



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania

A Parent Guide for Table Etiquette – from the First Meal to the Last Supper CLASSROOM TABLE

Etiquette – protocol, customs, and life-connecting skills – can be taught through multiple settings. Each issue of the 2013-14 *Parent Partnership Handbook* emphasizes the etiquette associated with a particular kind of table: (1) the family dinner table, (2) the homework table, (3) the classroom table, (4) the school cafeteria table, (5) the party/social-guest table, and (6) the Eucharistic table. This newsletter focuses on **CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**.

Parents know the importance of academic achievement. Children know the importance of socialization – being respected by teachers and accepted, approved, and included by peers. Schools integrate both goals and equip a child to understand the norms, attitudes, values, and behaviors that lead to personal success. The classroom becomes the place for total formation. May the following specifics of classroom etiquette aid the process.

Foster respect for the common good. Explain to your child that individual preferences and freedoms sometimes need to be sacrificed in order for large-group to function well. With your child read the school handbook and classroom rules/procedures documents. Establish the expectation that your child will comply with school policy, show respect to all adults, come prepared to class, actively participate, practice self-control, maintain a neat, organized desk/space, and complete assignments on schedule.

Motivate perseverance. Encourage the rhyme-message to become a personal mantra. “Good, better, best. I will never rest. Until my good is better and my better is my best.”

Reveal the recipe for school success: effort, energy, and enthusiasm with participation, cooperation, respectfulness, and perseverance.

Strengthen the capacity for self-control. Provide exercise in taking turns, inviting others to go first, delaying gratification and waiting patiently.

Encourage Self-Governance. Teach autonomous, responsible behavior by teaching your child to pack her own lunch, choose clothing, prepare books and assignments, complete homework and ask for required signatures and permission slips. Allow her to accept the consequences of forgotten papers and lunches. If she makes mistakes, ask her to name ways in which she can improve future performance. Refuse to make excuses for her missed assignments or misbehavior. Model the practice, “You are responsible for getting your work done but allow time for us to help if you need help.”

Teach Decision-Making Skills. Model decision-making process skills by discussing situations from your life. Involve your child in the process of (1) identifying possibilities or approaches to the situation, (2) recognizing the positive and negative consequences of each possibility, and (3) suggesting the most appropriate solution. Listen to your child's ideas and offer alternative considerations.

Strengthen listening skills. Engage your child in (1) following a given direction, (2) repeating a spoken message, and (3) re-wording the spoken message into other words that convey the same meaning.

Cultivate a culture of follow-through. Expect children to finish responsibilities and activities once begun; take a task to the finish line; and respond to teacher suggestions or directives or questions/comments – whether spoken or written on returned assignments.

Cultivate leadership. Let your child decide ideas for school reports, contests, and projects. Help her child plan a schedule for school projects, to break the assignment into manageable parts, and to plan a reasonable timeline. Initially “walk through” the steps together. Make it her responsibility to determine

materials that need to be gathered or purchased. Offer transportation to obtain materials and research; otherwise, maintain a hands-off policy. Gradually decrease your active presence. Show interest in her progress. Let planning and accomplishment be her own.

Establish goals. Routinely, help your child to set and follow through with both short and long-term goals, to make a schedule, and to present it to you in written form. By junior high age have him communicate to you realistic academic goals at the beginning of the year and at each quarter or more often if necessary. In addition to goals, have him list the specific behaviors that will be necessary in order to reach the goal. Let him post these in a meaningful place for frequent reference and motivation.

Avoid procrastination. Provide your child with an organizer-type book to keep track of upcoming events, projects, homework, etc. Teach him how to maintain a log, a to-do list, or a calendar book. Help him to develop a systematic approach to task completion. If your school sends home regular communication, read the material together and make calendar notions of events. Teach him to avoid procrastination; to look ahead; and to develop the habit of getting jump-starts on long-range assignments.

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