What the School May Expect of the Home

Sarah M. Dean, Assistant Principal, The Brearley School, 1914

This article was written in response to the title’s question, posed in 1914 by the Parents League to several of its founding member schools. It is followed by the thoughts of Jane Foley Fried, the school’s current Head, on the home-school partnership.

There are three requisites, it seems to me, that the school may properly expect of the home when a child enters school: the child should be truthful, should have the habit of obedience, and should have good manners.

Integrity of School Work
School should be the chief business of the child during the entire school year, that is from its formal opening until its closing day. The school day should be kept intact except for urgent cause like sickness, and dismissal should not be asked for circus, theatre, etc.; it is bad for the child to feel that the school hours may be treated lightly, and it is very bad for the school, because there is nothing so contagious as requests for dismissal. Study periods, which are carefully planned by the school, should not be disregarded by the parents. It is very common for parents to ask for the early dismissal of a pupil, urging that she will not lose anything as it is only a study period, but one of the duties of the school is to teach the child concentration in studying and how to study, and this lack of consideration of study periods on the part of the parents makes the task of the school more difficult and militates against the proper attitude of the child toward study. The curriculum of the school is carefully planned with a due regard for the development of the child’s mind and the balance of subjects. For instance, this school believes in the value of the study of Geometry, yet there isn’t a year that many parents do not urge us to allow their daughter to give it up.

Home Study
The school may expect of the home that a suitable place and time for home study should be provided, that is, a room where there are no distractions going on, and time which is not too late at night, nor too early in the morning. I speak of this latter for we have more than one student whom we discovered was sleeping with an alarm clock beside her bed and
beginning to study at five o’clock. All the time which the school expects can be given in perfectly normal hours without interfering with exercise or sleeping, and it means that the child is not using the right time, or is studying more than the school intends for her to study, to begin at five A.M. On the other hand, is it too much to expect the parent to see that the child does as much time in preparing home lessons as the school thinks should be given?

**Summer Work**
The school wants co-operation from the home in seeing that required summer work is done. The long vacation is mentally demoralizing if no specific work is accomplished during four months, yet the school is often helpless in requiring summer work because parents object to such work being taken into account in grading the pupils, and do not consider this summer work of sufficient importance to see that it is done. The school believes that possible summer work is of two kinds: 1st, work to help the student maintain her grade in the school, lost through absence or any other cause, and 2nd cultural work, such as reading.

**Loyalty**
There should be no criticism of the school in the presence of the children, either of the teachers or of the course of study. Investigation should be made before criticism is given, as children’s stories are notably untrustworthy about the school as about the home. The rules of the school should be accepted loyalty.

Sarah M. Dean was Assistant Principal at The Brearly School in 1914.