

8 AUG 07

Outline of Talk, by Lourdes Saks
Antonian Parent Association
Meeting, August 6, 2007
Antonian Library
Notes taken by: J. Bulgrin

Lourdes Saks spoke Monday night to the executive meeting of the APA on the general topic of how we can help our children achieve success. Following on the heels of the talk earlier in the day by principal Gilbert Saenz (in fact, Gil gave Lourdes the text of his remarks), she offered some excellent specific examples from her own parenting experience (four children, ages 10 – 17?), combined with her professional observations from over 15 years teaching Spanish to adults (initially in Mexico City) and the past several years working with grade schoolers (St. Luke's Episcopal school).

Although educators are quick to observe that once children hit the high school years (14-16 y.o.), parents are swiftly replaced by their peer group as the leading influencers of their behavior. However, Lourdes suggests, there are still many areas in which we can provide praise, encouragement and support that will keep us relevant in their lives, both academically and spiritually. These goals are not mutually exclusive, and in fact together form the objectives of ACP, according to both speakers today ("one of you in this room will be the class valedictorian", 3 will be Nat'l Merit Scholars" stated Mr. Saenz, if the student will determine to achieve such a goal; however, the "real objective" that underlies measurable academic targets is "to help them get to heaven" (spiritual maturity? Wisdom? All the above...)

Lourdes suggested the following practical contributions parents can make to instill "successful study habits":

1. Appropriate and habitual place for study.
2. Appropriate and habitual TIME for study. Set min. time needed for study
3. Avoiding noise and distractions (no iPods, CDs, radio, IM). Song lyrics shown to impede study.
4. Good lighting.
5. Accurate information (; don't rely on Internet; Wikipedia is full of errors, etc.)
6. Figure out how your child learns best (visual, audio, writer, tactile, etc.); the more senses employed, the more info is retained.
7. Try to relate current subjects to real life (in memory parlance, using existing "pegs" in the student's memory to "hang" new information on; moving from short-term memory to long term takes technique, repetition.

8. Be aware of dangers of Internet (inappropriate, suggestive pictures on Facebook, MySpace, etc.; sexual predators rampant on such sites, very difficult to police.) If possible, don't have computer, TV in bedrooms; leave in more public space in home.

Finally, Lourdes encouraged us to become good listeners, and to develop helpful attitudes in dealing with the inescapable hardships our offspring will encounter. Value the effort more than the result; review "lessons learned" in daily experiences; put a premium on sticking with activities, even when difficult.

Her examples and stories from her children and own life, in combination with the summarized educator theory, were both heartfelt and practical, I thought. It left me feeling more hopeful that I can make a positive impact on my son's experience at Antonian, even as I must inevitably step back to give him more space and allow him his personal, social, intellectual and even spiritual development.

Maybe even to get him to finish reading through the freshman summer reading list....