

# Miss Katie's Kids Korner

## ... And Do Your Best

by Katie Taylor

Every morning, five days a week, the Ellenville elementary school students hear "... and do your best." But what does that mean? Does it mean that I'm not doing my best and I should be, or that I am but it's not good enough? Or that her best is better than mine? It's all very confusing, and it's meant to be inspirational.

What is your "best"? First, let me tell you what it isn't.

It isn't showing up five minutes late to class without a writing utensil and something to write on. It's amazing to me that your teachers purchase, out of their own pockets, pencils, pens, and paper and then distribute them daily to unprepared students. I can understand sharpened pencils with new erasers for special state testing, but every day? Students need to be held accountable for being prepared for class and that includes writing utensils, paper, and text book. No exceptions, no excuses.

Woody Allen says that 85% of success is just showing up; I say that 87% of success is showing up on time. On time does not just mean sauntering through the door before the second bell. Here's what on time really looks like: being at your desk, homework completed, with pens, paper, and textbook. What if you were having surgery and your doctor showed up for your surgery with dirty fingernails and someone else's medical records? How confident would you feel? Now, be a teacher for a

minute. For the sake of argument, assume your teacher is doing her/his best and has prepared a lesson plan and graded your homework. You straggle in with an attitude, 10 minutes late, and flop into your seat with nothing but the clothes on your back. Believe it or not, this upsets your teacher far beyond the disrespect factor.

Teachers really want you to do your best. Believe it or not, it's really fun for teachers to see you succeed. It may sound lame, but teachers are thrilled when you do well. So your teachers keep trying; just the fact that you did show up on time gives your teachers another chance to make a difference.

Showing up on time and prepared is a good start. The next component of doing one's best is trying. Not to be confused with being THE BEST, because being YOUR best is not always THE best; it might involve failure.

Failing doesn't mean YOU are a failure; it means you failed a particular task, problem or subject. Your failure is also not a reflection on your parents or your teacher's fault: you are responsible for your failures. You know what is expected of you and when you forget to do your homework, or email your friends instead of studying for a test, it's no one's fault but your own. Doing your best implies the fact that you know what needs to be done and doing it.

This is what doing your best does look like:

➤ **Set Small Achievable Goals And Reach Them.** Want to bring your math grade from a D to a C? Then ask your

teacher for extra help and have your parents check your homework. Realize that you are going to make mistakes and correct them. Remember, you are not wrong: you did the problem wrong.

➤ **Know Your Schedule.** Every student is given a lesson plan book. Write down your daily homework assignments; then complete them. Have a term paper due? Make a big calendar and mark the due dates of the notes, first draft etc. Chorus rehearsal and Spanish test on the same day? Find time to study for your test. Make flash cards and look them over in the car and during lunch.

➤ **Help Out At Home.** Everyone should be responsible for cleaning up his/her room, taking dirty dishes to the kitchen, and putting dirty clothes into the hamper.

The essence of doing your best is taking responsibility for your actions. It sounds simple, but it's not easy. Take small steps. Show up on time. Do your homework. Bring paper and a writing utensil. And be kind to your substitute teachers because one of them might be me! ☆

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