

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Navigating Island Parenting: Success Is Not Predetermined

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Success is not predetermined. It is earned through hard work and determination. This is true in every avenue of life including academics.

As I approached my son's class I felt a bump, lunged forward, and regained my balance. There standing next to me was a parent, apparently out of breath. She later revealed that she had made a "mad dash" in an effort to catch up with me. She blurted, "So how did your son do on his report card?"

I gave her what my son likes to refer to as Paddington Bear's hard stare. I was quite astonished. My thought, "Did this woman actually run all this way to ask how my son did on his report card?" My response, "I don't know we haven't collected his report card as yet." She then went on to give the details on how brilliant her daughter was and that she had received high scores in reading readiness and math concepts. Still a bit bewildered, Paddington's Bear's hard stare in place, I asked, "So tell me what her scores on character development were?"

She gasped, almost choked, and responded, "No one pays attention to that section. My child is bright. The teacher said that she is one of the brightest in the class. Why would I waste time and look at the section on character development. I know all I need to know. She isn't going to school to learn character development. She is going to school to learn how to read and write."

Flustered she began searching through her purse for her phone, almost certain that she had heard a text coming through that she needed to respond to, and then without a farewell she was off. There was another parent within earshot, who smiled and said, "I wish I had given her the same response that you did."

I chose to share this story as there are many parents who think that how their children perform academically is the cornerstone or Holy Grail of excellence at school or even in life. They think that academic excellence will automatically translate to success in life. As the aforementioned parent said she was not sending her daughter to school to learn character development but rather to excel at the three R's. As a parent should this be your only concern? Aren't you concerned about your child's overall well-being?

Aren't you concerned about his or her behavior for those six or eight hours that he or she is not in your care? Aren't you concerned about your child's work habits? Aren't you concerned about your child's social traits? Aren't you concerned about your child's personal traits? Does your child listen while others speak? Does he or she follow directions? Does he or she work well independently? Does he or she put forth his or her best effort? Does he or she respect others? Does he or she accept correction cheerfully? Is he or she quiet when necessary? Does he or she display self-control or self-confidence? Does he or she display a positive attitude? Does he or she obey the rules? Is he or she attentive? Does he or she care for his or her possessions? Does he or she complete his or her work in a reasonable time? Does he or she share? Does he or she show respect for his or her teachers? How does he or she get along with classmates? Aren't these character traits or behaviors important? Don't they give you an idea of the kind of human being that your child is growing into?

I can tell you that I was most proud when I collected my sons' report cards, I was beaming even and when I reported to their aunt, grandmother and friends it wasn't about how well they did academically but rather the fact that they scored well on the character development scale or what was termed as the desirable work habits and traits section of their report card. As a parent this is most important to me and I let their teachers know this.

I don't know how their report cards will be structured throughout their academic journey but I will save these and when I have a conference with their teachers in the future, I will be sure to ask all of the questions that fall on the character development section. I will

want to know about their overall performance or development.

Parents, when our children age, we tend to forget about those desirable traits and work habits, and as I noted before they are replaced by how well our children are doing academically. The concern is getting the grades up to secure the best possible college entrance, or scholarships and this should not be the case. Take a minute and reflect. Have you given thought lately as to whether your child is courteous, shows self-control, responds well to correction, shows respect for authority, shows respect for self, or gets along well with others? Where would he or she fall on the character development spectrum? **Be Kind! Be Courteous! Be Obedient! Be Respectful!**

Before my sons leave for school each morning, I have them repeat the following words, words that they now know by heart, "I am going to be kind, courteous, obedient and respectful!" I can't take credit for this as this is a mantra that I learned by heart. Each morning before my grandmother sent me out the door, I had to repeat those words and I always say that I think that they have made all the difference, and the hope is that one day my sons can say the same. I also remember her telling me every morning after she prayed over me, "Remember Manners Maketh Man!"

Here are some other send offs that I use as well, but the aforementioned is a staple.

- Remember to be helpful!
- Be a good listener!
- Have fun at school and remember to always do your best!
- Let your light shine today! It's beautiful!
- You are so very special!
- Be your own kind of beautiful!
- Make a new friend today they will be blessed by you!
- I believe in you!
- The world needs more leaders. You are one!
- Have the most awesome day!
- You make me proud!
- Smile!
- I love you!

### **Quotes on Character Development**

The essential thing is not knowledge, but character. Joseph Le Conte Character is the real foundation of all worthwhile success. John Hays Hammond Be your character what it will, it will be known, and nobody will take it upon your word. Lord Chesterfield Reputation is for time; character is for eternity. J. B. Gough It is of little traits that the greatest human character is composed. William Winter

### **Encourage Reading**

"If you are looking for another reason to encourage reading, a recent study of 1,890 pairs of identical twins published in the journal Child Development found that the twin with stronger reading skills at age 7 had a higher intelligence scores at age 9. And even more substantial correlation was found between reading skills at age 12 and IQ at age 16."

Source - Parent's Magazine

### **Recommended Reading for Children**

Now We Are Six by A. A. Milne Peter Pan by James M. Barrie Pied Piper of Hamelin by Robert Browning A Child's Introduction to the World – Geography, Cultures and People – From the Grand Canyon to the Great Wall of China by Heather Alexander Illustrated by Meredith Hamilton