

# Student Services Quarterly

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## TKN – True, Kind, Necessary - by Kathy Bailey

The Student Services Department has teamed up with the other faculty and staff to help our students continue to build their understanding of our 10 character traits throughout their experiences at The Benjamin School. We have recently been discussing with the children in the Lower School the importance of asking the following three questions before saying something to or about someone else: “Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?” or TKN. Taking a moment to ask these questions helps people slow down and incorporate the other character traits before they speak. (Sometimes adults need to be reminded to use TKN before they speak, too.) The story below, The Three Sieves, is a great example of how the three questions can be used.

### The Three Sieves

A little boy, one day, ran indoors from school and called out eagerly:  
“Oh, Mother, what do you think of Tom Jones? I have just heard that ---“  
“Wait a minute, my boy. Have you put what you have heard through the three sieves before you tell it to me?”  
“Sieves, Mother!, What do you mean?”  
“Well, the first sieve is called Truth. Is it true?”  
“Well, I don’t know, but Bob Brown said that Charlie told him that Tom ---“  
“That’s very roundabout. What about the second sieve – Kindness. Is it kind?”  
“Kind! No, I can’t say it is kind.”  
“Now the third sieve --- Necessity. Will it go through that? Must you tell this tale?”  
“No, Mother, I need not repeat it.”  
“Well, then, my boy, if it is not

## Making Mistakes – We all do it and that’s just fine

by Danielle Benvenuto

Most adults can remember a grammar school spelling bee in which he or she missed what appeared to be an “easy” word and subsequently was eliminated from the contest. Due to that simple mistake, the correct spelling of that unforgettable word is instilled in our memory to this day. It is from those seemingly small, but significant mistakes that we can often learn the most valuable lesson.

As adults, charged with advising youth, it is imperative that we help them learn that it is okay to make mistakes. We can admit that as adults we all make mistakes from time to time. Some may be small and some a little bit bigger, but in the end, they all are opportunities to learn and grow.

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## Time For Bed ... by Amy Talyor

has never been a more critical statement to learning than it is now. Recent brain research has underscored the importance of sleep to the learning process. What we currently know is that in one of the

phases of sleep, the brain reviews the events and tasks of the day, allowing them to be stored in our long term memory for retrieval (Sousa, 2006).

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necessary, not kind, and perhaps not true, let the story die.”  
(The above story is from *The Children’s Story Garden*, stories collected by a committee of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1920.)

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## Family Dinners

by Susan Poncy

Each October, the Student Services Department encourages Benjamin families to participate in an *Eat Dinner with Your Family Night*. Our hope is to raise parents’ awareness of the enormous benefits associated with eating family dinners on a regular basis. We tie it to our Red Ribbon Week celebration because research shows that children who regularly eat dinner with their families are less likely to use drugs, alcohol, or participate in other risky behaviors.

Dozens of scientific studies have demonstrated the benefits associated with eating together as a family – better behaviors, better health and nutrition, happier children and adults. No benefit, however, compares to the sheer fun of this time shared together and to the wonderful memories that linger long after the children grow up and leave home.

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**TKN continued****Does it have to be all three – true, kind, and necessary?**

It is best if all three questions can be answered with a resounding, “Yes!” However, there are some situations where only two of the three questions need to be answered with a yes. For example, saying something kind and necessary, such as, “Sure it looks nice!” after someone asks if you like their new haircut. Similarly, it’s acceptable to say something unkind if it is true and necessary, such as “When you are

around that group of kids you become really mean.” Finally, it can be seen as thoughtful if you say something that is true and kind but not necessary.

So, the next time you hear your child begin to talk about someone else or say something that just shouldn’t be said, please remind him/her of TKN. Remember, we are our children’s most important role models so be aware of whether you apply TKN before you speak.



**Red Ribbon Week**  
**October 26-30, 2009**

**Making Mistakes continued**

The great thing about mistakes is that it allows us to take ownership for our own actions, to learn sometimes very valuable lessons and to strive to become a better version of ourselves. When children make mistakes, whether they are 3 years old or 13 years old, it is essential that they see mistakes not as failures but as opportunities to grow. In a world that can often feel unfair, it is a normal reaction to want to protect children from anything painful or uncomfortable. Unfortunately, if we do not allow children to experience their own mistakes and the consequences that come from them, we are leaving them ill-prepared for the harsh realities that exist in the world beyond their home and school. This might seem harsh, but there is no greater gift we give to our children than the tools they will need

to become confident, independent and resilient individuals.

How can we teach them these lessons? We can start by simply using their mistakes and our own as teachable moments. Take the time to identify their mistakes with them, ask them where they went wrong, and find out how they would handle the situation better the next time. Help them identify all of the possible consequences of their actions as well as how others can be negatively affected by their actions. Teach them to own up to their mistakes and to not make excuses for them. If we help children do this at an early age, we hopefully will reduce the risk of any serious mistakes down the line.

Red Ribbon Week serves as a vehicle for communities and individuals to take a stand for the hopes and dreams of our children through a commitment to drug prevention and education and a personal commitment to live drug free lives with the ultimate goal being the creation of drug free America.

And, perhaps more importantly, Red Ribbon Week commemorates the ultimate sacrifice made by DEA Special Agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, who died at the hands of drug traffickers in Mexico while fighting the battle against illegal drugs to keep our country and children safe.

Each division will be providing age appropriate activities during this special week.

**Time for Bed continued**

The implication this has for our children is two-fold; first, our children need to sleep. The recommended time for most is about 9 hours per night. The second thing is that if a child reviews information before going to sleep, their brain will continue to process the information while they sleep, allowing them to be better prepared for the test the next

day. This means, no more ‘all-nighters’.

There is a growing concern that we are raising a nation of children who are sleep deprived. This not only leads to poorer memory, but ultimately, affects overall mental and physical health as well. It is strongly suggested that parents help

children manage their time, allowing for sufficient sleep in their daily routine. Providing time to ‘wind down’ at the end of the day, either by reading before going to bed or engaging in another quiet activity, will help the brain prepare for sleep.

**Family Dinners** continued

Having grown up in an interesting and fairly civilized family, I envisioned the day my own family would have mannerly family dinners, which included fascinating conversations. We had interesting dinners all right, but not in the ways I expected. My husband, George, introduced The Quiz, and to this day I worry our now-grown kids will be unable to hold their own at a dinner party without shrieking out a loud “buzzer” sound before speaking. George, a sort of human encyclopedia of facts (some more useful than others) was the quizmaster. The questions were all over the board and the quizzes were spirited and competitive, sometimes raucous, always fun. They set the tone, but purposely did not take up the whole dinner hour, so as to leave time for more meaningful conversation.

Dinner should be a time family members look forward to

spending together, a time when each member is encouraged to share and listen to one another. It is the perfect time to discuss issues, instill family values, and pass down traditions. (It is not the ideal time to fuss about cleaning rooms, curfews, and chores that have not been completed.) We know that children who value their families and have a real sense of connection with them tend to be better adjusted and more stable.

Family meals offer routine and consistency, upon which children thrive. They provide an opportunity for children to learn language and communication skills, manners, and so much more. To get some ideas for dinner table conversation-starters, go to the Student Services page on the Benjamin website.

An August 2004 study reported in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* followed thousands of youth. About one fourth of them reported having

family meals seven or more times a week. Another fourth reported having family meals two times or less a week. Those who enjoyed eating with their families seven times a week demonstrated significant, measurable benefits, including better grades, less substance abuse, less depression, and less suicide risk – even in families that were otherwise similar. Too much hinges on this practice not to do it.

Chances are that many of you look back on your childhoods and recall your nightly dinner hours when everyone was expected to sit down at the table together. You probably recall these times as some of your fondest memories. Establishing this same routine with your own family will give your children a significant advantage in many ways and will give them and you memories to cherish all your lives.

**Contributions from the “Trenches”****Students responses to the question - “What do you enjoy most about eating dinner with your family?”**

“What I enjoy most is getting to talk with my family. I enjoy getting an update on what my family is doing.”

- Nick Straus

“What I enjoy most is getting to bond with my family. I enjoy seeing their faces.”

- Zara Seabridge

“One thing I like is eating dinner with my entire family.”

- Zack Rubiano

“I like to eat dinner with my family because we never really get to see each other during the day and that is my chance to see everyone.”

- Bella Gaeta

“I enjoy having dinner with my family because if someone has a problem we help to solve it.”

- Hannah Jacobs

“I like eating dinner with my family because it is a time to spend with my sisters who are under a lot of stress and I can help them.”

- Rainey Johnson

**Parents responses to the question - “What are your thoughts about your family participating in last year’s *Eat Dinner with Your Family Night?*”**

“For *Eat Dinner with Your Family Night*. Chuck and I used the TBS Parent Resource Guide sent out by Student Services to facilitate the dinner conversation with our three children. Thank you for promoting such a wonderful evening.”

- Debra Hale-Hagy

“It gave us a chance to slow down and talk to our children, but more importantly, we listened to what they had to say.”

- Suzanne Malamala

“We spoke about how everyone’s day was, how school was, what was happening with school sports, and an upcoming visit from out-of-state grandparents. We also teased each other (but mostly Mom) for one thing or another leaving the family in hysterical laughter.”

- Meredith Logan