

## The Common Cry of Parents ... Help!

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**Head of the Middle School**

Just two weeks into the school year, we already begin to see emerging social and academic behavioral trends in our students, individually and as groups. As parents, we often receive the brunt of the emotional response of our children from their experiences at school. It is not uncommon to witness significant mood swings one day to the next as they navigate the increasingly more complex dilemmas of pre-adolescent and adolescent life. It is also not uncommon to feel as if we don't have the answers as parents.

Recently, at Back to School Night, the sixth grade team discussed Jim Schleicher's *Ten Commandments of Parenting* that were presented to the Parents Council of Nashville in the Fall of 2006. They provided such good advice I wanted to share them with our entire community. The commandments follow Schleicher's abbreviated notes.

- **Slow down and be present** - ...we are prone to busyness and over-scheduling. Our children lack our full presence and therefore they are lacking security and focus. Make time to be present.
- **Let your child go to school** - Let your children have the experience and responsibility of school. They need to get their work done on their own and be responsible for gathering the information from the teacher. Parents need to guide their children but not do the work for them or fix their situations.
- **Let your child have a bad teacher** - In life we will have many people we do not "gel" with. Parents today have a tendency to try to make everything "right" for their children. There is an increase of a form of depression called "learned helplessness" because of this parental over involvement.
- **Teach your children to lose** - We should train our children to do their best, to be content with their successes and compliant with their losses. Ability to lose correlates with a capacity for empathy.
- **Stay curious** - In our task oriented society we tend to be more about getting it done rather than what are we doing and why are we doing it ... focus on the learning.
- **Model respect and insist on it** - Our job as parents is to model respect in our homes. We give the best example of this by the way we treat our spouses and each other. We must hold our children to a high standard of respect in the way they treat parents and siblings.
- **Stay in the adult world** - Our marriages often get the crumbs of our energy. We spend so much time and energy on our children's scheduling and functions that

we neglect the greatest security we can give them by having a healthy, happy marriage.

- **Own your own home** - A child's bedroom is not "his room." His room is a room in your house. It is important for us to teach our children to keep up the space that we have allotted to them and to make a contribution to the upkeep of the household.
- **Give less** - Children are lacking enthusiasm about getting out into the world and on their own because they see no excitement about becoming an adult. Much of this is due to the fact that parents have indulged them. They have done it all and have little to look forward to or to aim for. Even if you are able to provide extravagance for them, leave things to look forward to.
- **Live like a blessed person** - Gratitude greatly displaces anxiety. We need to practice and to teach our children thankfulness and gratitude. Work to find three things each day you are thankful for.

Certainly, these commandments do not cover all the situations we deal with as parents. However, striving to meet their ideals can provide a strong foundation on which to weather the many storms of the middle years. Please know that your child's advisor, the Middle School Dean of Students, and I am always available to discuss your child's Middle School experience.

In service,

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Head of Middle School