

Helping Your Child to Succeed at School



ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Lighting the Way ~ Rejoicing in Our Journey

A Message from the Director of Education...



Paul Wubben
Director of Education

This newsletter is devoted to encouraging your participation as parents in your child's education. The reason for this focus is simple... when parents are engaged, students succeed.

While St. Clair Catholic is consistently among the top school boards in the province for student achievement, we still fail to reach every student. An 87 per cent graduation rate is something of which we can be proud because it is above the provincial average and meets the target set by the ministry of education; however, the corollary 13 per cent failure rate is disturbing. Our teachers, principals and support staff are devoted to helping your child succeed, but they know the likelihood of meeting that goal increases significantly when parents are actively engaged in the education of their child.

Active involvement starts with sitting down and talking about your hopes

and dreams for your son or daughter. Instilling in your child a vision of the future provides her with direction that can be enormously motivating.

The setting of general goals and sub-goals required to reach that target gives meaning to school work. The answer to the question, "Why do you go to school?" should never be... "Because my parents make me; because I have to; it's the law; or, I don't know." It should always be, "Because I want to be a"

It is never too early to talk to your child about the high hopes you have for him. Let her know you have faith in her abilities and that if she works hard, she can determine her future. That concept of having the power to effect his own path in life will help your child believe in his ability and develop the resilience he will need to cope with disappointment.

These kinds of discussions should not just happen once in a while, but frequently. "What did you do at school today?" is a great question. It tells your child you are interested. Yes... he will frequently respond by saying "nothing," but don't accept that answer. Probe deeper. Ask a question based on something you may have seen in her school

planner, the school newsletter or related to a conversation with the teacher. It is always best to begin this practice in JK, but it's never too late to start.

Aristotle said, "The habits we form from childhood make no small difference, but rather, make all the difference."

You may think that forming good habits at an early age, such as praying before meals and at bed time, punctuality, regular study times, always giving your best, treating others with respect and good manners don't really matter, but think again. Our habits help form our character and our character determines the outcome of our lives. The great American statesman Benjamin Franklin once wrote, "It is easier to prevent bad habits than to break them."

What goals do you want your son or daughter to attain? What habits will they need to attain those goals? Contained within the pages of this newsletter is information that will help you to help your child achieve. Achieving engenders confidence, efficacy and resilience.

Please take the time to read and consider this information.

Inside:

- **Tips for helping your child with reading, writing and math**
- **Literacy help for boys**
- **Staying safe on the internet**
- **Career planning for secondary school students**
- **TVO is more than just great TV!**
- **Helping your child cope with stress**
- **Let's get organized**
- **Being your child's cheerleader**
- **Tips for helping children who struggle with focusing on a task**

Tips and Website Links Parents Can Use to Help Students in Elementary School

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As your child's first teacher and role model, you strive to provide consistent, positive examples for your children. Your involvement and support as a parent can influence your child's attitudes and his or her interest and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. As a first step, establish an environment that values learning. Encourage your child to be curious and to ask questions. Engage in conversation with your child, where you are both listeners, learners and teachers.



You can actively demonstrate your own interest in reading, writing and mathematics by:

Reading...

"Your involvement and support as a parent can influence your child's attitudes and his or her interest and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics."

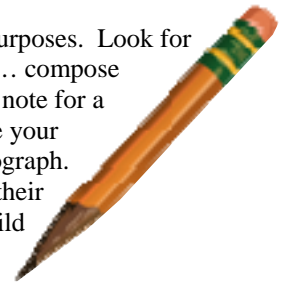
Talk regularly with your child about things you have read in the newspaper, in a magazine, on-line or about something you have heard on radio or television. Read to your child daily. Children of all ages enjoy listening to their parents read. As a child gets older, share the reading. Give your child time to read independently. Ask him to choose his material independently. Talk to him about what he has been reading and discuss favourite authors and illustrators.

It's also a good idea to visit the public library regularly and, when shopping, browse through bookstores. Show your child that you read for a variety of purposes — novels and magazines for pleasure; newspapers, journals, e-news or blogs to stay abreast of current events; and 'how to' books and texts, such as cookbooks and home building magazines, for information. Also be sure to show your child that she can access on-line resources for pleasure, as well as information gathering.

Writing...

Show that you use writing for a variety of purposes. Look for opportunities for purposeful writing at home... compose

grocery lists together, compare advertisements for best prices, leave a note for a family member, record a telephone message, write a card, compose an invitation, or write a letter. Encourage your child to keep a scrapbook or blog of family holidays and to write captions or brief descriptions for each photograph. Provide interesting stationery, journals, pens and markers to encourage writing. Play word games to expand their daily vocabulary. Enter writing contests in local newspapers or write a 'letter to the editor' on issues your child feels strongly about. There are numerous on-line web applications that can be used to assist with writing.



Helping Your Child with Reading and Writing: A Guide for Parents — <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>

Mathematics...

Let your child know that you think mathematics is important. Be positive and talk about the ways in which you use math daily. Include your child in everyday activities involving mathematics — making purchases, comparing prices and measuring ingredients for recipes. Play games and do puzzles that relate to: direction, time, logic, reasoning, sorting, classifying and estimating.

When your child is working on mathematics problems, be encouraging and work together to solve the problems. Encourage your child to think out loud and discuss together the possible strategies to solve the problem, such as drawing, acting out and using props.

Always treat errors and misconceptions as opportunities to talk together and develop reasoning skills and new ideas.

Helping Your Child Do Mathematics: A Guide for Parents
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>

The importance of routines!

During the school year when family life becomes busy with school, work and extra-curricular activities, it's important to have routines established. A well-rounded schedule will include time for personal reading, time for homework and time for play. Ideally, children should have a dedicated time and place for homework with all the necessary tools available — paper, pencils, pens, markers, computer, etc.

Steps to Success for Your Child

The Ontario Ministry of Education offers tips for success to parents, with downloadable resources for reading, writing and mathematics, as well as excellent fun and educational links.

For *Simple Steps to Your Child's Success* visit their website at:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/eng/>



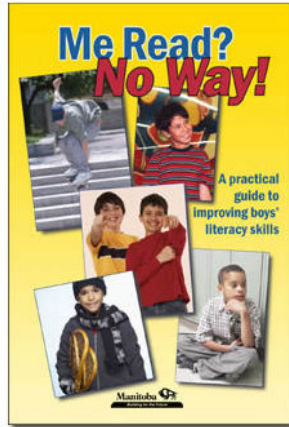
Tips and Website Links Parents Can Use to Help Students Attending High School

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Literacy Help for Boys...

In high school, boys particularly can face challenges in reading and comprehending some of the more complex texts and articles assigned in their classes.

Parents can help with improving these literacy skills at home. Tips and strategies can be found in this helpful brochure, which is available for free download at:



<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/meread/>

Helpful Tips for Parents:

- Attendance — Help ensure students attend school every day and arrive on time.
- Homework and Assignments — Check the homework assignments each day and ask about due dates.
- Organization and Time Management — Check for an agenda or notebook used to note homework, assignments and tests. Students may need help managing study time at home.
- Encourage Reading — Even during holidays, it is important that students keep reading to improve speed and comprehension. Set aside time for reading each day!

Staying Safe on the Internet...

Students need help in ensuring their safety when surfing the net and accessing social networks such as Facebook and MySpace. Cyber attacks and identity theft can happen to anyone. Technical tips for parents and students can be found at:

http://SafeCanada.ca/parents_e.asp

There are many topics of interest for parents on this website, with a specific link called "Internet Security for Kids," which will provide tips and guidance.



Helping Students Plan their Careers...

St. Clair Catholic students have access to useful tools that help with selecting courses and planning their future destinations after high school.

<http://mypathway.st-clair.net> helps guide students and parents through topics such as:

- Helping your child understand who they are — discovering their skills, interests and strengths.
- Honouring your child's decisions — supporting them as they investigate opportunities.
- Helping your child build a pathway — exploring resources to build a pathway planner.
- Helping your child explore a variety of careers.

www.myblueprint.ca is a website that more specifically helps students and their parents:

- Select the appropriate courses according to their pathway planning.
- Discover what they need for their post-secondary destination.

Each secondary school has its own access code — check your school newsletters and websites for the appropriate code for your own login.

More interesting and helpful websites...

The Ontario Ministry of Education website is an excellent source of tips and information for parents. Topics include *More Ways to Succeed in School; Parent Engagement; Healthy Schools, Curriculum Documents; and Safe Schools.*

Go to www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents

TVOntario is more than just great TV!

The TVO website is a great resource for parents, with topics such as "What is Cyberbullying?" Articles such as *The Family Room* give resources for helping kids learn at home, while *The Classroom* has information about what is happening in Ontario's classrooms.

Go to www.tvoparents.com

Tips and Website Links Parents Can Use to Help Students with Special Needs

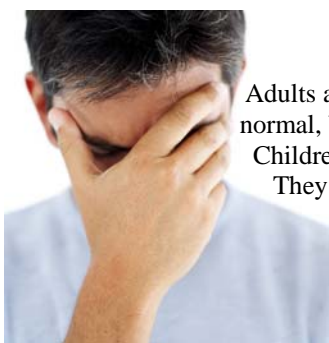
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Let's Get Organized...

Many children struggle with organizational skills. Teaching your child simple organizational techniques from an early age will lead to some terrific life-long habits. Here are some great techniques.

- Have a designated location for certain items (e.g., a spot for backpacks, books, coats, etc.)
- Use an agenda or homework book.
- Use a calendar, especially for homework or long term assignments. Break the assignments into small sections (e.g., *By Friday, you should have the outline completed; By the following Wednesday, you should have your references for the first section, etc.*)
- Use a clock to set reasonable time frames for completing tasks so that your child begins to understand time management.
- Use visual checklists to help your child complete a series of tasks (e.g. *First, hang up your backpack, then empty your lunch pail, then put your homework on the table.*)
- Use different coloured file folders or containers to help children organize personal items such as books, toys and school work.

For more information about strategies for getting organized visit: www.idonline.org



Helping Your Child Cope with Stress...

Adults aren't the only ones who feel stressed. Children do, too. Some stress is normal, but too much is not good for young people.

Children who are feeling stress may complain of stomach aches and headaches.

They may seem sad, panicky or angry. Stress for children may have many different sources:

- Change is difficult for children and teenagers. Moving to a new home or school can cause stress.
 - Having too much to do is stressful. Children need some quiet time.
 - Having difficulty with school work can be another source of stress.
- It is stressful when children and teens feel that they don't fit in, or that they are different.

"Children with disabilities are children first."

How can I help when my child feels stressed?

- Spending time with your child is the most important thing you can do.
- Celebrate your child's strengths and successes whenever possible.
- Children need some time on their own. Listening to music, reading or playing quietly may help them feel better.
- Ensure your child is well rested.
- Exercise is a great way to burn off stress. Enjoy family walks or bike rides.

Helping Your Child Pay Attention...

Everyone has a hard time concentrating once in a while. It can happen for many different reasons — being bored or tired, not understanding what is happening, feeling afraid or overwhelmed or hiding a problem instead of dealing with it.

Did you know that Albert Einstein was suspended from school as a young boy because he couldn't pay attention? Many people with attention difficulties need to know that they are smart and they can learn — they just do it differently! Here are some tips that will help:

- Chewing gum while doing homework can help an inattentive child focus.
- Squeezing a stress ball, doodling and standing to complete homework are effective strategies.
- Have your child complete a "to-do" list of her homework or chores. Keep the tasks short, so that she feels she is being successful in completing them.
- Provide your child with choices, so that he feels he is in control. (e.g., *Do you want to use the pen or the pencil to complete your homework?*)
- Create opportunities for your child to move. Provide frequent breaks when a task is lengthy. (e.g., complete three math questions, then take a stretch.)
- Encourage the use of a computer for completing assignments. The computer is much more engaging, especially for boys.
- Transitions are difficult, so give notice. (e.g., *Dinner is in five minutes.*)

Praise! Praise! Praise! Be Your Child's Cheerleader



Children with special needs have numerous strengths to be celebrated and nurtured. There are so many ways to say 'well done!'

Be sure to be specific with positive feedback, so that they can do it again. Say things like:

- You have really worked hard to finish that report!
- You should be so proud of yourself for reading that entire chapter!
- You are listening with such concentration. That is really polite!
- You were really kind to that little girl by helping her to pick up her book!

For more information on how to help your child to focus on tasks, visit www.cpri.ca