

Issue # 2- October 2004

Access your files, email and important stuff from anywhere.



In this month's *Successful Child*:

- "I Deserve A Break" Contest
- Making the Most of School Tours
- Stop, Look & Listen-Parent/Teacher Conferences

Deals!!!

Great books, great prices! BookCloseouts.com offers 5 million NEW books at blowout prices, many under \$5.00 with a 100% satisfaction guarantee. Go to **BookCloseouts.com**.

Fall Promo: Get \$5.00 off any order \$35.00 or more.

Coupon Code: fall-promo

Coupon Password: bookcloseouts

Expires: Dec 31, 2004

Would you like your child to learn how to play chess for \$5.00? Order Chess 7000 and get chess tips for your child from International Master Josh Waitzkin. Get this cd and many others for just \$5.00! **\$5.00 Dollars Software.com**

Freebies!!

Calling All Working Mothers! A **free** online course for working mothers- Life Can Be Easier! This course is perfect for working mothers because it's free and it's convenient. You can take the course at your leisure from your computer. **Access the course here**.

Free Barnes & Noble Online Course

How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day. **Click here for details**.

Recommendations

Are you looking for a way to get your child in middle school or high school to excel in Math or Science?

With the Right Tools, Your Son or Daughter Will Succeeding Math and Science Classes
If you're serious about helping your son or daughter succeed in grades 7-12 math or science classes, Successful Child recommends Awesome Grades in Math and Science by Anita Delmar, B.Sc., B.Ed.

This program gives students dozens of powerful tools that guide them to math and science success, step-by-step. It's easy to use, effective, and very motivating. Want to find out more? Click [Here!](#)

There is a great book on helping your child raise their grades and standardized test scores. Visit this site if you would like to find strategies to help your child improve their grades!

Learning vs. Testing

Now, you can access school information from home on the web. [School Notes.com](#) makes it easy for parents to stay in touch with teachers. If your child's school or class is not listed, suggest it to the teacher. It's free for both educators and parents.

Making The Most of School Tours

Choosing the right school for your child is a very big decision. School tours are the best way to find out more about the school. The only way to make an informed decision is to visit the school. Before you take your next school tour, you want to make sure that you are well prepared and have carefully examined all the facts about the school you and your child are choosing.

Successful Child provides you with a checklist of questions and things to observe on your next school tour.

Preschool/Kindergarten

What is the school's philosophy?

Does the school's philosophy match your philosophy on learning?

What is the ratio of teachers to students?

How many teachers' aides are in a class? What is the maximum number of students per class?

How is the day structured? What is the daily schedule?

How much time is spent on independent play vs. group activities?

How is the curriculum developed?

Is the curriculum built around "play"? Are the children provided a structured learning experience?

How receptive is the staff and administration? When you called the school to make an appointment or to ask questions, was the staff polite and receptive?

Are the teachers attentive and responsive?

Observe how teachers speak to the children. Pay attention to their tone and body language.

How are discipline issues handled?

How do teachers intervene when a problem arises?

Are the children encouraged to play or does the school function as a mini college?

This is important for those parents who prefer a more academic setting for their little ones.

Is nap time suggested or enforced?

How clean is the play area? Are the toys and blocks dirty? Ask the teacher or Director of the school how often toys and books are cleaned.

Does the school have a "community" feeling?
Would your child feel comfortable in this setting?
Chances are, if you don't feel comfortable in a school, your child may not feel comfortable too.
Does the school support parental involvement?
Does the school embrace cultural diversity?
Are parents welcome to be part of their child's experience?
What is the turn-over rate of teachers?
How long has the Director been involved with the school?
Does the Director have any short or long term plans for the school?
If it is a private school, does the school offer scholarships?
Does the school offer extended hours for working parents?
Does the school have its own playground? Is the playground equipment stable?
Does the school have an Emergency Evacuation Plan? Is this plan given to parents?

Is your little one ready for Kindergarten? **Take this readiness test to find out!**

Elementary/Middle/High School

What is the school's philosophy?
What is the school's code of conduct?
Does the school offer conflict resolution?
What are the guidelines for suspension and expulsion?
Does the school have a strict dress code?
How do the students interact with the teachers?
Does the school have a diverse student population?
Does the school have an accelerated or gifted program?
What is the criteria for having your child tested or admitted into a gifted program?
What is the average class size?
Does the school have reduced class size? (Are the reduced class size only for particular programs?)
Does the school offer an integrated curriculum with full inclusion of all learners?
What are the school's academic standards?
How are the school's test scores?
Do the scores fluctuate or have they been steadily improving or declining?
How does the school prepare its students for higher education?
What programs are offered in the school?
Does the school support English Language Learners?
How long has the administration been in the school?
Does the school provide teachers with professional development?
Does the school have a strong PTA?
Is there an afterschool program?
Does the school have an Emergency Evacuation Plan? Is this plan given to parents?
Does the school have a website?

Be sure to bring a pen and notepad. Ask if you can follow-up with a current parent to get their perspective on the school.

Check out your state's Department of Education site at [Learning with Success](#).

You can get a Preschool Director/Teacher Interview form [here](#). Get more information for middle school and high school from [Mapping Your Future](#).

For college video tours, check out: [Collegiate Choice Walking Video Tours](#).

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Check out this great article by JacquieMcTaggart.

The parent-teacher conference is when partners with a common interest and shared goals meet. Oftentimes two members of the partnership are, or have been, at odds with each other - such as in divorce, separation, or some other form of estrangement. There is no one pat "rule" that fits every situation, but there are a few guidelines that I hope will be beneficial.

IF both natural parents can be in a small confined area for 20 minutes and refrain from arguing or assigning blame, that is the preferable scenario. Both get to hear the same information and each has the opportunity to contribute. For obvious reasons, it is best to leave the stepparent or "significant other" at home when both natural parents attend a conference simultaneously.

In some cases, divorced or estranged parents attending the conference together simply won't work due to unresolved hostilities. The solution to that situation is really quite simple. All the non-custodial parent needs do is call the office at his child's attendance center and request a separate conference time. The teacher will be eager to visit with the non-custodial parent, to answer any questions he (or she) might have, and to consider thoughtfully any suggestions that parent might offer. Teachers understand that both parents are interested in their child, and therefore they want input from both.

Before leaving this topic, I have one more suggestion for BOTH parents of a disintegrated relationship. The parent-teacher conference is not an appropriate time to assign blame or to seek information about an ex-partner. The teacher ethically cannot respond to negative statements or questions involving anyone other than the student for whom the conference is being held. In short, both parents of a disintegrated relationship need to remember that they are attending the conference to discuss the welfare of their child, and nothing else.

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](#).