

July 2006

Dear Parentteacher:

(Reading time : __ minutes)

Grade Reminder—*If you have already sent final grades, there is no need to call.* The target date for sending in end-of-year grade reports was June 30. Typically, the first semester runs from the beginning of the school year until Christmas break. The second semester then follows till the end of the school year, typically in May or June. Note that we use a “target date” rather than a “deadline” in order to allow flexibility and accommodate the various schedules of home educators. Some parents begin their new school year early in the summer in order to get a head start, making provision for unexpected breaks or allowing them to finish early. Others begin around Labor Day and may even extend their school year through the summer. Either way, it is about time to send in your grade reports (if you have not already done so). This notice does not imply that we have not received your grades. It is being sent to all families.

Pull from your files the Grade/Attendance forms and add Semester 2 and Final grades as well as days completed, sign and put the ending date for the second semester. Then **fax or mail a copy to Gateway, keeping the original(s) for your files.** (The forms were originally sent with your confirmation of enrollment letter so that semester 1 grades could be recorded.)

Enrollment for 2006-07—To re-enroll a student, it is necessary to send an application *each year*; the time to do this is the *beginning* of each school year. Enclosed in this mailing are applications and initiation form for the 2006-07 school year. Be sure that the applications you send are complete, including educational plan, lest incomplete applications be returned to you. We are offering the early-bird incentive this year. This \$10 reduction per family is for returning families whose 2006-07 applications are received by ~~July 31~~, August 31 2006 and who have submitted final grades for the 05-06 school year.

E-mail Considerations—If you contact us by e-mail, please include a descriptive subject line (for example: "Transcript Request," or "Enrollment Packet Please"). Note: In order to avoid infection by viruses or worms, we do not open e-mail attachments. Also, we do not accept applications or grade forms by e-mail.

Website Update—Check out GatewayChristianSchools.com on the web. Check the Total Home Education page. It includes links to “High School Guidelines” and “High School Course of Study.” The latter includes further links to some great resources for such subjects as foreign language.

Getting-Started Seminars—About once a month we have a free seminar at Gateway entitled, "A Good Start in Home Education." The next will be 10 a.m. till noon on **Saturday, August 26, 2006.** It will include:

- The importance of a right foundation
- Turning the hearts of the children
- Minimizing frustration & discouragement
- Working with learning styles
- Curriculum as a tool—not a tyrant
- The importance of wise counsel
- Lifestyle of learning
- Questions & Answers

About four times a year we also have a free supplemental seminar entitled, "**Teaching High School at Home.**" The next will be held on a Saturday this September. Check www.GatewayChristianSchools.com for more information and directions. This seminar will include:

- High School credits
- Resources for challenging courses
- Foreign languages
- How to prepare for college
- Advanced math courses
- Questions & Answers

From the Heart—Daily Habits for Learning

Today is the first day of the rest of your life; by the time it is over, it will be a new today. How shall we then learn? Although children often demonstrate remarkable short-term memory, the

passage of time proves that they are particularly prone to confusion, misunderstanding, and getting things mixed up. Before buying into the mentality that you must cover what the public schools do in a given grade-level year, apply the **test of parental judgment** to your *own* education. How much of what you learned in school do you no longer know? Some parents estimate the loss at 70%. Others put it at greater than 90%. If education by the traditional approach results in such phenomenal loss, perhaps we should we look how the schools do things — and try something different. If confusion or "mixed-up-ed-ness" is the biggest devourer of real learning, then what is taught should not be presented too soon, too fast, too much. In the education of a child, success is not determined by whether you have "covered" the curriculum. Education is a matter of the heart. In a child's education, if every day is a bad day, the result is frustration and discouragement, and the ultimate end is failure. Daily you are either succeeding or failing (although everyone has a bad day from time to time). If today a student fails at a certain learning endeavor, yet comes back tomorrow even more motivated, he can still be on the road to success. Confidence is a sign of being on the right track. Frustration, overwhelmed-ness, and discouragement are symptoms of failure.

Educational metabolism is the net result of two opposing processes: building up a body of knowledge and erosion of what had previously been learned. Each passing day either increases or diminishes the substance of one's education. Consider spelling or vocabulary lists: A student who learns 20 words per week in a school year will boost his vocabulary by 720 words, *if he retains them*. Learning is only half of the equation. The other half is to minimize or eliminate loss. To realize a net gain requires not forgetting what has been previously learned.

In learning, try the buddy-system. Instead of isolated facts and factoids, knowledge learned in context provides opportunity for individual elements to be connected like arctic explorers strung together by a rope so that if one falls into a crevasse, the others can pull him out. The other day, after watching a soccer game, my son informed me that the Spanish word for a yellow card was *amonestación*. What is the likelihood that I would retain this lone bit of knowledge? Although its context was more hopeful than a school vocabulary list, I think you'll admit the prognosis is bleak. However, recalling that Spanish is a Romance language, and that nearly 80% of Spanish words are derived from Latin, I thought it entirely possible that this word would have English cognates. In fact, the word is related to our words admonish and admonition. Once I realized this, the dictionary revealed that its Latin root, *monere*, (meaning to remind or to warn) gave rise to such English words as monitor, monument, premonition, and summon. Having established a connection between these words, there is hope that when one falls into the inevitable crevasse it can be recovered by its connection with its fellows. Application and context are keys to lasting learning.

Consider addition facts—commonly introduced to students in one megadose—the student is expected to memorize this apparently random set of facts and often continues to struggle for several years. Because number sense is the goal, try an alternate approach: teach a child to add one to any number; later teach him to add two to any number, then to count by even numbers and later by odd numbers. Another time, teach him to add ten to any number, then, perhaps count by tens. Later, teach combinations that make ten, continuing with application and use of numbers until the student becomes skilled and confident. To instill conceptual understanding of math, try using games, dominos, dice or other manipulatives whenever possible *before* using symbols and equations. Likewise, multiplication facts should not be dumped on a student all at once. Similarly, the standard approach of cramming all the content of Algebra I into one year pushes most students into a mode of memorization rather than one of understanding so that the content is not retained or applied. The common method of "study," forcing the mind to memorize factoids and definitions for a test does not mean that one can think or apply what is supposedly learned. Tests which prove that certain material has been learned can be quite misleading. If the student

"knows" for the test, but forgets a few weeks later, has anything really been learned? Do not habitually inundate your learner with irrelevant information. Avoid the in-over-your-head state of mind.

As a teacher or tutor, you can daily present knowledge to a student; you can point out the error in any incorrect thinking, but the most important thing is to consider the *habits* of a student's thinking. Habit might cause a music student to play a C major chord instead of A minor chord even though he knows the difference. It is possible for a student who has been taught phonics to develop the habit of guessing at new words instead of systematically sounding them out. Mental habits can be troublesome although they are not immediately obvious. Try to discern what your child is thinking. One student, when asked whether addition required counting on her fingers, quickly crossed her arms to hide the guilty. (In such a case, the use of math manipulatives might facilitate the replacement of one mental habit with a better one.) Coach your child in the art of daily learning. Cultivate the habit of standing in awe at the Lord's creation. Set an example, teaching your child as you learn.

Learning every day,

Greg Stablein