

Issue # 5- February 2005

In this month's *Successful Child*:

February Issue

- ***Mind Your Manners***-The importance of good manners.
- ***It's Not Black History, It's Everyone's History***-Let's celebrate history.
- ***Ways to Show Your Kids You Love Them!***-Celebrate Valentine's

Declining Manners by Jacquie McTaggart

PLEASE answer the following questions honestly. (Go ahead – you won't be graded.)

Does your child...

- Greet you with something other than a grunt in the morning?
- Use the word “*PLEASE*” when he asks you to purchase a \$90 pair of designer jeans?
- Say “*THANKS*” when you take his forgotten homework assignment to school?
- Utter “*EXCUSE ME*” after he accidentally knocks you down on his way to the phone?
- Write Grandma a thank-you letter for the DVD she sent in the mail?

Chances are pretty good that a few of you answered, “yes” to some of these questions. Chances are even better that many of you answered, “no” to most of them.

During my lengthy career (forty-two years) in the classroom I observed a drastic decline in what we call “Good Manners.” I have no answers (or theories) as to why this has occurred, but it has. I believe that we must make an attempt to correct the situation.

Good manners are the cornerstone of courteous behavior. They provide the impetus to say the words and exhibit the behaviors that distinguish us humans from the rest of the animal kingdom. Good manners show consideration for others.

Good manners demand that intentional sounds of physical relief such as belching and “fluffing” are saved for non-public areas. (You male readers may call “fluffing” by another name, but I'm sure you get the idea.) Good manners encompass all the things that make the people around us feel good. They compel us to eliminate words, sounds, and actions that cause others in our presence to feel uncomfortable. In essence, they enable us to be an accepted member of a civilized society.

Good manners are not automatically *caught*, they must be *taught*. A child or adolescent does not magically discover on his own the fact that common decency and politeness help to make him a more socially acceptable person. Neither does he understand that those attributes will ultimately contribute to his success, and help to make him a happier individual. It's up to us to teach our children these concepts.

How do we do that? Good manners, like most values, must be demonstrated and lived *in the home* if they are to become a permanent part of the child's character. The school should not be expected to bear the primary responsibility for teaching good manners. Seven hours a day for nine months of the year is not an adequate amount of time to instill a lasting principle or a moral value. (In one year, the average kid spends 1,253 hours in school and 7,507 hours out of school.) Teachers can force compliance (“Tell Jimmy you're sorry”), but they can't make good manners and common decency an automatic, knee-jerk response. Parents can.

How? Parents need to *demonstrate* good manners in the home – day in and day out. Kids hear messages that are delivered by lecture – “You should . . .” They internalize that which they observe. Parents must “practice what they preach,” if they want the value of good manners to become a part of the child’s moral fiber. And they should begin this process when the child is very young.

Politeness and good manners open the door to a successful and happy adult life. We need to give our kids the legs that will enable them to walk through that door.

“Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

by Jacquie McTaggart

*In 2001, Jacquie McTaggart retired from a 42-year teaching career and began to write about her passion - kids and learning. Several of her articles have been published in national magazines and on the Internet. She also writes weekly columns on education for two daily newspapers. You can find her online at **The Teacher's Desk**.*

It's Not Black History, It's Everyone's History

Every February, we celebrate Black History Month. A month dedicated to the accomplishments of African Americans throughout history. African Americans have made huge contributions to the American society. Do you know how many African American inventors are not given recognition for their inventions?

- Did you know that Elijah McCoy invented an oil-dripping cup for trains? The term “Real McCoy” is based on his name.
- Did you know that Granville T. Woods invented a train-to-station communication system
- Did you know that Madam C. J. Walker invented a hair-growing lotion and was the first female African American millionaire
- Did you know that Garrett Morgan invented the gas mask?
- Did you know that George Washington Carver invented peanut butter and 400 plant products!
- Did you know that J.W. Winters invented the fire escape ladder

So the next time, your using your stove, rolling pin, pencil sharpener, keychain, refrigerator, ironing board, ice cream scooper, hair brush, guitar, elevator, egg beater, dust pan, clothes dryer, cellular phone, folding chair, fountain pen, golf tee, or lawn mower, just know that it was an African American who invented it.

Test your knowledge of Black History and also read biographies of significant African Americans: http://www.gale.com/free_resources/bhm/

Ten Ways to Show Your Child Love

1. Write a love note and put it in your child's backpack or lunch bag.
2. Write a poem about your child, highlighting all his/her strengths, gifts and talents.
3. Listen to your child without interrupting, criticizing or chastising.
4. Do something new with your child: paint, dance, yoga, etc.
5. Register a star in your child's name. For more information visit:
<http://www.starregistry.com/>
6. Dedicate a song to your child. Go here for details:
<http://www.pugmarks.com/valentine/dedicate.htm>
7. Dream with your child. Encourage your child to dream the impossible.
8. Create a collage of your child's favorite things.
9. Hug and kiss your child unexpectedly.
10. Laugh with your child. Tell a joke, watch a funny movie, read funny stories or comics.

COPYRIGHT © 2004 SMART BEE COACHING, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

