



Belle Chasse Academy

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PARENT POWER

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A Letter From Our Principals, Mary Bekeris & Rene Thompson

November 2019

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

As always, once it gets started, the school year seems to pick up speed with every passing day.

Keep your eyes and ears open! As the holidays approach we'll have plenty of classroom and school-wide events. Please join us for any and all! We want you to experience all facets of BCA. So, come to school when you have a few extra minutes. Have breakfast or lunch with your student, observe a class, come to have a cup of coffee or let Ms. Juli Braatz know that you'd like to volunteer. As the holiday season approaches we have many, many seasonal volunteer needs besides our "normal" opportunities. Let Juli know what you would like to do, and she can match you to a task that will help our children learn in a positive learning environment.

If you can't join us, please still communicate. Communicate with your child's teacher and the Administrative Team. Certainly tell us your concerns, but please feel free to offer your creative ideas. We are committed to continuous school improvement, and we can only succeed by working in partnership with you. As always, we remind you to check out our website for upcoming events, important messages, classroom news, homework, and more.

As we approach our national Thanksgiving holiday, we thank you for giving us the privilege of offering formal education services to that most precious person in your family, our BCA student.

Happy Thanksgiving,

Rene Thompson, Principal K-4
Mary Bekeris, Principal 5-8

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Important Upcoming Dates & Topics in This Issue

- November 19th— Progress Reports
- November 20th— Student of the Month Ceremony
- November 21st— Coffee with the Principals
- November 25-29th— Thanksgiving Break
- Reliability of online content
- Conversations about school
- Strong study habits

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Belle Chasse Academy



November 2019

Help your student evaluate the reliability of online content

Middle schoolers often begin online research with a quick Google search. But when they get the list of results, they are faced with a challenge.

Studies show that students have difficulty telling the difference between unbiased information and content created to promote a particular product or point of view.

To help your child learn to find reliable sources of news and information online, share these strategies:

- **Assess links.** Does the link lead to a news source your child knows to be trustworthy? Or does it go to a site that offers only one point of view?
- **Consider the author.** What is the content creator's expertise?
- **Look for clues** about the purpose of the site. If an article says "sponsored content," it isn't news. It's advertising.
- **Read more.** Sometimes an article will take one sentence from another source out of context. It's a good idea for your child to read more of the original source. She can also check one source's facts against another's.
- **Check the date.** A source from 1996 may be acceptable for a time line of ancient Greek civilization. But your child should find an up-to-date source if she's writing a report about today's economy.



Source: S. McGrew and others, "Can Students Evaluate Online Sources? Learning From Assessments of Civic Online Reasoning," *Theory & Research in Social Education*, Taylor & Francis.



Responsible learning happens daily

Taking responsibility for learning involves more than turning in homework when it's due and studying for tests. Help your middle schooler learn that it also means giving school his best effort every day.

Encourage your child to make these responsible habits part of his daily routine:

- **Reading ahead.** By skimming over the next day's lesson or chapter ahead of time, your child will be better prepared for class. Advance reading can also help him ask better questions.
- **Reviewing his notes.** Whether or not your child has homework in a subject, he should still look over his class notes each night. It's an easy way to reinforce what he's learning.
- **Attending every class.** Even if your middle schooler does the homework and reading, he won't learn what the teacher thinks is important if he isn't in class. He should miss a class only if he is sick or there is an emergency.

Set rules for the present that take care of the future

Middle schoolers live in the moment. It's hard for them to connect doing something today—like studying for tomorrow's test—to their grade at the end of the semester.

To help your child get the work done, enforce firm rules about study time. Then, when the results are positive, remind her that her consistent hard work is paying off.

Get creative about writing

Strong writing skills support school success. But tell your child to practice writing, and he'll probably roll his eyes. Instead, look for creative ways to add writing to his day. You might ask your child to:

- **Put requests in writing.** The next time your child wants something, have him write a persuasive argument for why he should get it. Ask him to address any objections he thinks you may have.
- **Cover a family event** on social media. He can take photos and write posts to go with them so that friends can see what's going on in your lives.



Help make success possible

Every year, your middle schooler will be expected to do more—at school and at home. To help her meet the challenge:

- **Create routines.** Doing a task in a familiar way makes it more automatic.
- **Catch your child** before she plugs in. If you need her to do something, have her do it before she turns on the TV, computer or tablet.
- **Encourage her interests.** Your support as your child works at something she loves may inspire her to work hard at other things—like school!





Is holiday togetherness too much to ask from my child?

Q: We're heading into the holidays, but my eighth grader isn't exactly overjoyed about family time. I really want him to spend time with us. Should I make him join in all the family holiday activities?

A: Your middle schooler's wish to separate a little from you is a normal part of growing up. Supporting his independence while maintaining his connection to family will take some flexibility. But in the process, you can teach him about limits and compromise. Rather than insist your child do everything with the family this season:



- **Prioritize.** Skipping Thanksgiving dinner at Grandma's isn't an option. But let your child know you understand he wants to spend time with his friends. Perhaps he could pass up your annual shopping marathon.
- **Update.** Accept that it may be time to retire or adapt some "little kid" activities. Instead of making the usual handprint turkey decorations, give your child a hot glue gun and ask him to create an autumn centerpiece.
- **Maintain perspective.** Try not to take it personally when your child doesn't want to participate in family activities. Keep in mind that while he may scorn these things now, he'll probably enjoy them with his own kids someday!



Are you stressing academic honesty?

Surveys show that most middle and high school students cheat in school at some time—and that many don't believe cheating is serious. Are you making the importance of academic honesty clear? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Have you read** the school honor code with your child, and talked about the need to follow it?
- ___ **2. Do you talk** about different kinds of cheating, such as sharing test questions and copying homework answers?
- ___ **3. Do you explain** that copying passages from the internet and passing them off as her own work is cheating?
- ___ **4. Do you discuss** the consequences of cheating?

- ___ **5. Do you set** an example for your child by being honest yourself?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean that you are addressing the issue of cheating head on. For each no, try that idea.

"With integrity, you have nothing to fear, since you have nothing to hide."

—Zig Ziglar

Direct some 'brain movies'

Can your child remember every detail of his favorite Netflix show, but nothing about the passage he just read for English? Show him how to turn reading assignments into "brain movies." Here's how:

- 1. Choose a poem** or story that is filled with sensory-rich language, such as Longfellow's "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere."
- 2. Find images online** that set the scene and show them to your child.
- 3. Read the passage** aloud and ask your child to imagine what it would look like as a movie.



Creating mental images helps kids focus on details and remember what they read.

Source: D. Wilson and M. Conyers, "Brain Movies: When Readers Can Picture It, They Understand It," *EduTopia*, nswc.com/mid_brainmovie.

Commitments take thought

Honoring commitments is a cornerstone of character. Teach your child that before she makes a commitment—whether it's to bring supplies for a group project or help a neighbor clean up his yard—she should consider what's involved. It's great to take on new responsibilities, but she should do so only when she's sure she can follow through.

Add science to conversation

Some middle schoolers think science is all boring formulas. But it is fascinating! To engage your child, sprinkle some science into family conversations. Discuss:

- 1. The night sky.** Can your family identify any constellations?
- 2. Inventions** you appreciate.
- 3. The foods you eat.** Which are the healthiest? Why?

Source: V. Perrone, *101 Educational Conversations With Your Sixth Grader*, Chelsea House Publishers.

Helping Students Learn[®]

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Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas parents can use to help students
do well in school*

Belle Chasse Academy



THE
PARENT
INSTITUTE

November 2019

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Ask your child to explain a homework assignment to you.
- 2. Have your child play a favorite song. Listen to the lyrics and discuss what you hear.
- 3. Challenge your child to run a 30-yard dash. Time her. Encourage her to keep practicing to improve her time.
- 4. Talk about stereotypes with your child. Discuss why they're unfair.
- 5. Ask your child to tell you about the historical figures he is studying in school.
- 6. Discuss an international news event with your child. How could it affect this country?
- 7. Talk about one of your values. Parents' opinions *do* matter to kids.
- 8. Tell a story about yourself when you were your child's age.
- 9. Go to the library with your child. Each of you check out a book.
- 10. At the grocery store, have your child estimate how many apples are in two pounds. Use the scales to check.
- 11. Let your child help you research a major family purchase. List important features and ask your child to find the best deal.
- 12. Talk to your child about bullying. Has she ever been bullied at school? Online? Has she ever bullied someone?
- 13. Ask your child to think of several places where he would like to volunteer. Have him call to ask for information from each.
- 14. Help your child use small chunks of time to study or review.
- 15. Ask your child how she decides who her friends will be.
- 16. Make today a device-free day. Put your child in charge of thinking of alternate activities.
- 17. Give your child some graph paper to use in math class. It helps students keep columns of numbers neat.
- 18. Learn a tongue twister. At dinner, challenge everyone to repeat it three times fast.
- 19. Does your child use Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram? Discuss appropriate social media use. Monitor your child's posts often.
- 20. Review what your child should do in case of a fire in your home.
- 21. Together, list ideas for a delicious new flavor of ice cream.
- 22. Talk with your child about how each of you could improve your listening skills.
- 23. Play a memory game with your child. Try to remember the things you each did the day before yesterday.
- 24. Have your child spend 10 minutes at night preparing for the next day.
- 25. Choose a movie based on a book. Read the book as a family, then watch the film.
- 26. Establish times when texting is not allowed, such as during meals.
- 27. Ask your child what he thinks high school will be like.
- 28. Give your child a newspaper article. Have her circle all the adjectives.
- 29. Encourage your child to make daily to-do lists. When he completes each item, he should check it off.
- 30. Avoid power struggles with your middle schooler. Too much parental control can cause rebellion.

Helping Students Learn
MIDDLE SCHOOL
Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

Belle Chasse Academy
Jane Dye, School Leader

SHORT NOTES

Excellent attendance

Being in school every day means your child won't miss out on learning. Try to schedule appointments and family trips outside of school hours. If he asks to stay home "just because," remind him of what he'll miss, such as his reading group or PE class. Explain that he can be absent only if he's sick or if there's a family emergency.

DID YOU KNOW?

Children who regularly eat meals with their families tend to do better in school and avoid risky behavior. Eating dinner together is great, but other meals count, too. If you work at night, maybe you could make time for a family breakfast. Or on a weekend, try a picnic lunch.

Celebrate progress

Suggest that your youngster create a fun reminder of all the things she has accomplished. Let her cover a box with construction paper and label it "I did it!" Then, she can write each success ("I learned to add fractions") on a slip of paper and put it in the box. If she's feeling discouraged, have her read the slips.

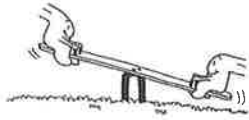
Worth quoting

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up!"
Mark Twain

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Can a kangaroo jump higher than the Empire State Building?

A: Of course. The Empire State Building can't jump!



Conversations about school

When you think of parent involvement, do you picture moms and dads volunteering in classrooms? That's one way to help—but research shows that supporting your child's education at home is even more important. Here are conversation starters that will help you stay involved.

"Let's see what you brought home."

Look at completed work to find out what your youngster is learning and how well she's doing. You could comment on her math work or social studies project, for instance. ("You know a lot about our state's history!") Also, respond to notes from her teacher, and sign her weekly folder or daily planner if required.

"Show me what you have for homework."

It's your child's job to do her homework, but you play a role, too. Make sure she knows what she's supposed to do by having her explain the assignments to you. After she finishes her homework, glance over the work to see that it's complete.

"Describe a book you enjoyed today."

This gives you an idea of what your youngster prefers to read. Then, build a daily reading habit by asking what she'd like to read tonight. Encourage her reading and listening skills by reading aloud to her and letting her read to you.

"Tell me what you learned that you'd like to know more about."

Use her interests as jumping-off points for activities to share. If she likes geometry, you might hunt for

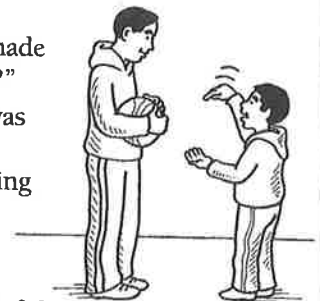


shapes together. If she's fascinated by how animals adapt to winter, take her to the library to research the subject or to the zoo to see live animals. ♥

After-school questions

Asking "How was school today?" might not get you far. Instead, ask questions like these for a better picture of your youngster's day:

- "What's the coolest thing that happened today?"
- "Pretend you're the teacher. How would you describe the day?"
- "What made you laugh?"
- "What was the most creative thing you did?"
- "How were you kind or helpful today? How was someone kind or helpful to you?" ♥



What does respect look like?

Your youngster's daily dealings with adults and kids alike will be more pleasant if he speaks and acts respectfully. Try these tips for helping him learn about respect.

Respectful replies. Think about something that you and your youngster disagree on (say, whether his video game time should be limited). Model having a respectful discussion about it. You might say that his brain and body are growing and that he needs to run and play to stay healthy. Then, suggest a respectful response, such



as, "I want to be healthy, but I love video games." Have him brainstorm other situations where people have different opinions but still speak to each other with respect.

Everyday acts. When you mow the lawn or clean up after your dog, you can teach your child about respect for neighbors. Explain that keeping your

neighborhood clean and neat makes it nice for everyone. Ask him to think of other respectful things neighbors should do. If you share an apartment laundry room, he might say that you respect neighbors' time by removing your clothes when they're done so others get to use the washers and dryers.♥

A reading challenge

By reading more complex books, your child can learn new words, facts, and ideas. He'll also be exposed to more complicated plots and will grow as a reader. Share these suggestions:

- Knowing something about the topic or setting makes a tougher book easier to comprehend. If your youngster is reading a novel set in China, he could talk to someone who has been there or look up the country online (try a children's site like *kids.nationalgeographic.com*).



- Encourage your child to look at a simpler book on the same subject. A picture-book biography about Harriet Tubman may help your youngster better understand a textbook chapter on the civil rights movement, for instance.

- Suggest that your child read complicated material with pencil and paper in hand. He can jot down questions, words to look up, or facts he wants to learn more about.♥



Strong study habits

Q: My third grader has to spend more time studying this year. How can I make sure she studies effectively?

A: Set your daughter up for success by helping her find a distraction-free study spot. Also, have her come up with a study routine. For instance, she could reserve time each evening to review her textbook and notes in the days leading up to a test.

Also, many students find it helpful to jot down a purpose each time they study. Your child might write: "I will learn the definitions of all the boldfaced words in chapter 7, section 1."

Finally, encourage her to experiment with study strategies to find what works best. She could close her eyes and imagine how a word is spelled or draw a grid with 9 squares to solve 3 x 3. Or she might find it helpful to spell or recite math facts aloud in rhythm or to a familiar tune.♥



Talking to kids about money

My children were always asking to buy things like dress-up shoes or new games. They didn't seem to understand that these items weren't in our budget.

I wanted them to learn about how we spend our money—and that it is limited. So I got a spiral notebook and labeled it "Family Spending Journal." I explained that for two weeks, everyone would keep a record of what they spent money on. I listed items like my

subway fare, the electric bill, and food at the grocery store. The children wrote down expenses such as school lunch, soccer cleats, and field trip fees.

After a few days, they were surprised by how many things we needed money for. Our kids had no idea, for example, that we paid for taxes on our income, several types of insurance, and membership in our homeowners' association. Sometimes they still ask to buy too many things at the store, but when I say no, at least they understand why.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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