

# SPARTAN SPONSORS

MILTON  
HERSHEY  
SCHOOL®

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## INTEGRITY

### Tough Conversations and How to Tackle Them

Not every conversation you have with your child is going to be easy. But it's important to face those topics head on to keep your child motivated. Here are some useful tips for tackling topics that might be difficult to talk about.

**Be proactive about the conversation.** Don't wait until there's a problem to talk about something.

**Show compassion and understanding.** By stepping into your child's shoes, you gain perspective and demonstrate a willingness to work with them.

**Focus on facts.** Make sure you get all the information you can. Try talking to a teacher or houseparent first to see if they can offer some context.

**Plan the next steps.** Not everything will be resolved in one sitting but thinking of the next thing to tackle is a great start!

### Ways to Spot Homesickness

Every student deals with homesickness at some point. It can be hard to be away from the familiarity of home. Here are some things to look for in your child's behavior to help minimize homesickness.

- ✓ Look for changes in behavior toward the end of the student's time at home. A child acting up right before going back to school might indicate that they're hesitant to return. Talk to them about their concerns.
- ✓ Look for a lack of enthusiasm, or withdrawal from family activities.
- ✓ Students who are struggling with homesickness will avoid conversations or not want to talk about it. It is important to encourage dialogue about their feelings and fears—most of these can be talked through and it will open the door to future conversations when the need arises.

### Ways to Address Homesickness

**Mail** a letter.

**Ask** the houseparent for a recommendation on the best time for a phone call.

**Recognize** and normalize it—acknowledge that is normal and OK to feel this way.



## ENCOURAGE THEM TO GET INVOLVED

“

**I think it's important to let your students know it's OK to enjoy being away from home.**

I think my youngest one feels guilty sometimes that she's doing things and she knows mommy is home by herself. But you just need to be up front with them and say *"take every advantage of the opportunities at MHS."* Whether that's going on field trips or the houseparents offering a special reward, or once you're in high school, going on an overseas trip.



**HOLLY HOCKENBERRY**  
PARENT SPONSOR

“

**Let your students know that you want them to be here...**

It's very important that you give them permission to not only be at Milton Hershey School, but to embrace it and get involved.



**JAY GARVEY**  
COORDINATOR OF FAMILY RELATIONS AND NEW STUDENT TRANSITIONS

The way that you talk about school around your child can impact what they think about their time at Milton Hershey School. Students mimic their parents, whether they mean to or not. Making sure that you're aware of your perceptions is as important for them as it is for you.



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## COMMITMENT TO MISSION

### The Importance of High Expectations

Students will live up to the expectations set for them by those who they believe truly love and care for them. As caring adults, when we see our students or children struggling to meet our expectations, we often lower them so they are easier to meet.

We do this because we don't want to see them fail—or we do not want to deal with the behaviors and attitude we might experience due to the struggle. We are doing our children a disservice when we lower expectations. Hold strong to those expectations—kids will live up to them—some might have to work a little harder or need more time to meet them.

Expectations inform the way that students think about their time at Milton Hershey School. Our expectation is that all of our students graduate.

But if those students are hearing something different from their parent sponsor, that can create some confusion. When the expectations set for them are conflicting, it makes it easier for students to settle for the easier option.

So set the expectations high. Students will rise to meet them.

### Help Them by Helping Yourself

The opportunities for your student at Milton Hershey School are excellent. But it can also be an opportunity for you to do something that you might have been putting off because of your responsibilities to your child. Having some of those obligations lifted can give you a chance to do something for yourself. And seeing you be proactive can help motivate your child as well!

**Consider going back to school.** Take classes to learn about something you've always been interested in.

**Take a small step to improve your health.** Try a healthy new recipe, make an appointment with your doctor, begin a new exercise routine, or go for a walk with a friend.

**Think about and write down** some life goals you hope to achieve.



## QUESTIONS THAT CAN GET YOUR STUDENT TALKING

Simple questions usually get simple answers. Try asking questions like these to create a dialogue with your child:

**What**  
is the best thing  
that's happening  
at school right now?



**Who**  
are your friends?



**What**  
is something  
coming up that  
you are looking  
forward to?



One of the biggest things you can do to help your child while they're at Milton Hershey School is commit. Your commitment to their success can help them see how many opportunities there are for them (and you!) at Milton Hershey.

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## MUTUAL RESPECT

### Ease the Transitions

There are always going to be two parts to Milton Hershey students' lives; their life at school and their life at home. The transition between the two can be a difficult time for a student. There are some things you can do to help make those transitional times as easy as possible.

**Keep a routine at home.** Try regular wakeup time and bedtime, healthy food choices, simple chores, screen-free time, and family time.

**Be in touch early.** Be more in contact than you would normally be for those first few weeks back at school if you suspect homesickness may be an issue.

**Talk about the differences** for your child between home and MHS.

**Plan ahead for transitions.** Start talking about the transitions before they happen.

We want your child to be successful at MHS and at home. Check in around these difficult transition periods to make sure they go smoothly.

**Right before break.** When students are looking forward to coming home, they can lose focus.

**Right after break.** It can be hard to get refocused coming back to school.

**The middle of break periods.** Assess whether your child is falling into bad habits being away from school.



### Busting the Myths About Summer School

At Milton Hershey School, we don't view summer school as a bad thing. In fact, it can be a very good thing!

## FALSE

### Summer school...

is for students who failed.

should be considered a punishment.

is boring.



## TRUE

### Summer school...

is a chance to get caught up and get ahead.

is an opportunity to get the most out of an education at MHS.

can provide opportunities to learn and experience new things/topics.





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## POSITIVE SPIRIT

### The Power of “I’m Proud”

Students of all ages can benefit from hearing that you’re proud of them. That type of reinforcement encourages them to keep going. The power of positive reinforcement is particularly important when it comes from a parent sponsor.

**Try to find small opportunities to tell them you’re proud.** Rather than focusing only on big milestones, find little successes to praise. That will encourage smaller good habits.

**Don’t be afraid to tell them you’re disappointed.**

**But always focus on the lesson there is to learn from a mistake.** And if you see them working hard to correct it, that can be another great time to express pride.

### How to Talk About Their Dreams

There’s a moment in the movie *Pursuit of Happyness* where Will Smith’s character tells his son to focus on school instead of basketball. Not that many people can become professional basketball players, he reminds him. Later, he realizes how his attitude has impacted his son’s dream. His negativity, even if it was reasonable, altered his son’s self-perception.

We think about this a lot at MHS. It’s important to approach dreams and aspirations carefully. If every parent told their child they’d never be a professional basketball player, we’d have a lot fewer professional basketball players.

We like to encourage a realistic confidence. When students enroll at MHS, all the excuses they could make for not achieving their dreams at home have been taken away. They start with a clean slate. So, encourage those big goals!

You can talk to younger kids early about the level of work it takes to achieve lofty goals. As students get older, encourage them to explore passions and areas of interest. Just focus on setting realistic expectations, without being discouraging. It can make a big difference.



## STAY POSITIVE FOR THEM AND YOURSELF

Being positive can benefit you, too. There are both mental and physical health benefits associated with positive thinking. The Mayo Clinic\* says they may include:

- ✓ Increased lifespan
- ✓ Lower rates of depression
- ✓ Greater resistance to the common cold
- ✓ Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease

\*Last Updated: Feb. 18, 2017. URL: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950>

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## STAY CONNECTED WITH YOUR NEW SPARTAN



### WEEK ONE

Send a **card or letter** with a funny joke or silly picture.  
Keep your message positive!



### WEEK TWO

Establish a “**phone ritual**” and give these a try:

“What was the funniest moment of your day?”

“Who did you help today?”

“I’m so proud of you because...”



### WEEK THREE

Send **another card or letter** with a drawing from a sibling,  
a decoration for their room, or a photo of a pet.



### WEEK FOUR

Ideas for your next phone call:

“What activities are you doing with your student home?”

“If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?”

Talk about and plan your next visit to campus.



## THROUGHOUT THE YEAR REMEMBER TO...

### Chat

with your child's  
houseparents often.

### Continue to praise

your student's successes.

### Remind

yourself why you  
chose MHS for your family.  
(Remember your “Motivator Tags?”)