a parent must find out what it is.

- **DO** understand how different your gifted child can be carrying the burdens of the world on their shoulders and could feel responsible for mom's drinking or dad's smoking or the separation or divorce. Do know and understand that it is not easy to be gifted!

- **DO** volunteer in the school and keep your eye on the pulse, but there must be a balance between being involved and being an interfering parent.

- **DO** go to the teacher when you have a problem or a concern, and if it is not addressed sufficiently, then take the next step to the consultant's or principal's office. Give the classroom teacher a chance to solve it first. No, you don't run to the board chairman first! (Yes, it has happened to me!) I have not seen this because I have very little time to leave the classroom, but another staff member mentioned to me that he sees the same parent in the principal's office day after day for lengthy periods of time. Can you imagine how much time that takes away from the principal's ability to do so many other necessary jobs during the day?

- **DO** spray mosquito spray on your child before leaving for school or use the patches or bracelets that help repel mosquitoes. You might want to research how safe that bracelet is, how long it lasts, and what chemicals are emitted when your child touches it. Put sunscreen on your child before leaving for school in the morning if the weather warrants it. Give your child a hat or cap for excursions and field trips.

- **DON'T** drop in on the principal or the teacher over every minor issue involving your child.

- **DO** read the parent handbook with all the rules, routines, expectations, and guidelines provided. Most problems could be solved beforehand if parents only read the handbook thoroughly, read the school e-mails sent to all parents, read the weekly school newspaper on the web, or read the weekly Friday blurb teachers send home to

let parents know what has transpired in the classroom all week. Don't even ask me what percentage of parents, have no time to read these things!

- **DO** read the communication book each day. This should keep you up to date on what is happening with your child at school.

- **DO** make entries into your child's communication book if you feel the teacher should know something important. Yes, we have some parents who write a missive every day and it takes up so much of our time to respond. What happened to a happy balance?

- **DO** read to your child each day, and as a noted guest speaker once told the audience, "Do not stop until he or she is in university."

- **DO** make wish list possibilities with your child so that he or she can choose one for good behavior or good work or good effort: Walk around the block with mom only—no siblings, have a favorite snack, make popcorn, watch a movie together, read a book together, extra allowance, go to the ice cream shop, someone else gets to do one of their chores, shopping, stay up with mom or dad one half hour later, play a game with mom or dad, star on star chart adding up toward something special, free choice of what to wear, money. Brainstorm these with your child and have them printed out so that he or she can look over the list and choose when the proper time comes.

- **DO** give your child some say about the style of his or her hair. Hair is a very personal thing and, within reason, a child should have some say. Parents, however, must consider the options if a teacher has complained that hair is impeding the child's work, if it is constantly in the child's eyes, if someone is teasing and bullying the child about it, if the child is playing with it obsessively to the extent that it is often in his or her mouth, or if it does not comply with the school rules.

- **DO** listen to music together. The whole family can listen to music of various types with choices for each member which means flexibility and tolerance.

- **DO** prepare them at home on manners, etiquette for a restaurant, and appropriate behavior. Practice at home. Talk about voice levels and whining, crying, fooling around inappropriately, embarrassing your family, and disturbing others who, by the way, are paying money for relaxation and enjoyment at a restaurant. As unbelievable as this may sound, some restaurants in the United States are now giving discounts to families whose children behave appropriately. Who would have predicted that? I am so proud to say that my husband and I, when eating out with our six grandchildren, have never once been embarrassed. We absolutely enjoy taking them out when we visit. We feel that each situation, when it does arise, is handled appropriately (better than we ever did it with our own girls!), and our daughters and their husbands deserve so much credit for that!

My husband and I once took our eight-month-old first daughter to a restaurant for a much-needed break and, fortunately, we were in a big room with no patrons yet, so we felt free for some reason to let our baby just crawl around. When we finally got enough brains to see what she was up to, we found her eating cherries in the bar area as she sat inside the empty back of a huge drum set. We learned something very important that day about looking after a baby!

- **DON'T** take cranky, sick, or tired children to a restaurant, especially if it is past bedtime and you have put them through a long wait with nothing to do.

- **DO** write out important routines and rules, especially if your child is a visual learner. These can be put up on the fridge with a magnet, listed on a bulletin board, placed in an evident spot, and listed with times and even picture clues of the daily routines. This would especially help those on the autistic spectrum or those with ADHD. At school the teacher may have to do this with class changes.

- **DO** discuss grocery store behavior with your child. Do not take a cranky, naughty, tired child to the grocery store. Get a babysitter or go at another time. Discourage touching, sampling, taking things, opening packages, and

breaking things in the store. Do not allow your child to push the cart unless he or she is very capable and can keep up with the proper speed and traffic flow. Do teach your child about not cutting in or butting in, as the same rules apply in the classroom with lining up. Do not allow your child to touch the buns, breads, pastry, or cookies from inside the container doors without a pair of tongs supplied by the store and explain why.

Just yesterday, a little girl around nine years old and her brother, about six, were at the pastry counter and the little brother touched everything he saw. I stared at him and yelled, “No!” When he saw his sister pick up what she wanted to buy without using tongs, he said to her, “You’re not supposed to touch!”

- **DON’T** send your child to school with lice as this spreads very quickly. Please read my section on head lice. Lice can jump and the eggs are very difficult to spot. Yes, I have had lice several times during my teaching career. Parents must be more vigilant and less nonchalant about acting quickly when called by the school to come and take the child home for treatment.

- **DO** take your child to the doctor if he or she complains of the same ache or pain constantly. Chances are it is real and needs to be attended to.

- **DO** let your child be a child. It is such a short time to play, explore, have fun, and enjoy that precious innocence. Be careful not to make them grow up too fast, and only you as a parent can control this. Don’t push them too far too fast! Don’t tell your child what he or she does not need to know. Your children do not want to hear your problems either, and many cannot deal with them.

I have found that the bar is very high in Hong Kong in many international schools to have children reading fluently at the pre-school age. I am not so sure that that is the correct way to go. So many children are just not ready for this and as a result are faced with so much stress and pressure. Let us remember again that the best readers in the world are

the children of Finland, who are not taught to read until age seven. What we are teaching children in grade one in Hong Kong would be grade two work in Canada. I taught grade one there. Teachers are faced with reversal problems, poor listening skills, very weak fine motor skills, and pressure to make these children reach the bar when perhaps they should still be playing, exploring, and enjoying stories, poetry, and more rhyme, rhythm, and repetition. Of all the Chinese students I have tutored over the years, only a few of them knew any nursery rhymes at all.

- **DO** teach your child common greetings like “Good morning” and “Hello, (teacher’s name).” If a stranger tries to shake your child’s hand when introduced, it will avoid embarrassment for the child if you have practiced the right hand to right hand shake at home. You can do this after playing a game with your child as a form of congratulations or as you are saying “good game,” which will also come in handy at school. My husband and I well remember one of our daughters, after losing a game of checkers with her dad, running off to her bedroom and slamming the door to avoid saying, “Good game, Dad.” Yes, it does take practice, but this will serve them well in the future.

- **DO** teach your children responsibility and help them to become more independent. Does your child make his or her own bed each morning? Does your child help set the table for dinner? Is he or she learning the proper rules of etiquette? Does your child know how to count? He or she can get practice with sequencing numbers and spatial relations while setting the plates out and placing the cutlery. Does your child feed his or her pet each day? Does your child dress himself or herself each day? Does your child tidy up his or her own room each day? Does your child pick up his or her own toys and put them away properly after playing with them? (As mothers, we all remember finding a slew of toys hidden under the bed in haste!) If you have answered “no” to any of these questions, my question to you is, “Why not?” Teachers know which children do these things at home

when your child is observed at tidy-up time. It couldn't be more obvious! I would strongly suggest starting those chores very early in your child's life.

- **DO** have good communication with your child's teacher. It can often clarify concerns. Why not communicate by writing in the communication book, or by leaving a phone message or making an appointment to visit the teacher at a convenient time? However, a teacher cannot be expected to be contacted in the classroom during teaching time just because a call from a parent comes in, unless it is an extreme emergency. It is the same common sense that should be used about showing up unannounced. Keep in mind that for safety reasons, many schools have strict security in place. When a parent just walks into a classroom unannounced, without the teacher or administration knowing, it can create problems for all.

This will probably not be the first time this is mentioned in this book. Parents must remember to go to the teacher first with their concerns—not other parents, not the principal, and not the board of education. Please start with the teacher to see if the problem can be resolved there. Get it from the horse's mouth and not from hearsay. Keep in mind that word spreads quickly throughout the school when a parent becomes known as a chronic complainer, feisty, always criticizing, or really rude; this can, although it should not, affect attitudes toward your child. Teachers are human and can often feel intimidated and resentful too.

- **DO** encourage your child to have good friends. If I had to name one of the most important reasons why my daughters turned out so well, it would be because of the kinds of friends they had all through their school lives. Do monitor the kinds of friends your child keeps, and if you are worried about the influence those friends are having on your child, or you can see that your child is negatively affected, you as a parent have that responsibility to take action. You can speak to that child's parents or even not allow the friendship

to be fostered or encouraged. My daughters still communicate with most of their good childhood friends, even though they are spread out all across Canada. They often vacation together, they visit each other, they are on Facebook, they phone each other, they help and support each other, and even their husbands have become good friends in many cases. So be vigilant in terms of the language you hear, the requests the friends make of your child, the manners they use or do not use, how they share and cooperate, and how your child feels during the play date. Is it a happy, positive experience? If not, you can and should put a stop to it.

- **DO** encourage your child to participate in the show and tell opportunities at school. There are excellent ways to help the child feel comfortable in front of an audience and practice good voice volume and projection. Be mindful of the guidelines in the parent handbook which may limit what your child can bring to school. Toys and live animals are often discouraged, and souvenirs from travel and family pictures are preferred. For obvious reasons, toys present a problem with competition, and toys can be broken or stolen, especially if they are the tech gadgets as many are these days. Animals can present a problem with allergies in the classroom. If an animal such as a turtle is touched by the children, it is wise to be cautious in this area. (Check websites on the diseases turtles and other small animals can give your child.)

Do monitor the jewelry your child wants to wear to school. The child can be constantly playing with it or sucking on it, it can be lost or stolen, and it can cause upsetting situations. When I wrote to a mom that her daughter had her necklace in her mouth 90 percent of the school day, the mom said she had never seen her do that at home and immediately stopped her from wearing it to school.

- **DO** research and check out the benefits of fish oils. Are you giving your child a daily multivitamin? When it comes to your child's health, explore as many avenues as possible,

however foreign or even unorthodox they may seem to you. Remember also that every child's case is unique and even though it can be very helpful to go on the web for answers, they may not be the answers for your child.

- **DO** show interest in the work your child brings home. Your child will often come home so excited with artwork that may appear more like scribbling, smeared paint, or just blobs of color. Be sure to avoid asking your child what it is because you may get a retort like, "Can't you see what it is?" or "Don't you know what it is?" Instead, ask your child to tell you about the painting in order to avoid uncomfortable upsetting moments.

- **DO** encourage your child to refrain from using fillers like "uh," "um," "like," "yeah," or repetitive sounds before and while speaking. These can easily and quickly become habit-forming, sometimes learned and copied from the parents. Your child is in the transition of trying to get the thoughts from the mind into audible speech and needs to take time, to stop, or sometimes just slow down and find the right words (planning) instead of filling in with such sounds.

- **DO** make these five concepts a regular part of each day in raising your child: routines, consistency, listening, following directions, and eye contact while speaking in complete sentences.

- **DO** teach your children their address and telephone number, age, days of the week, months of the year, before and after, telling time, and birthday. Memorizing these facts will help your child not to feel awkward, embarrassed, or stumped. It simply takes repeating the information often and/or even showing it to them visually.

- **DO** teach your child proper etiquette when answering the phone. ("Just a minute please." "I'm sorry, she is not in. May I take a message?")

- **DO** encourage independence and self-reliance whenever you can. Encourage your child to try something new on his or her own first before you rush to assist or do it yourself.

- **DO** help your primary child with oral counting and sequencing to and from 100 since this is taught in first grade. Practice can be done while in the bathtub, in the hot tub, in the car, in the taxi, going up stairs, counting pages, picking up toys, counting how many books they have, counting cards in a collection, or counting cutlery while setting the table. In a lift, with my class, we see what number we will reach when the door opens. This helps stop all the unnecessary fooling around with everyone talking or shouting at one another.

- **DO** read some books on child management.

- **DO** consider a parenting course in child management if your child is constantly misbehaving, and don't assume that you are doing something wrong but that perhaps something different would work better.

- **DO** reflect on the teacher's perception of your child. Ask the scout leader, piano teacher, after school activity leader, summer camp leader, and other teachers to see if you are hearing similar comments.

- **DO** work together with the school to help your child improve his behavior instead of getting defensive; the fact that he or she has a problem does not mean you have done something wrong.

- **DON'T** tell your children their IQ if they have been assessed by an educational psychologist. The children can become fixated on this, especially if the parent tells them how smart they are. They can lose friends over comparisons which can come across like put-downs. Young children and even many adults have trouble handling this information.

My husband has a student he tutors who was constantly bragging to him about his 152 IQ. He became so obnoxious that he finally had to be bluntly told to knock it off and to keep it private. When my two little ones were five years old, I gave them the Peabody Picture Vocabulary IQ test, and they scored only one or two points apart. It wasn't until one of my daughters was married that she asked me if I knew her IQ, because she and her husband did theirs on the web and

were curious about the reliability of the test. Coincidentally, when I asked her what their score was, it was exactly the same score as the Peabody Test score done at that very early age—amazing.

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