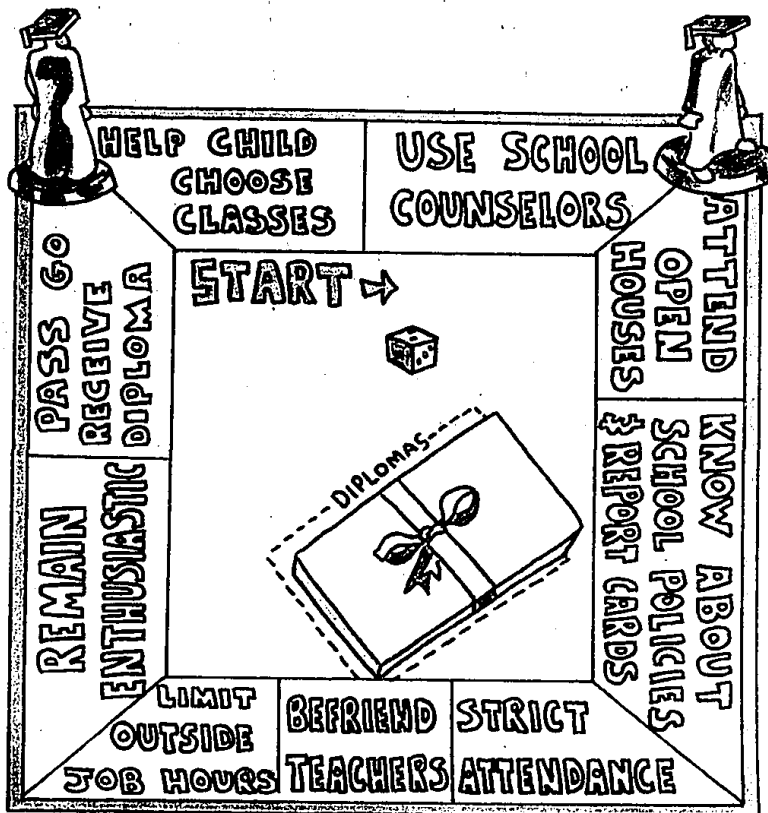


How to help your child succeed in high school without becoming PTA president



Editor's note: Mary Brown, who has taught high school classes for the past 15 years, experiences a perennial eagerness to "start fresh" every September. With the belief that many students and parents feel the same way, she passes along suggestions that can be used to guide students through the next year of school.

By Mary Brown
special writer

It's hard to believe that within a week we'll be trading watermelons for pumpkins and lemonade for cider. Beach bags will surrender to shiny new lunch buckets, and mothers no longer will have to cope with the plaintive wails of "What can we do now?"

Instead, parental thoughts will turn to the beginning of the school year, and their concerns will veer away from subjects like water safety and toward issues like academic achievement. Somehow, knowing how to help your child succeed in elementary school wasn't too difficult. Everyone knew that insistence on regularly scheduled homework time, conscientious attendance at parent-teacher conferences, and occasional stints as room mother were all helpful strategies.

It's not so easy once the child reaches high school, however. Teen-agers tend to respond in monosyllables when asked about school, and many a parent has accepted the assurances of his child only to be shocked and disappointed when a mediocre or downright horrible report card appears.

Coming up, therefore, are a number of ideas the concerned parent can use to help his youngster really benefit from the high school experience. The suggestions are easy to follow and not especially time-consuming and may help any parent to guide his child in making the most of those crucial high school years.

EXAMINE THE CURRICULUM

A majority of high schools offer at least some flexibility in the courses a student may choose. The wide variety can be enriching, but also very confusing to student and parent alike.

Would Shakespeare or Current History be the best choice? What's the difference between Reading Techniques and Reading Skills?

A curriculum guide lists courses and gives an explanation of the course content and prerequisites and usually is easily attainable.

Read course descriptions carefully; titles can be confusing. A course in

American Culture, for example, may sound like a humanities course, but may really be a course for slow learners which explores pop culture.

Try to determine the difficulty of the course, so that your child is placed according to his abilities. Discuss your child's goals and plan a program with the whole curriculum in mind.

UTILIZE COUNSELORS

A 10-minute phone call once a semester to your child's counselor can provide you with answers to some very important questions.

For instance, what college entrance tests will be given in the following months? What are the graduation requirements for this particular high school? How should PSAT scores be interpreted? How will your child's grades as a freshman and sophomore affect his college admissions applications? Which teachers are especially good in a particular area?

In addition, many counseling departments regularly publish helpful newsletters which bear careful reading.

ATTEND OPEN HOUSE

This one seems obvious, but it's surprising how many parents don't take those one or two evenings each fall or

spring to investigate the world their children inhabit 160 days a year.

Your attendance at open house says to do care. Even mediocre students are pleased that their parents are interested in their lives, and most are eager to hear their parents' impressions of their teachers.

It's fun to compare notes about Mr. Johnson's pendulous ear lobes or Mrs. Jones' nervous twitch, but, more importantly, attending open house gives you a better idea of what's going on during those hours your child is away at school. You find out precisely what your child is studying and meet the persons who influence him each day.

Knowing your child's teacher also gives you an advantage should there be a problem. You've already met each other on neutral ground, and this former pleasant introduction will help in any more tense situation.

BE AWARE OF POLICIES

The scam is familiar to any high school teacher. Progress reports and report cards are mailed home but are never seen by parental eyes because enterprising teens have removed them from the mailbox long before parents arrive home.

Know in advance when report cards are distributed, when mid-marking reports are mailed home, and watch for them. If you do get a communication, always call immediately. Prolonged hesitation may mean that it's too late in the marking period to remedy the problem.

And if your halter-clad 15-year old sets off for school barefoot, know what to say.

Be aware of dress codes, procedures for dropping and adding classes, and disciplinary approaches, before the fact. Most school rules are clearly outlined in materials sent to the parent before school opens each fall.

Take 10 minutes to go over them with your teen. It will be time well spent.

BE STRICT ABOUT ATTENDANCE

It's a wonderfully bright, blustery weekend in early January, and the slopes of Upper Michigan beckon invitingly in your imagination. But, answering their call involves taking an extra day on the weekend.

There's nothing innately wrong with missing school one Friday because the family is going up north for a mini-holiday, but frequent absences for similar reasons lead to a very casual attitude about attendance.

Be somewhat sticky about allowing your child to be absent for non-medical reasons. Accumulated absences mean missed lectures and assignments, and school quickly plummets on the list of priorities for the young socialite.

Hours which are not spent in class are spent elsewhere, away from adult supervision and outside of your knowledge. In general, become familiar with school attendance requirements and follow them to the letter.

LEARN TO DEAL SUCCESSFULLY WITH TEACHERS

The days of the straight-laced school marm, complete with glasses and graying bun, are long dead. Today's teachers range from rather hip ex-Earth children to conservative business types.

It's really best to approach your child's teacher as the qualified, competent professional he is, rather than as an infallible god or highly paid baby sitter. The large majority of teachers are reasonable human beings who truly have your child's best interests at heart.

When you have a question or complaint to voice to an instructor, a threat to call the school board usually won't work; most teachers won't be the slightest bit intimidated and simply will regard you as a crackpot.

Also, don't automatically regard your child's version of an incident as necessarily accurate in all regards. Ad-

olescents are renowned for tunnel vision. Ask, instead, for the teacher to explain his grading criteria before you challenge a grade; request that he describe a disturbing incident in full before you point an accusing, defensive finger.

Almost always you'll find that you and the teacher are closer than you think in your standards and goals.

If, on the other hand, after several incidents you're beginning to feel that your child's teacher is indeed incompetent or unfair, don't be too hesitant about discussing the problem with a department chairman or administrator.

School principals want happy parents, and the adage about the squeaky wheel is as true in education as elsewhere.

Before seeing or phoning an administrator, however, accumulate data care-

Please turn to Page 4

Ward Presbyterian opens new branch here

A steering committee from Ward Presbyterian Church hosts open house at 3 p.m. Sunday in Grace Chapel, William Tyndale College, 12 Mile and Drake roads, to introduce visitors to the beginnings of a new branch of the Livonia-based church.

Because the church has now reached a membership of 4,200, planning and organizing the opening of a branch for those living in suburbs north of Livonia began late in 1982.

The first service scheduled in Grace Chapel is set for Sunday, Oct. 2. The church's pastor will be the Rev. Douglas Klein.

This will be the second branch

opened by Ward. Four years ago Trinity Presbyterian Church opened for those in the Plymouth-Ann Arbor area and now has a congregation of about 400 members.

A nucleus of 80 members is committed to transplanting the church life they have enjoyed in Ward to their new temporary location here.

They will use the 300-seat chapel, the classrooms and parking space at the college until the congregation grows sufficiently to purchase land to start a building program.

Dr. Bartlett Hess is senior pastor at Ward Church, located at Six Mile and Farmington Road.

Holy Cross parish opens its new church Sept. 11

Thyranoxia, the opening day ceremonies for Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in Farmington Hills, will be celebrated Sunday, Sept. 11, with splendor, pageantry, praise and thanksgiving.

The parish's permanent church, at 25225 Middlebelt, was 14 years in the planning.

His Excellency Bishop Timothy of Detroit will officiate at the 10:30 a.m. Sunday services assisted by Father S.J. Anthony, parish priest of Holy Cross.

The Orthodox, or morning prayer service, will be celebrated in the temporary church; then altar boys with processional banners, candles, exaptyrha and the Cross, the choir, the clergy and the congregation will proceed to the en-

trance of the new church.

Before entering the new church, the services of Agiasmos (holy water) will be read and the doors of the new church blessed. The ribbon will be cut, the doors will be opened and the procession will enter the new church as the choir chants the Doxology.

About 500 are expected to celebrate the first Divine Liturgy in the new church and the opening day luncheon.

The first vesper in the new church will be celebrated on the eve of the Feast of Holy Cross, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 13.

The Feast of the Elevation of Holy Cross begins at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 14.

Vogelheim takes blue ribbon

Donna Vogelheim, a Farmington Hills resident and member of Farmington Artists Club, took the blue ribbon in the watercolor division of the fine arts competition sponsored by Michigan State Fair.

Five judges chose "Harbor Springs Dock" as the first-place winner, which was announced during the opening reception of the fair's arts exhibition.

Watercolor is the artist's forte. She paints realism characterized by contrasting rich color.

Vogelheim was trained as a biologist, and her early interest in biology is reflected in the organic subject matter of her paintings.

Since returning to painting she has amassed a host of awards. Most recently her paintings have been accepted in the 1983 Salamungundi Club Exhibition, New York's oldest artists club.

She was commissioned to do the painting for the 1983 "April in Paris" charity ball, given annually to benefit the Lycee International, and co-sponsored by Southfield Commission for the Arts. At that event, a lithograph of the original painting was given to each of the 750 guests.

Currently her work can be viewed in the Rental Gallery of the Detroit Institute of Arts, Art Alcove, 33305 Grand River, and Pictures Galore & More on the southwest corner of Grand River and Farmington Road.

