



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN ENGLAND

BOARDING PARENTS'

HANDBOOK

2008-2009

A TROUBLE-SHOOTER'S GUIDE TO BOARDING SCHOOL

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Typical of boarding life, this handbook is a group effort. Our appreciation goes to boarding students whose conversations and answers to questionnaires “told it like it is.” TASIS colleagues, parents, and placement or education counselors from schools and companies did the same. A special word of thanks goes to Mr. Robert Mitchell, formerly of the Saudi Arabian International Schools, who planted the seed for this booklet while providing chauffeur-service from Dhahran to Jubail for TASIS representatives. Alumni faculty, L. Ruth Clay and David A. Chandler, nurtured the original idea. Using their practical knowledge of boarding school life and their unique literary wit to give a light tone to convey a serious message, they brought the project to fruition, the results of which are contained within this handbook.

Fernando L. Gonzalez
Chairman of the Board of Directors

N.B. While we wait for linguistic experts to invent a single pronoun for he and she, we will continue the regrettable, but customary and efficient, practice of using the masculine pronoun to refer to both genders. Meanwhile, we want to say clearly that this booklet applies every bit as much to your daughters as to your sons, language conventions notwithstanding.

Also, please note that all TASIS students have access to e-mail either privately or through the school e-mail address listed on the final page of this book. Although hand written letters are always more personal, the speed and convenience of faxes and e-mail provide a more immediate means of communication with your children. Therefore in sections of this book which refer to letter and mail, please interpret that to mean e-mail and faxes as well.

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INTRODUCTION

“Adjusting to boarding school...” It’s the big challenge. People, publications, systems are all geared to ease those first weeks and months when everything is new, bewildering, happening for the first time. No question about it, students need all the help they can get with adjusting to boarding school, and substantial help is available. But students are not the only ones undergoing the adjustment process. Mom and Dad are plunged into a whole new experience as well, with very little existing to help them. Sometimes without so much as a helpful hint, the grown-ups are supposed to master their own anxieties, uncertainties, fears, and frustrations while providing cool, capable support and assistance to the child and school.

Years of sympathy with the struggles of sensitive parents as they themselves adjust to the boarding school world have motivated this guidebook. After all, the boarding school student is still living within the family bonds of caring, learning, struggling, and growing. When that student joins the boarding community he lives simultaneously in two worlds: the world of boarding life as well as the ongoing life of his family. Each world impinges on the other just as the well-being of each family member affects the other. As we watch the interaction between home life and school life, it occurs to us that parents new to boarding life might benefit from the experience of parents who have already learned the ropes. Current boarding students also offer advice, as do teachers, administrators, and placement counselors who have watched the adjustment process unfold over the years.

Back when you were about to become a parent, you probably sought printed advice. Actually, had you read *What Every Parent Should Know* before having your baby, you might have had second thoughts. By the time the guidebook warned you about the hundreds of things that could go wrong and offered more advice than you could ever remember, you probably wondered whether you would survive... let alone the baby.

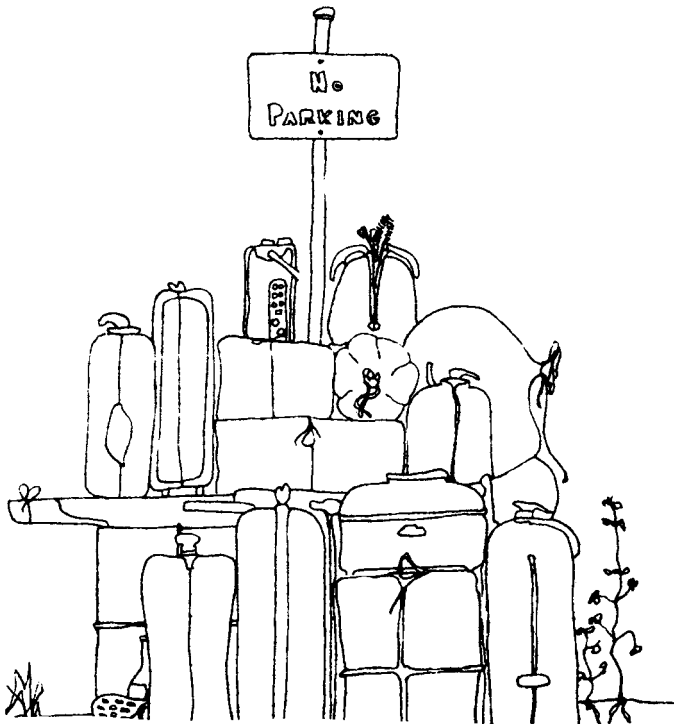
This parents’ guide to the first year of boarding school life has to be read with the same kind of courage. As you look back on your “how to raise a baby” books, you realize that very few of all those panicking possibilities ever occurred in the life of your baby. But they might have. Or perhaps what your baby didn’t experience, some other reader’s baby did. That baby-raising guide was narrow in its focus, too. It didn’t tell you much about the many delights of child-rearing; it assumed you could cope with the wonder and joy. What it did tell you was how to cope with what might go wrong, or better yet what to do to prevent problems from developing.

Similarly, if this *Parents’ Guide to Boarding School* is successful, it should give you the perspective, the background, or the helpful hint which will prevent minor disturbances from becoming actual problems. If nothing else, it will perhaps reassure you to know that if your child should need assistance with settling in to this new kind of life, he will be surrounded by people who are familiar with the adjustment process. Best of all, if this *Guide* is successful, you as parents can be somewhat familiar with the process yourselves because you read about it in advance.

Because American students in particular are sometimes unaccustomed to the idea of boarding school, their adjustment difficulties are especially predictable. With apologies to the many TESIS parents who are not American, it is only fair to admit that this *Guide* somewhat emphasizes those problems which are easily predicted. Of course any generalizations must, of necessity, apply only part of the time. American and non-American parents alike will probably find sections that reflect their child’s experience as well as sections that do not apply in the least. Most parents, most of the time, will not need this trouble-shooting advice. But if the need does arise, a helpful hint from your *Parents’ Guide* just might make all the difference.

Our first recommendation is that you curl up with our good book and read it cover to cover... consider it entertainment and try to get an overview. Then comes the assignment. As the school year begins and you enter each chronological period—the Edge of the Nest, Where Am I?, the Mid-Fall Doldrums, and so on—re-read that section with care and apply whatever makes sense to you.

We won't presume to tell you how to be a good parent or how to understand your individual child. You've already been years at the job. But the role of parent-in-absentia is probably a new one. It is an extremely important one. This booklet, then, confirms our commitment to work with you toward a good boarding school experience for you as well as for your child. We hope it helps.



In hopes of providing pleasant reading and of eliciting a chuckle or two, the tone is informal. That in no way implies that the problems discussed are insignificant or that TESIS does not take them seriously—quite the contrary. But as boarding school staffs and students agree, a sense of humor is a great help in solving problems. We hope you'll think so, too.

Some of the advice in this booklet will be conceptual... psychological principles likely to affect children and parents. Some of the advice will be extremely practical... do's and don'ts which can smooth the way. However, the framework is chronological.

We are convinced that a year in the life of a boarding community moves through predictable stages. Each child's private experience is obviously different, but there are sequences we have seen so often that we recognize a pattern.

You will find our year divided into six stages. Each is approximate and may or may not occur quite as described or quite on schedule, but we think you'll find the year mapped out accurately enough for you to get your bearings. The sequences, then, are as follows:

Edge of the Nest (Summertime): This is the pre-boarding school stage when attitudes take shape and arrangements are finalized.

Where Am I? (September, October): This is when social adjustment—learning the ropes, making friends, settling in—takes place.

Mid-Fall Doldrums (October, November): This is when the excitement wears off. The routine sets in, the rules chafe, and the first panic phone call may ring loud and clear.

Holiday Seesaw (November, December): This is a time for ups and downs including a dawning sense of community, anticipation of vacation, reactions to first grade reports, and awareness of growing friendships.

The Great Depression (January, February, March): This is when summer is a long way off, the weather is dreadful, the same old grind is grinding away, and moods turn as grey as the weather.

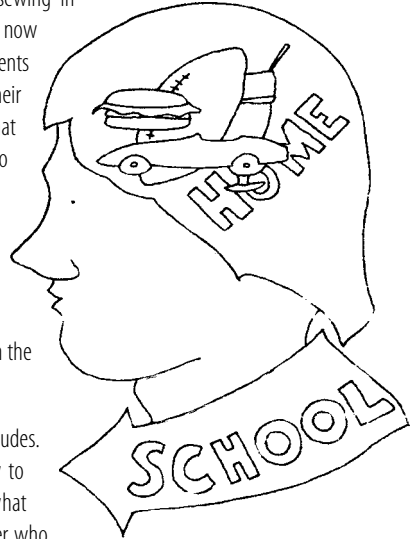
Year End Euphoria (April, May, June): This is when spring vacation saves the day and energies turn toward making the most of this fleeting, one-of-a-kind, wonderful year together.

The point of taking you through these predictable sequences is that forewarned is forearmed. You may find these events easier to understand and be able to respond better because you know that what is occurring is normal, natural, to be expected. But you need to know that before the fact, before the clanging alarm bells distract you. It isn't easy to know what it all means when you're in the middle of the experience for the first time. Hopefully, we can share observations, insights, nuggets of advice, and illuminating anecdotes which will spare you having to learn it all the hard way.

EDGE OF THE NEST

ATTITUDES BEGIN AT HOME

Preparation for boarding school involves far more than sewing in laundry labels. The attitudinal groundwork accomplished now may be the “make or break” factor. Many newly arriving students are eager, excited, open to new experiences, thrilled at their good fortune to be educated in Europe... maybe somewhat apprehensive and a trifle unsure, but basically committed to benefiting tremendously. Other students arrive bitter, angry, wishing they were someplace else, missing the people and places they’ve left so much that they want no part of the people and places they are now encountering. What accounts for the difference? The fundamental personality of the child, of course, but key attitudes are formed at home on the first stages of considering boarding school.



Parents, like arriving students, display various sets of attitudes. “I know it’s all our fault that Johnny has to be sent away to boarding school,” confesses a worried mother. “We’ll do what we can to make it up to him.” Contrast her with the mother who

explains that the major reason for seeking overseas employment was the

opportunity to educate the children abroad... to put them in a school whose tuition would have been prohibitive within their normal circumstances. Or contrast her with parents who make the tremendous sacrifices to provide the European boarding experience within their normal job setting. Children don’t always absorb their parents’ outlook, but those who are offered a privilege may have an advantage over those offered apologies.

Of course an increasing number of parents today work for companies which subsidize education and relocate families. These parents themselves are sometimes unclear as to whether the move, including boarding school, is good or bad for a given child. Sometimes the well-being of the entire family takes precedence over what might be best for a particular child. Sometimes, too, whether the child stands to gain or lose may be very much open to question. In order to think clearly about that question, a family discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of boarding school might be timely. It will help the student gain a realistic perspective on the forthcoming experience, and it will help Mom and Dad clarify their own outlook.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF BOARDING LIFE

Any discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of boarding life would certainly concentrate on how the student's own personality might be affected. But there are some universal points to be made as well. Your discussion might include these items, presented here from the student's perspective.

Advantages

1. Exposure to living in a different culture... a different way of life... new sights, new tastes, new customs.
2. Opportunity to travel... to visit places you'll always remember.
3. Opportunity to study a culture or country first-hand through living there.
4. A chance to become far more independent, far more self-sufficient than most students of your age.
5. A chance to forge the especially deep and lasting friendships resulting from living in the same community and having joys and woes in common.
6. Learning the self-discipline of being responsible for your own life... from studying because you know you have a test to turning in your own laundry in order to get it back on time.
7. A chance to grow up with more adults to understand you and help you.
8. Getting to know your teachers by playing softball with them and talking about "life."
9. Joining classmates in creating a community of people living and working together and blending their varied backgrounds.

Disadvantages

1. Missing Mom and Dad and... and... and HOMESICKNESS.
2. Eating food that never will compare with Mom's cooking.
3. Enjoying less privacy (unless your family is very large).
4. Leaving special friends, pets, and relatives.
5. Altering or postponing future plans... captaining the football team, buying your first car, celebrating your birthday the way you always have.
6. Leaving your own comfortable room at home.
7. Coping with the aggravations of a foreign country... things you can't buy, systems you don't understand, impatient people, perhaps a different language.



8. Living with rules that may suit other students but surely weren't tailor-made for you.
9. Growing up because it's good for you even when it hurts and you'd really rather not.

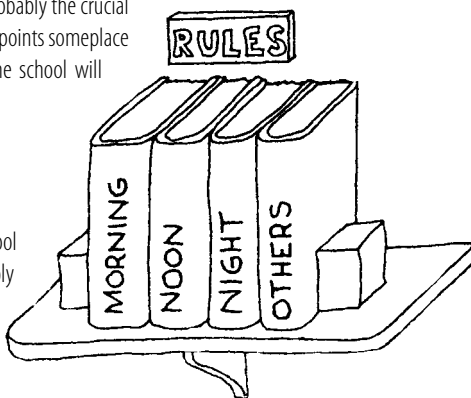
A successful discussion along those lines should help formulate your child's outlook on the new experience. Honest admission that the rough spots will be there is probably better than excessive persuasion. A balanced, realistic perspective should pave the way to a positive attitude and prevent let-down and disappointment at a later date.

RUDIMENTS OF RULES

Your next step in preparing the positive attitude is probably the crucial discussion about rules. If you can lodge the following points someplace where they will be remembered, your child and the school will have a head start at adjusting to each other.

WHY CAN'T I HAVE MY VERY OWN SET OF RULES?

Many students are capable of more latitude than school rules allow. Take Susan, a mature junior who sensibly sets her own curfew at home, drinks wine with her parents at meals, and smokes in her room while she studies. Susan arrives at boarding school only to find that she must be in her room at 10:00pm, and that drinking and smoking are not permitted. Susan would probably continue to behave maturely and sensibly without any of these rules. But Sally, who loves testing the outer limits, needs those rules and her own private watch-dog to enforce them.



Both Susan and Sally need to understand that rules cannot be tailor-made to the individual in a boarding school full of individuals of all levels of maturity coming from many different family backgrounds. At home the adult-to-child ratio is superb: supervision can be very individualized. Not only that but the parental supervisors have known their Susan and Sally all their lives and have a pretty good idea of what to count on. Not so for the boarding faculty.

Clearly, the school cannot write each student a private, personal, tailor-made set of rules. Students need to ponder these points before becoming insulted or aggravated at less freedom than they are accustomed to. If you feel like divulging such truths, you might even admit that parents secretly want the school to take a harder line than they've succeeded in establishing! Once again, the student who understands why the rules may pinch and cramp is probably better able to tolerate the frustration.

WHO'S THE BIGGEST BOSS?

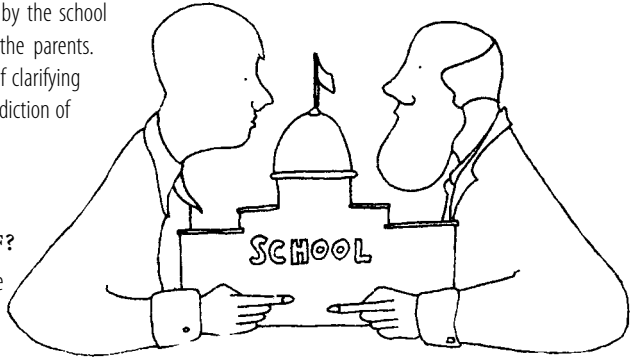
The student who enters school convinced that the school is hired by his Dad to do whatever Dad says may be set up for some real surprises. For example, when the school doesn't permit smoking, special pleas to lift the rules because James has a smoking habit will not prevail. The student needs to know that the school's standards will not be altered by request unless perchance the parents request stricter rules. It's amazing what a difference it can make once the student

grasps that rules at school are set by the school just as rules at home are set by the parents. Parents are in the critical position of clarifying what it means to be under the jurisdiction of the school.

WHAT'S ALL THIS "COMMUNITY" STUFF?

Sometimes, there's a collision course when normal adolescent "me-centeredness" runs up against a whole new notion... that of

Community. Your child will hear that word used regularly. He will be told that certain behaviors harm the Community, that he is expected to contribute to the Community. If that notion is foreign to him, he may become impatient; but he will nevertheless be encouraged to think of the boarding community as a large family which experiences good times and bad times but still functions as a unit. He will be encouraged to develop an awareness of what hurts the whole and what helps it. He will be asked to think about what is good for "us" as well as what is good for "me". (When it works, amazed parents report that James has come home from boarding school more sensitive to members of his own family and more ready to contribute to the whole.)



But this shift in attitude doesn't come easily... not that any growing up ever does. Perhaps you can start your child thinking about what it is to be part of a group of people combining their personalities, energies, talents, and needs into that unique mixture: a one-of-a-kind year of boarding school life. Your child needs to understand that you haven't just bought him a place to live while he attends school, you've opened up a world which he helps to shape even as it helps to shape him. No question about it, he will make better use of his year if he arrives convinced that he is about to travel a two-way street.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

If by now you have a child eager for the new experience, willing to accept the discomfort of rules, you've come a long way. But don't be complacent. You have one more assignment in your orientation program, and that's the famous discussion of *Unrealistic Expectations*.

CLOSETS, DRAWERS AND SHOWERS

Wander casually into your child's room, take a deep breath and begin. "No more double bed all to yourself; it's probably bunkbed time. See that sliding-door closet all the way across one wall of the room? Cut it in half and then share it with your roommate(s). These two chests of drawers flanked by yards of bookshelves? Make that more like two drawers, one shelf, and an encroaching room mate." Actually, your style will no doubt be much more diplomatic, but the harsh reality is that the comforts of home and the accommodations of boarding school are often worlds apart. Once again, getting used to the idea can prevent the first let-down when the dormitory room just doesn't measure up to home. Neither does the student-to-bathroom ratio, and that can be hard on the five minute tooth-brushers and twenty minute shower-takers.

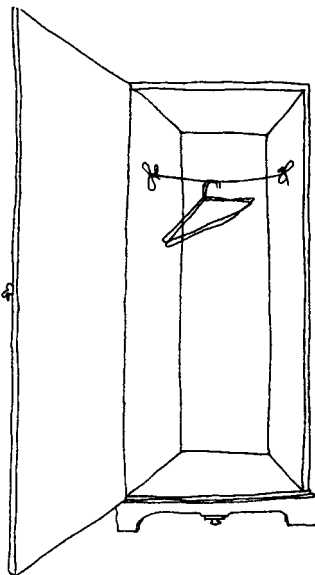
MUTED PIZZAZZ

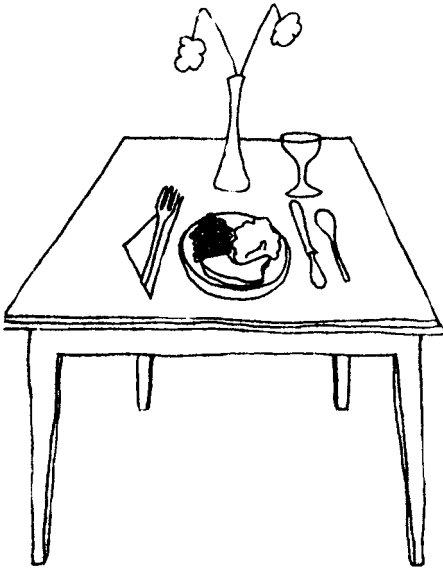
Depending upon where you have lived and what your child has lived for, it may be necessary to point out that the sports scene, especially football, is different overseas. To begin with, soccer replaces football; but beyond that, if the hometown high school was sports-crazy and athletics ruled, with cheerleaders a close second, the more balanced international outlook could be a let-down. Also, because there are fewer schools and wider distances, varsity competition is less intensive, rivalries less exciting, glory less guaranteed. Even a very fine sports program may not have all the pizzazz of Hometown High. So if your child lives for football, it would pay to prepare for possible de-escalation of that particular enthusiasm before stark disappointment sets in (without you there to help to deal with it).

TOO MANY ONIONS

The next Unrealistic Expectation to be confronted head-on can be addressed at almost any meal. If you're one of those mothers who prepares meatloaf in three sections... with onions for Dad, without for James, with green peppers for sister... that would be the right meal for a few observations on dormitory food.

James will cope better if he understands these facts of institutional cuisine. Point one, the menu probably won't feature his favorite foods and exclude what he doesn't like. Point two, even his favorite dinner won't be cooked the way he likes it (onions in the meatloaf... yeech!) Point three, international schools and international chefs don't always have access to culturally diverse food.





ALL DAY, EVERYDAY

A less concrete but very important unrealistic expectation has to do with the fundamental nature of boarding school itself. By definition, boarding school is a total experience and is always in session. The educational program does not end when the classes are dismissed at 3:10 p.m. It continues with afternoon sports and activities, with a certain style at dinner, with evening study halls, with plays, concerts, and field trips on weekends. These are not just options; these are the expectations and requirements of a school which has assumed *in loco parentis* responsibility for developing the whole child.

Many students understandably think that school “owns them” only until the class ends and then their time should be their own. After all, that’s how it’s always been. They would like the boarding unit to be a kind of “room and board” facility which provides essential services and leaves them alone to come and go, much as they would if they

were attending college and sharing an apartment. However, this is a highly unrealistic expectation which must be supplanted as soon as possible with the realization that the parents have given (and the school has accepted) a much further responsibility for their overall development.

THINGS TO DO

That’s your talking assignment. Now for some practical tips on things to do to soften the initial impact of your child’s being left alone at boarding school.

MAIL, MAIL AND MORE MAIL OR E-MAIL

First, smart parents often send the first letter before the child leaves home... timed to arrive at school a day or two after he does (or after the parents leave him there.) You might also alert the family network of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers, and sisters that the first month away is a good time to keep those funny cards and letters pouring in. Mail, mail and more mail! It does wonders for morale. Be sure to send things air mail and to calculate the slow international mail systems.

HOMEY TOUCHES

When you pack, be sure to include the favorite poster, stuffed animal, scrapbook, dresser ornaments, choice possession... whatever decorates the room at home. Those bare walls and serviceable furnishings at school need to be converted to the student’s own special place as soon as possible. It’s also nice to send along a starter-fund of extra allowance for a few new posters or an inexpensive local-color bedspread and/or duvet.

MONEY, MONEY...

Another pre-enrollment tip is to be very sure that allowance funds are arranged with great precision. Such matters are nearer the student's heart than might be imagined. There seems to be a more psychological dimension to the monetary situation in boarding school than at home. At home, there's always the safety-valve of Mom or Dad who can usually bail Susan out of a problem. At school, feeling safe, secure, and independent has partially to do with having enough money. Feeling happy has something to do with being able to buy a pizza when one more dormitory meal is one too many. Buying a new CD can be important, and joining a group taking a friend out for a birthday dinner can be imperative.

You need to exercise real judgment here because you want to provide happiness and security for your child but must also beware of providing excessive allowances. Too much money may create practical problems of envy amongst classmates and the temptation of theft. Another important educational consideration is that management of money develops independence and maturity as well as the proverbial "learning the value of the pound."



Each TASIS school suggests a weekly sum appropriate to the needs of students and the economy of the country. An adequate allowance in one country may be exorbitant in another country and woefully inadequate in another. Obviously, family circumstances will dictate whether a given child is on the low or high end of the recommended allowance scale, but real thought should go into the amount because it may say and mean more in a boarding school context than it normally would.

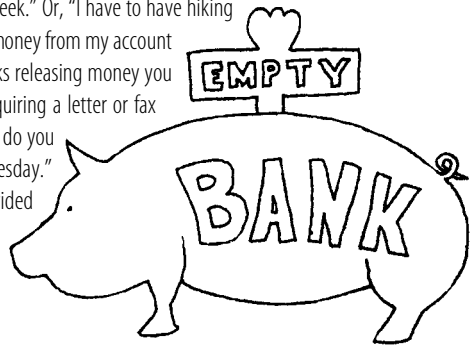
AND MORE MONEY

Finally, much grief can be avoided by careful instructions to the school as to what discretion you are willing to authorize. Your child will probably ask the school for extra funds for relatively good reasons... running shoes, broken calculators, Christmas presents, souvenirs of weekend trips, overweight charges at the airport, equipment for an upcoming camping trip. You know how endless is the string of

requests for over-and-above allowance money. To begin with, by all means make clear to your child what the allowance is meant to cover normally; school supplies and toiletries are included in the amount recommended by the school, so trips to the school office to ask for extra money for shampoo, toothpaste, and notebook paper are not in order. Some students feel that allowances are strictly "fun money" and that necessities should come from their parents, whose role is now carried on by the school. Real animosity occurs when James is told to use his weekly money for shampoo

if he thinks that his allowance is for pleasure only. Students also need to understand that since some weeks will drain their funds more than other weeks, prudence dictates saving for extra expenses. It is neither necessary nor wise to spend the whole sum each week.

That takes care of clarity with your child. Clarity with the school is equally important. The Boarding Coordinator needs guidance as to how liberal to be with those requests for extra money. He will need to use discretion, and there are certainly times when the need is apparent and immediate. Much misery can be avoided if you minimize the grey areas by clear instructions in advance and by written authorization for spending extra money at Christmas time, for the new boots you agreed to, for the prom dress. Some of the worst sessions the school goes through start out, "My Mom told me over the phone to buy her a Swiss Army Knife... or a Wedgewood tea set... or a flokati rug, and bring it back for Christmas vacation. I need a hundred pounds extra this week." Or, "I have to have hiking boots for the camping trip Friday. My Dad told me to get money from my account to buy them." At that point, the Boarding Coordinator risks releasing money you never wanted spent or angering you or your child by requiring a letter or fax authorizing the money... in which case it becomes, "Why do you always think I'm lying?" or "But I have to buy it this Wednesday." Somebody is sure to be aggravated unless you have provided clear written instructions far enough in advance. The fact is that students, like adults, become very prickly where money matters are concerned. Careful thought and preparation from you could therefore avoid much misery.



FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

The information below is for you. Your child will come to know the personalities as well as the roles and titles very soon. But for you, as you read further, it will be helpful to know the functions of the positions named. Later, as you respond to our repeated urgings to be in contact with the school, this glossary of who's who at TASIS may help you direct your concern.

HEADMASTER

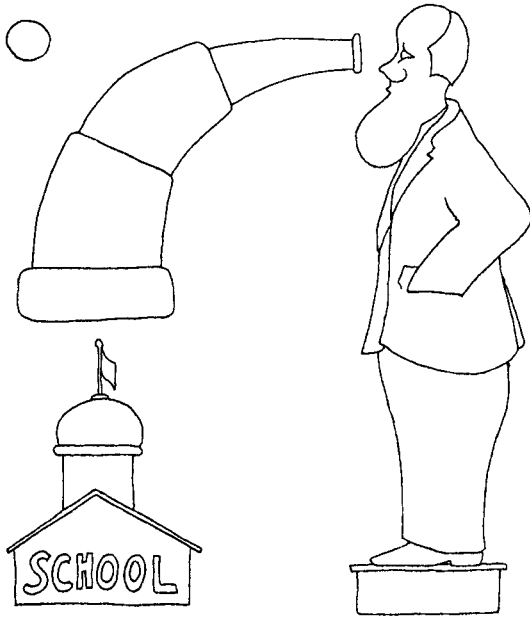
The solution to almost any problem can start here. The Headmaster of the school will refer any concern to the right person, if appropriate, and will be directly concerned with ascertaining that all systems and persons described below are giving you good professional service. Because the Headmaster of the school oversees quality, complaints or concerns will certainly be his business. All TASIS schools are small enough for the Headmaster to be acquainted with all the facets of the operation; it may be necessary for the Headmaster to do some research first, but any issue can ultimately be answered here.

BOARDING COORDINATOR/HEAD OF UPPER SCHOOL

Each campus defines these roles somewhat differently. The signature at the bottom of a letter to you will be your best tip-off as to who is doing what. Essentially, whatever the title on a given campus, these people oversee a major division of the school.

DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS

You've probably already met the person who arranges your child's acceptance and entry to TASIS. This person also provides essential initial information and, simply because you are now acquainted, remains a contact point in the TASIS world. Others will take over the day-to-day involvement with your child once he arrives on campus, but the Admissions Director stays acquainted, remains interested, and is always a ready resource.



ACADEMIC DEAN

This person monitors individual academic programs and progress. He will decide whether James should drop chemistry, begin another foreign language, transfer to another section. The Academic Dean will apply graduation requirements and set individual courses of study. If the student's work falls below standard, the Academic Dean will monitor and structure his studies through academic probation.

Parents can help by assuring that prior school records, including any testing, have been provided. If your child has any specific learning problems or has received special instruction in the past, the Academic Dean should be informed.

DEAN OF STUDENT LIFE

Again, a variety of functions go with this title depending on the particular school. But the important thing on all campuses is that this individual is the chief disciplinarian. If your child should misbehave, you will hear directly from the Dean of Students. Parents can help by passing on hints, danger signals, or any useful background to the Dean of Students.

ADVISOR

The Advisor System at TASIS is at the heart of the adjustment process. There needs to be an anchor person, a sympathetic and *simpatico* adult who will listen, counsel, run interference, befriend, support, encourage, mediate, persuade, aid, and care. Every student must have someone to turn to... an adult friend over and above all the "official" helpers such as college counselors and academic deans. That "personal" teacher is the student's advisor.

Parents are very much included in the advisor's responsibilities. Besides cheering up homesickness or lovelornness, besides reminding James to study his French, besides pleading his cause with the Dean of Students, the advisor also provides you with an overview comment in every grade report and any additional correspondence that may be necessary. The advisor is someone to see when you visit the campus and is someone to write or phone if you're worried that something isn't going right.

Parents can help by contributing insights and background information. (A "Dear advisor, let-me-tell-you-about-my-daughter" letter before school even begins could be good for everybody.) Behind the scenes, the advisor will then speak in the student's best interests at residential faculty meetings: "Susan seems to be working up to a chip on her shoulder; let's be careful not to push her." "Who else is having trouble getting her to do her homework?..." "Nagging will get you nowhere with James, but what you might try is..." Thus, anything you can contribute can be channeled by the advisor and may smooth the way for your child.

DORMITORY PARENT

Another adult with whom your child could strike up a friendship is the Dormitory Parent. This is the on-the-spot person who supervises the particular dormitory or section of a dormitory. This person will report a plumbing problem, do room inspections and check-ins at bedtime, and come to know your child through the kind of casual socializing that stems naturally from frequent contact and living in close proximity.

SCHOOL BANKER

Personal allowance accounts are kept by the bursar or school banker. As stressed earlier, parents can help by providing adequate funds with clear instructions well in advance for any extra expenditures authorized. Funds for extra travel must also be provided, always with the awareness that cancellation fees may pertain. Larger concerns, such as payment for tuition, will be handled by the central business office.

COLLEGE COUNSELOR

Parents of Juniors and Seniors will want to know that each school has a College Counselor to pilot the student through the college application process. The Counselor will prepare a school profile and oversee the obtaining of recommendations. He will assist with information on various colleges and advice for the selection process. However, it is fair to assume that a student capable of attending college is also capable of making inquiries, filling out forms, providing information, and generally carrying out his responsibilities within the application process.

Parents can help by making their desires known to the Counselor, by reaching agreement with their child, and by promptly providing information asked of them.

SCHOOL NURSE

The school nurse keeps medical records for each child and provides or arranges for medical attention as needed in the course of the year. The Nurse also dispenses medication, and all medication must be registered with her. This measure prevents unauthorized use of medication and protects all students from accidental misuse.

Parents can help by providing full medical histories, particularly including careful documentation for any disorders that might occur during the year or that require medical follow-up. By all means, provide written information for your child's file; do not trust to a verbal interchange with a staff member who may well assume that the Nurse is otherwise informed and that the discussion is merely for personal information.

GOOD SHOW

You've worked hard. You've set the stage, paved the way, and you've earned a bit of a breather before the trek to boarding school begins. Maybe you should just relax and enjoy that special, unique human being you've been raising before the plunge into boarding life.

WHERE AM I?

FROM DAY ONE

Ready or not, here we come! You hope you've packed everything, signed the right forms, prepared all the proper attitudes. You manage to hurl yourself, your child, and a mountain of luggage across whatever portion of the planet lies between you and the school. Big smiles and friendly expressions greet you as you arrive on campus. Students and teachers from the previous year are greeting one another warmly with the hint of inside jokes and shared experiences. You work your way through the controlled chaos of checking in, getting your child's room assignment, depositing his luggage, meeting his roommate, registering with the school banker, and confirming his classes. You glimpse the light at the end of the tunnel and make your way thankfully to the welcoming reception featuring food, drink, and the fellowship of other parents. By all means, enjoy, but while you're at it you can still do a few things to smooth your own adjustment.

GETTING ACQUAINTED

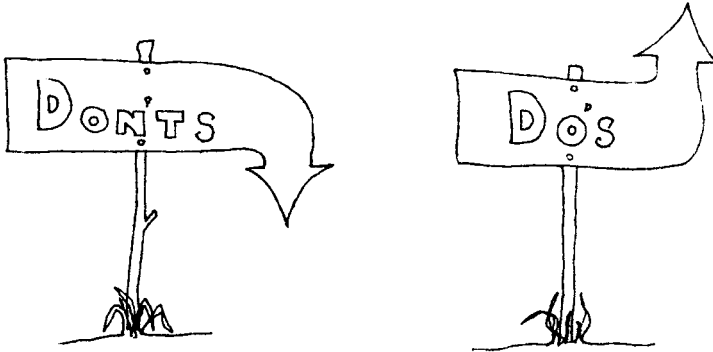
There is no way of knowing in advance all the people who are going to be significant in your child's life, but there are a few who are a very good bet. If at all possible, meet your child's roommate. Also make a special effort to meet his dormitory resident. Try also to meet the Head of Upper School, the Boarding Coordinator, the Academic Dean, and the Dean of Student Life. These are the people who will be overseeing the life of your child. When stories begin to filter home, these people will figure large in them. The key objective is to meet with at least one of these people and talk long enough so that you can feel you have a personal contact. This will help later if there is a problem; it is a great deal easier to send off a letter or place a phone call to a familiar person than to a name with a title attached! Parents often comment on how reassuring it is to feel that they know someone at the school.

COMING AND GOING

Of course, not everyone can make it to opening day of school. With the whirlpool of other commitments involved in moving or in simply maintaining the overseas pace, appearing on the school's doorstep at the appointed day and the appointed hour is simply impossible for some. However, put your conscience at rest: students assure us that parental presence on the first day is "no big deal." The school is prepared to assist students who arrive unaccompanied, and the gregariousness of fellow students is a certainty. Incidentally, current students also express strong feelings about parents remaining in the wings too long. They say it may feel good at the time, but it puts them out-of-phase with other students who have plunged all the way into the life of the school. The continued presence of parents prolongs the half-in, half-out stage. If you do attend orientation and feel strongly that staying around for a while is advisable, you might want to consider busying yourself with tours or shopping. Pulling your child away from school meals, events, and even routines to be with you only makes him "different" and slows the crucial process of establishing comfortable social groupings and routines within the school.

FROM THE HOME FRONT

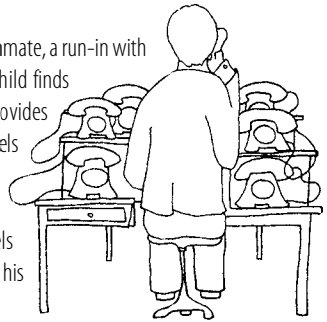
In some ways, the worst is over. The practical problems of getting Susan packed off, those awful goodbyes, and the return to the empty, quiet house are behind you. But Susan is still part of you, and you still worry and want to smooth her way as best you can. Long-distance parenting is a highly specialized skill, so the following bits of advice come to you from the real experts: experienced boarding students and parents.



DO'S AND DON'TS FOR EASING ADJUSTMENT

1. *Don't Overwork the Telephone*

Often a child will have minor difficulties such as a squabble with his roommate, a run-in with a teacher, or a minor disciplinary infraction. It is important that your child finds the channels set up to solve the problem. Overworking the telephone provides your child with the alternative of handing his troubles over to you. He feels better, but nothing constructive has been done to solve the problem or to learn how to go about solving the problem responsibly. When the telephoning goes into extra innings, you feel needed and your child feels cared for; but you may be delaying indefinitely, or even permanently, his complete adjustment to the boarding community.



2. *Don't Confuse Self Pity with Affection*

"Don't you miss us dear, we miss you..." followed by sobs and tears, or "Every time I think of you there and me here, I cry my eyes out. I can't do a single thing for days." Every year there are students who have all the equipment to adjust quickly and smoothly to boarding school and to benefit tremendously from the experience. However, it becomes apparent after several months that they haven't made any adjustment at all and are not likely to do so. Around Thanksgiving they may announce that they are leaving at Christmas. "My Mother needs me," or "My parents cannot survive without me." Those who do leave are tied ever more tightly to their parents at a time when they should be loosening the ties and functioning more on their own. Those who stay invariably have to make an unfair choice. They either cut themselves off from their parents in order to insulate themselves enough to sustain their world at school, or they try to live fully in two worlds simultaneously. In either case, the strain is tremendous.

3. *Do Realize when “Do Something!” only means “Listen to Me”*

When asked what they want most from their parents, experienced students will say patience—endless yards of it. One girl admitted that she had often called home and tried to get her parents to fight her battles for her; in the end what she really wanted was the reassurance that her parents still loved her. She admitted later that she wanted to be listened to, soothed, and calmed; essentially she needed to take a momentary time-out before going back to running her own life. When she made the call she thought she wanted Mom and Dad to “do something.” She realized later she could cope just fine as long as she knew they cared.

4. *Do Overburden the Mailman...*

Where phone calls can trigger emotional reactions, letters are always uplifting. The mails are a low-key way to affirm the family bond without jeopardizing independence. Once again, the tone needs to emphasize light family business and news. Current students speak out clearly against depressing letters, but they speak up for quantities of mail.

Students insist that withholding letters as a way of compelling them to write more is the wrong form of persuasion. “We need those letters even if we aren’t being very good about writing our own,” explains one student with no signs of writer’s cramp. Keeping the mail coming may be the most important morale builder of them all. It is the overwhelming response when students are asked what parents can do to help.

5. *Do Provide Incentives*

Give your children something to look forward to upon their return from school. As one student said “My Parents always had a steak on the grill and champagne on ice when I returned from school, and they repeated the ritual the night before I went back to school. It was something I looked forward to”. Another student recounted, “Whenever I returned home my parents were waiting for me. It didn’t matter the time of day or night. If it was at all possible, they would both be there waiting and ready to talk for at least two hours to catch up on all the news and gossip.” A third student said the going-away surprise tucked into her carry-on luggage had become a welcome tradition. It is important to find ways to show love and appreciation without upsetting delicate emotional balances. These students’ parents were evidently successful.

THE GREAT BALANCING ACT

Frustrating though it may be to anxious parents at home, there’s every likelihood that the first month at school will produce no clear signals. The first phone calls “Do you like it? Are you all right?” may well meet with a variety of answers all of which add up to, “Yes and No.” Or the answer may be a coherent but not very satisfying, “I don’t know.”

SOCIAL SECURITY

It cannot be emphasized enough that the student is engaged full-time in establishing his position in a very new environment. Initially, that great balancing act absorbs all the energy he has. First and foremost, students must establish themselves socially. Roommates need to click and then branch into small groupings of students who accept one another. The initial scramble not to be left out, to find a belonging place, is so absorbing that not much else will register until this social equilibrium is established. Teachers, classes, activities, even inevitable chafing at rules and routines take a back seat to establishing a social circle. Hence, “How do you like boarding school?” may be an almost irrelevant question early on. “Boarding school” as such isn’t in the forefront of awareness yet; social acceptance is. The

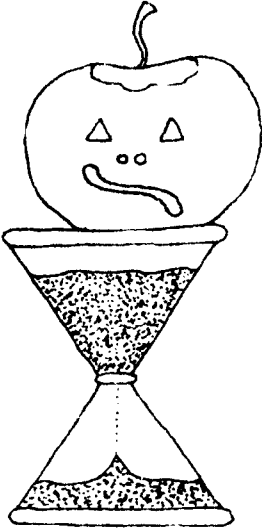
real question, though it might be indelicate to ask, is probably, "Do you feel liked? Do you have people to hang around with?" In the first few weeks of school, social security takes precedence over everything else.

LEARNING THE ROPES

Once social acceptance - social balance - is achieved, the students can respond to the world outside. Again, tremendous energy goes into learning the ropes. It's another balancing act to figure out how much leeway the rules allow, how tough the classes really are, who are the no-nonsense teachers. Even getting the hang of where to be when and what to wear there can be energy-absorbing. When it comes right down to it, the first four to six weeks of school your child is so busy *acting* that he may not have much time left over for *reacting*. You nervously wait for reactions, of course, because goodness knows you could use a little reassurance yourself. But perhaps your frustration at indefinite, ambivalent, hot and cold, or noncommittal answers will subside somewhat if you realize that your child is probably too busy catching his social balance to be able to analyze that balance. In truth, you will learn to take soundings as the year progresses rather than to rely on conclusions at any given point.

MID-FALL DOLDRUMS

REACTION TO ROUTINE



The first four to six weeks of boarding school for most students are a full, exciting, scary, exhausting time. They are meeting new friends, going to a new school, operating by a new code of rules... in short they are overhauling lifestyles. For many, not only is life more restrictive but the pace is faster than any previously maintained, especially during the weekdays. Understandably enough, once the student has tackled the many challenges head-on and brought them under some kind of control, it happens that one morning he may wake up disgruntled.

He is out of sorts for two reasons. The first is a delayed reaction, a sort of emotional whiplash. The commotion of uprooting from home, saying goodbye to friends, packing, leaving parents, arriving in a new country, meeting new friends and teachers, and adjusting to the whole new world is over. All of a sudden he has a moment to catch his breath; he has a moment to realize that he was forced to change. It doesn't matter whether the change was for the better. It is simply that he has had to change, and it may not have been his choice.

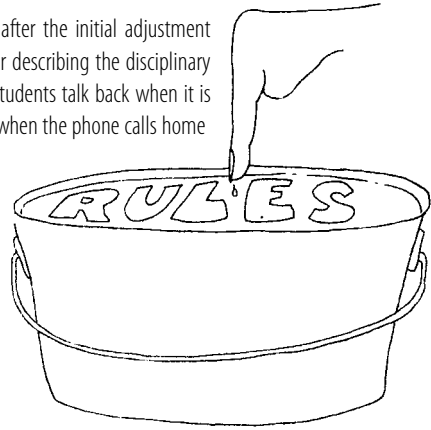
He may also begin to resent routine. The upheaval of the first four to six weeks of school and probably the six to eight weeks that preceded arrival guaranteed daily excitement. There were tasks to complete, deadlines to meet, places to go, things to discover; in short, life was anything but dull. Virtually every student who enters boarding school has ridden a crest of excitement. And since it is not fun to switch from daily excitement to a regular routine, there is always a bit of depression as the settling down occurs. Even students accustomed to boarding life feel the change of pace.

It is curious that in this fast-paced era students are often better at *adjusting* to a new routine than they are at actually practicing it. Often the anger voiced at this point by students is simple frustration over the fact that life is no longer unpredictable and therefore sufficiently exciting. Hence the anger itself can be its own kind of excitement — a way to keep the pot boiling in case the day-to-day simmer was becoming tepid.

TESTING AND REACTING

It is within this atmosphere of unrest and some internal turmoil that students begin to test the rules, their teachers, and their parents. There are at least three possible reasons. It may be a child's active attempt to re-inject his daily life with excitement. It may be that having become settled and established, he has time to lash out at the elements that caused his world to change so dramatically. Or it may be that he is of an age to challenge rules and authority.

Generally, the testing stage occurs sometime in the Fall after the initial adjustment period. This is when the parents may receive the first letter describing the disciplinary episode. This is when teachers find that previously polite students talk back when it is time to go to the study hall, or turn out their lights. This is when the phone calls home may be somewhat alarming because there is greater insistence or more tears in the voice. This is the testing stage.



The Mid-Fall Doldrums are also when amazing stories may filter home. The reason is simple. Whatever the causes for the slump, be they simple anger at change or a hunger for excitement, the need being expressed must be satisfied. One way to generate excitement is simply to make a mountain out of a mole hill. Thus, a student may have an unfortunate misunderstanding with a teacher and declare henceforward that “none of the teachers care”. Routine disciplinary cases are reported as school-wide disasters. The “October Scare” is also a common phenomenon. Watch for a particularly exciting tale right around Halloween. The Mid-Fall Doldrums are certainly prime time for the famous “Panic Phone Call.”

THE PANIC PHONE CALL OR REACHING FOR THE PARENTAL TEDDY BEAR

“Mom, Dad, I can’t stand this place, PLEASE get me out of here. The food stinks. The people are all jerks. This country is crazy. This school is a prison. There is no free time. They always tell me what to do. My roommate smells. The other boys barge into my room and “BORROW” things without my permission. There’s no closet space. There’s no hot water. My roommate comes from the same state we come from. He also plays tennis and tiddly-winks, so I have a partner. There’s a teacher down the hall who does magic tricks. He’s really good. Maybe if I get to know him he’ll teach me a few of his secrets. Last week during orientation they MADE the WHOLE boarding school go to the beach. Some of us went out on a paddle boat. The food was okay when you were here, but now we have to dress up for dinner and go to the study hall. And the nurse will never let me be sick, and I miss you mummy and daddy, and I can’t STAND this place GET ME OUT OF HERE... I’ll call next week at the same time, it gets me out of the study hall. BYE...” click.

SECOND-GUESSING THE PANIC PHONE CALL

You hang up from the conversation or something similar to it, not sure whether you’re supposed to breathe a sigh of relief or join the Panic. Welcome to the world of Mixed Message. Actually, there’s the bad news and then there’s the good news. The bad news is that your child is scared... maybe even miserable some of the time. The demands have been tremendous and his personal rate of change may have accelerated beyond anything he’s ever known before. At some point, many students want time off from meeting challenge after challenge. Not only is it scary to begin structuring and accounting for one’s life as a boarding school requires, it also consumes a lot of energy. It is natural to experience the exhaustion of growing rapidly and to want to retreat to the safety and warmth of home.

Often too, the Panic Phone Call is simply the child’s way of telling his parents he has invested so much energy in establishing his social and inner equilibrium that he may have temporarily dropped one of the balls (such as academics or discipline) which he is awkwardly learning to juggle. He may be warning you, preparing you, asking you not to be to

angry. Or he may be looking for a little reassurance in advance. He needs to know that if he fails a little here and there, if some adjustments aren't the smoothest and he messes up a little, he will still be loved and valued. This is not to say he can't or won't fight his own battles or face his own challenges; this is simply to say that the experience is new, different, exhausting, and scary; and occasionally he panics.

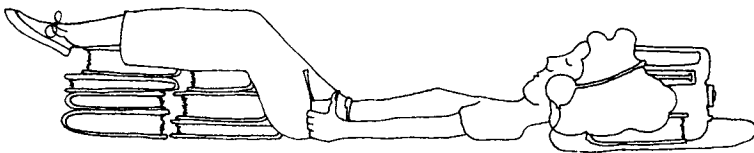
On the other hand, that Panic Phone Call is chock full of good news if your antenna is properly attuned to it. The opportunity to learn magic from a pro, the discovery of a tiddly-winks partner, a getting-acquainted school trip complete with paddle boat may sound like small potatoes weighed against drastic pleas to be sprung from prison... PLEASE. But they are very healthy indicators. As long as there is reference to new interests, sites visited, friendships developing, funny anecdotes, reactions to teachers, responses to classes or books or almost any trivia of daily life, there is indication that the acclimatization process is well under way. Once you have your first signals that your child has plunged into the ebb and flow of boarding life, you are in a position to take the Panic Phone Call in stride. Ups and downs are survivable as long as there is involvement and interest.

What signals real trouble to an experienced boarding school staff is not the tears of outrage or anger; momentary panics are natural when the challenge is enormous and not always sought or understood. But when the student shows signs of remaining a permanent outsider — no interests, no friends, no fun, no day-to-day plans, no especially close teacher, no vitality—then there is cause for concern. If the normal level of chatter about daily life does not accompany "PLEASE get me out of here," it is time to activate that contact with whatever person at the school is closest to you and your child. For that matter, if you aren't quite sure how to read the signals, by all means make your own mini-panic phone call to the school. It may be reassuring to hear another perspective; or you may have wisely initiated the parent/school cooperation that will head off a problem before it escalates.

SIDE-STEPPING THE TEDDY BEAR REACH

Precisely how you will work with the school to help adjust your child's equilibrium will certainly depend on your child's personality and the exact nature of the problem. However, there are some general principles to be observed. Somewhere between changing your job and relocating the rest of the family, on the one hand, and hanging up on Susan's tale of woe, there lies a wise course of action.

You probably will eventually strike a balance between sympathy and firmness. You can "kill with kindness" by rescuing too soon or by wholeheartedly sharing the emotion of the moment. Or you can be so unfeeling in your insistence that Susan "calm down and grow up" that she will feel really deserted. Experienced boarding students recommend patience again—listening and caring but no hasty action. One student said it clearly: "As long as we think there might be a way out, we make the worst of it. If our parents make it clear we're going to finish the year, we make the best of it. It's as simple as that". Once again, patience, caring, and firmness will often see a child through; and contact with the school will help determine the right course of action.



One final consideration: it is seldom necessary to remove a student from boarding school mid-stream, but if this rare event occurs, the way it is handled is extremely important. Once the boarding commitment is undertaken, arresting or altering the process may come to be translated in the child's mind as "I've failed; I can't do what the other kids can do." Or it may be translated as "When the going gets rough, Mom and Dad will take care of it for me." It is essential, therefore, that as much careful counseling be devoted to ending the boarding experience as was devoted to beginning it. Once again you can rely for assistance upon the people at school who have watched a great many students and parents learn to cope with boarding life.

BOARDING SCHOOL CLASSICS

The Panic Phone Call or even the Chronic Grumble Phone Call will generally center on certain predictable themes. If you hear them in advance, you may be able to field them or at least help keep them in perspective. They are absolutely classic boarding school complaints, and it is the rare parent who will not hear some combination of these during the first year of boarding life.

FOOD

Food is always a chronic issue because it is so central to each student's daily routine. It is bound to be different because food available in a foreign country and cooked in an institution or on a large scale is just not the same as at home.

RULES

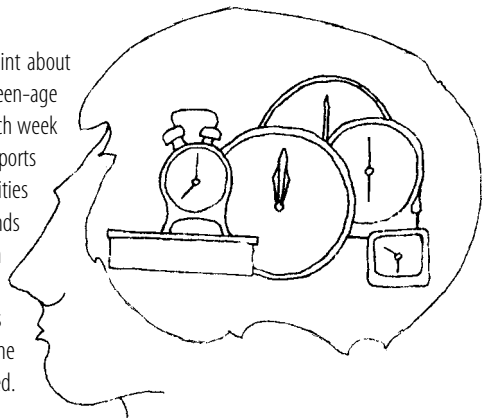
Rules are never popular because they are restrictive. Rules designed for a community of students are less popular because there is little or no room for individualized treatment. Since they are the main codes by which everyone must live, sooner or later each individual will feel he has a cause for complaint either regarding the rule itself or because of the way it was or wasn't enforced.

INSUFFICIENT FREE TIME

Boarding school is a very structured environment. During the typical weekday, only the odd half hour or 45 minutes are unscheduled.

INSUFFICIENT ACTIVITIES

It is curious that the same list that includes a complaint about not having enough free time also contains the classic teen-age complaint about "nothing to do." At least two days each week at TASIS, students are required to select afternoon sports and/or activities. Weekends feature a selection of activities and day or overnight trips. Granted, some weekends are more exciting than others, but much depends on individual tastes and on the willingness to search out or plan something to do. It also depends on willingness to sign up for an event even if the roommate, the boyfriend, or particular social group is not also interested.



TEACHERS DON'T CARE

The time commitment required of all boarding school teachers is phenomenal. To be a boarding school teacher requires a tremendous personal commitment as well. Boarding school teachers on the whole are a very concerned group; they would not choose to live surrounded by adolescents otherwise. Students are sometimes frustrated because they don't realize that their resident teacher after teaching five classes, supervising an afternoon sport or activity, then supervising dinner and study hall, is now impatient about getting the boys in their rooms and their lights out. This is not because he doesn't care, but rather because he has two sets of tests to grade and two classes yet to prepare before he can go to bed.

STUDENT BODY

"The kids aren't as good here as they were at the old school," or "These kids are stuck up," or "There are too many (or not enough) foreign kids here." At all TASIS schools there is a vast range within the student body. Often forty or more nationalities are represented in the boarding section. The range of abilities is served by programs from English-as-a-Second Language to Advanced Placement, or the International Baccalaureate, and there is a vast range in attitudes, back-grounds, and abilities as well. Some students have lived all over the world and speak as many as five languages. Others have never before left the part of the country in which they were born. Consequently, there is a tremendous variety within the student body. To many students, this comes as a shock at first. However, toward the end of the year it becomes one of the acknowledged strengths.

LOCATION

For better or for worse, no place else is like home. If your child is accustomed to the people, the customs, the language and the systems of his home country, then any other country is going to be different and may not measure up, from his point of view. Foreign countries necessitate adjustments, and that responsibility falls on the shoulders of your child. (Hint: children often copy attitudes from their parents.)

BAD COMPANY

An ever-present and often disconcerting complaint concerns other students whose behavior falls below the family's standards or the student's own personal standards. Listening to the (possibly exaggerated) reports of what "the other kids are doing," parents understandably fear that the child will keep "bad company." The company the child keeps and his choice of friends certainly are matters for deep concern, but there are some points to consider when this complaint is voiced.

In a boarding school, students know far more about one another's lives than is usual in a day school. In a day school, what the "other crowd" does after school or on weekends is not particularly apparent. But a boarding school is something of a fishbowl in that all students are in close proximity to one another at all times. In any school, students' out-of-school behaviors vary. This is true of boarding schools as well except that there is no such thing as out-of-school behavior. Therefore, you may hear accounts of "what the other kids are doing" that wouldn't normally have come to your attention in the day school world. However, there are many social groupings, and it is more necessary for your child to associate with those who test or break the rules than it was at Hometown High. There are many good, well-behaved students to choose as friends. The others can be avoided.

LAUNDRY

Another common source of complaint is laundry. Like food, laundry can never be personalized the way it is at home. Things are folded differently, shirts may have been starched, etc. Care is less individualized. Also because of the size of the laundry, socks or underwear may occasionally turn up missing. Occasionally even a T-shirt or a pair of pants with real sentimental value will be temporarily misplaced. These setbacks, however monumental to the individual, are rare but are part of the climate of complaint that can arise.

HEAT

Compared to the United States, which is surely the world's central heating paradise, almost no place is temperature-controlled to such perfection. Boarders overseas for the first time in cold climates almost universally find this one of their most difficult adjustments. Students, of course, are prone to blame the school for conditions which are actually standard throughout the country. Students also have difficulty understanding that few European hot water systems are prepared for over a hundred humans to shower at exactly 7:30am. Pleas to develop alternate shower times often fall on deaf ears... meanwhile the volume of complaint rises. Since creature comforts are important, this area can be most sensitive.

FACILITIES

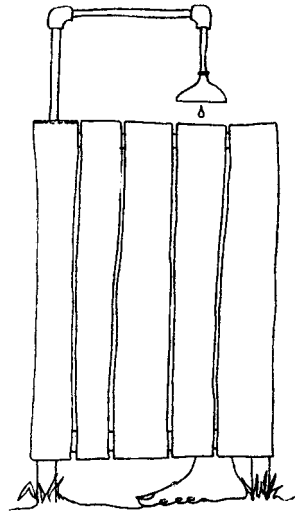
Your child probably has a very narrow base of comparison. Instead of comparing his current boarding school to what is standard in any good boarding school, he understandably compares facilities with what he knows at home. As mentioned before, the student-to-bathroom ratio, the closet space, even the personalized decor will not match home. Nor do European boarding schools often have the athletic facilities of a hometown school committed to sports. When anything is branded as woefully inadequate, the really telling question is "What are you comparing it to?"

ROOMMATES

Despite the Boarding Coordinator's best attempts at matching habits and interests, sometimes roommates just are not meant for each other.

But before a conclusion is too quickly drawn, students will be given help working out differences. Part of the growing up process at boarding school is making an honest effort before throwing in the towel. Furthermore, a wise Faculty Resident knows that the most adamant demands to be removed forever, from the contemptible presence of the horrid roommate, may blow over in the two days it takes to reconcile the spat.

It is also true that roommate changes if the school is full can start the dominoes falling. If Carol and Susan want to move out from Betty and Jane and room together, what happens when Betty and Jane can't stand each other and don't want to move in together? The more people involved, the more combinations, the worse the headaches. No wonder roommate changes are not made whimsically. Parents should understand the school's insistence on "due process" while at the same time alerting the school if they feel a deep incompatibility really is developing.



OVERSEAS COSTS

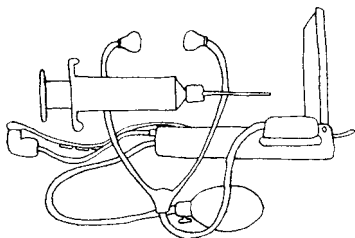
One of the facts of overseas life is that the cost of living is often much greater than people expect. Hamburgers and pizzas may cost two or three times what they cost at home. Housing is often exorbitant. Books and other school items have to be flown-in and understandably affect the budget as does chronic inflation. Because of location and circumstances, the cost of an overseas education is often greater than one in the United States.

This perspective can be difficult to convey to students. They somehow feel that because their education is expensive they have purchased a service rather than joined a community. This can result in the various unreasonable expectations discussed earlier. Students are not always equipped to analyze a foreign economy and are often prone to assume home country standards. Parents who have adjusted to the price of a meal in a fancy restaurant in Saudi Arabia or who always buy clothing in the United States can probably begin to explain international economies to their children.

THEFT

In a community of adolescents the problem of “borrowing” and theft is inevitable. A common-sense approach to the problem is recommended. Do not let your son or daughter bring unnecessary valuables to school. A strong box or a foot locker with a padlock may secure any necessary valuables. Since many things are lost rather than stolen, valuables or treasured items should be carefully marked whenever possible to facilitate their identification if they are found. When you send money, send it as a cheque to the Business Office.

NURSE/DOCTOR COMPETENCY



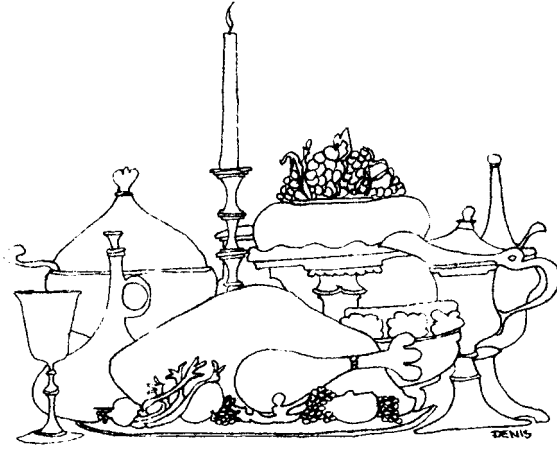
Medical service is very different throughout the world. Methods, equipment, and names of medicines will often be different from those at home. This can be disconcerting. A common complaint may be that the nurse, who knows a strep throat when she sees one, sends a student to school even though he complains of a sore throat. Another possible complaint may arise when the doctor simply prescribes fluids and rest, and leaves off aspirin because he doesn't believe in the too liberal use of medicines. To the student who is accustomed to staying home whenever he has a sore throat, or receiving aspirin whenever he asks for it, these actions seem like gross incompetence. Medical service, like food, occasions suspicion when it is different in any way from the accustomed. For that matter, even at home, medical care is a steady source of critical comment. As always, when in doubt contact the school, but also be aware that students regularly cast aspersions on the nurse and school-associated doctors. Often, the crux of the problem is being sent to school when sleeping late would feel ever so much better.

LOOKING AHEAD

If you're at the point of concluding that Murphy's Law was coined in a boarding school—"if it can go wrong, it will"—remember that students, like newspapers, are likely to report bad things as news while taking the good things for granted. On the assumption that you will have no problems coping with cheerful reports, the emphasis here, too, is on the trouble spots. That's where you need help, of course; but remember it's hardly a balanced view. With the holiday season just around our chronological corner, however, some of the good things may be on the rise. So take heart; it's safe to keep reading!

HOLIDAY SEESAW

HOLIDAY CHEER



As the boarding school world turns on its axis towards the Christmas holiday, a change of social climate normally sets in. Somehow Thanksgiving dinner often opens the era of alternating highs and lows which characterise the weeks prior to vacation. Thanksgiving dinner is an emotional experience for many students because it is often the first time they realise that this group of people who were strangers in September are now the family who share the holiday. There is the togetherness of having come through the same trials and tribulations of homesickness, of having adjusted to independence and having passed Mr. Z's algebra tests. There is the recognition of the real camaraderie of shared, meaningful experiences.

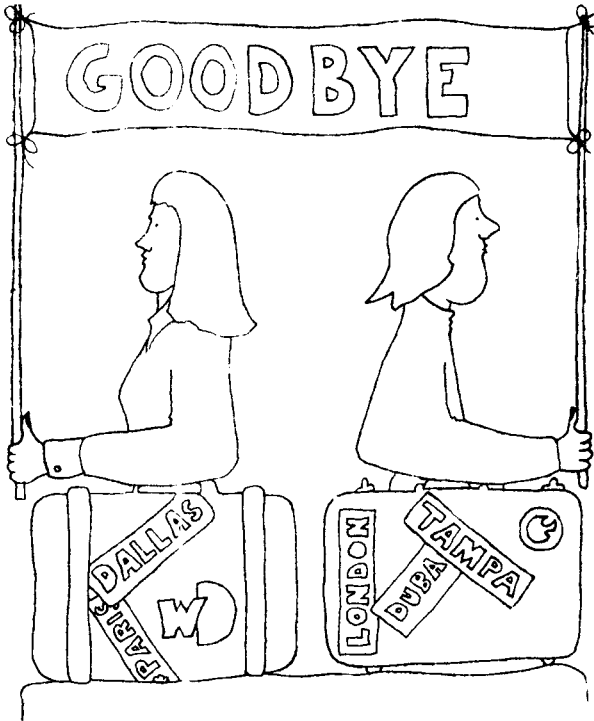
As a matter of fact, the parent trying to penetrate the cloud cover of lonesome letters and tearful telephone calls might want to be alert to Thanksgiving reactions. A certain amount of missing Aunt Ethel and Mom's turkey dressing is to be expected, but is there any hint of feeling for the new community... any flicker of warmth toward someone or something? If so, adjustment is moving right along. If not, the negativism may be serious enough to warrant contacting the school.

This recently awakened sense of community often develops into heightened awareness of valued friendships and experiences as Christmas holidays draw nearer. About the time of leaving the new life, however temporarily, the new life starts to look good. The seasonal festivities do their part as well. Christmas dances, banquets, Santa Claus parties, gift-giving, and decorations all do wonders to break the monotony of routine living, as does anticipation of change. And most importantly, there is the exciting prospect of rejoining the family for the holidays.

HOLIDAY FEAR

However, the eager anticipation is paralleled by certain anxieties. Will my visa number come through on time? Is my ticket in order? Will I have enough money for overweight charges at the airport if I pack all my summer things? How will I survive three weeks without my boyfriend? Mom and Dad may not be able to do much about the absent boyfriend, but visas, tickets, and sufficient funds are manageable. Parents must be aware of the regulations of the country in question, inform the school if necessary, and have all arrangements made in good time. One of the saddest sights in a whole year of boarding school is the face of the student left behind to wait for clearance when others joyously take off for vacation.

Flight plans should also be arranged well in advance, respecting the school calendar whenever humanly possible and providing explanation as well as prior arrangement when not possible. Do not be taken in by the timeworn "All the kids are leaving early... nothing happens in the last few days anyway... I'll die if I don't get home sooner." Orderly vacation openings and closings of school depend on parents and school cooperating in holding the line with respect to the school calendar.



As suggested in the “Edge of the Nest” chapter, money miseries are especially compelling before the holidays. By all means, plan ahead to authorize extra expenditures from party dresses to Christmas presents to the farewell dinner with roommates. Or don’t authorize extra expenditures if the understanding was that your child would save up for Christmas, but do be sure your instructions were clear and understood. If overweight luggage is a possibility it is also wise to plan ahead.

Two more points need to be made about the low end of the pre-Christmas seesaw. The first is the unpleasant truth that theft is always on the increase before holidays for the simple reason that the CD or calculator or whatever is stolen can be packed immediately and taken home, thereby eliminating the risk of a room search and discovery. In the best of all possible worlds, students would be above stealing from one another, but the unfortunate fact is that theft is almost inevitable when so many teenagers live so closely together. As mentioned previously, most valuables should not be brought to the school in the first place; all possessions should be looked after with care, especially before holidays. The school cannot be responsible for items not deposited with it and is usually unable to discover a theft which takes place hours before boarding a plane. Your child will be reminded to take extra care at this time of year, but you might want to underscore the reminder. Even a small theft has a jarring effect and can sour an otherwise good term.

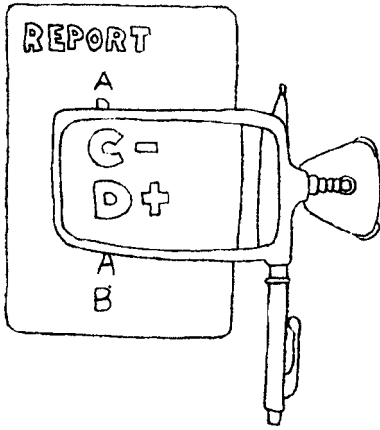
Another source of let-down during the Thanksgiving to Christmas period is the empty mailbox blues. Solicitous families who really kept the mailman jumping during the first two months may be slacking off about now. Everybody is doing a little less missing; James has been pretty casual with his infrequent letters requesting more allowance; life has settled into a routine which contains fewer letters. James will be home soon anyway. Actually, as he faces the prospect of returning to the fold, he can really use another flurry of letters assuring him that home is still there and that he still has his place.

HOME SWEET HOME

The first vacation home from boarding school can be tense in some ways. Mom and Dad hover anxiously. How has Susan changed? What is the school really like? They try to get a reading on all those conflicting signals. Will frantic phone calls fade to nothingness in the clear light of face-to-face contact? They’re ready for answers. Chances are Susan is ready to: (a) sleep a lot; (b) check out her friends; and (c) eat everything in sight. Possibly your child’s first objective, understandably, may be to wallow in the luxuries of home before becoming a communicative person, but your willingness to talk will be welcome whenever the time is right.

Or there may be more to it than that. Curiously enough, sensitive students often articulate mixed feelings on the eve of returning home. Often they are dimly aware that the newly won self-confidence and independence are precarious and may not bear up in the context of the old family environment. As one determined young lady said, “They’ll try to treat me the same old way, but I’m not the same old me. I’ve been deciding things for myself and doing pretty well. I don’t want to go backward.” A certain standoffishness at first may be a simple matter of establishing a new balance in familiar territory. Sensitive parents may be able to make the slight alterations necessary to permit growth to demonstrate itself.

GRADE REPORTS



With any luck first term grades and your child will be home at the same time. How to cope with this moment of truth? There's a pretty fair chance that first term grades may be a disappointment to all concerned. Any time a child changes schools, grades are likely to show it; but this is especially true of boarding school when a child has changed homes as well as schools. The simple fact of the matter is that until the student has achieved social security in his new setting, the bulk of his energy will be poured into achieving that new balance. While he copes with the dire necessity of making friends, establishing his identity, and learning the social ropes, he has very little left for concentrating on chemistry or absorbing his algebra.

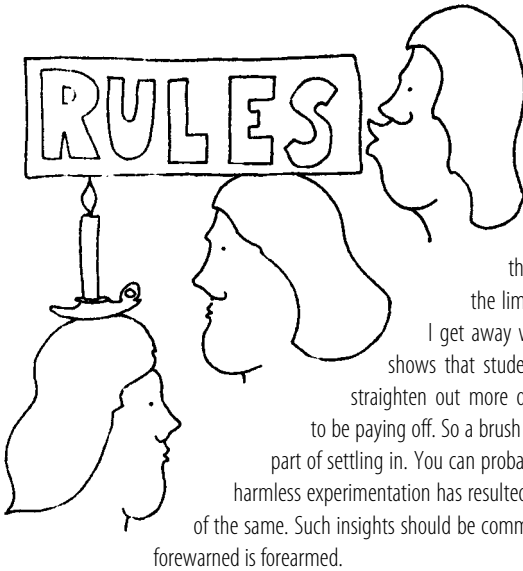
Common as the phenomenon of the first term "adjustment grade" is to boarding school staffs, it can come as a shock to parents. "Susan never got a grade below a B in her life; now she has three C's," and the worried parent comes up with a variety of explanations:

1) Susan is too irresponsible to study without close supervision from Mom and Dad— she's been goofing off; 2) The new school is academically much tougher than Hometown High; 3) Susan must be sick or too homesick to study; 4) The new school isn't doing the job.

Susan herself may have plenty of explanations: 1) My teachers don't care; 2) I don't get along with my roommate; 3) I feel so cooped up I can't concentrate; 4) Mr. Z. has it in for me; 5) The classes are boring.

Any combination of the above may contain elements of truth, but beware of single factor explanations or generalized conclusions. Instead you might listen between the lines for how the social acclimatization is progressing because probably until it is in good working order, not much else will be. You might explore this possibly new territory for an explanation of grades; but remember that you are still the experienced motivator where your particular child is concerned, and it is important for you to continue with whatever works. Do not make the mistake of bowing out of the picture because the boarding school is now "in charge." Ultimately your child answers to you for the use he makes of the educational opportunities you provide. He must feel that your involvement, concern, and expectations are in no way diminished by the fact that he studies away from home. Fortunately for all concerned, second term grades generally reflect a better social adjustment as well as parental influence liberally applied over vacation.

DISCIPLINE



Similarly, if your child has experienced disciplinary difficulties, the hour of reckoning may be at hand. Once again, your child needs to feel that your involvement, concern, and expectations follow him to boarding school. However, there are three points to keep in mind as you react to the disciplinary situation. The first concerns the likelihood that students new to boarding school may test the limits. A certain miscalculation of "how much can I get away with" may even be a healthy thing. Experience shows that students who get into trouble early on sometimes straighten out more quickly than those whose brinkmanship seems to be paying off. So a brush with a boarding school law may be a necessary part of settling in. You can probably tell better than anyone whether some fairly harmless experimentation has resulted in a lesson learned or whether to expect more of the same. Such insights should be communicated to the Dean of Students; for him, too, forewarned is forearmed.

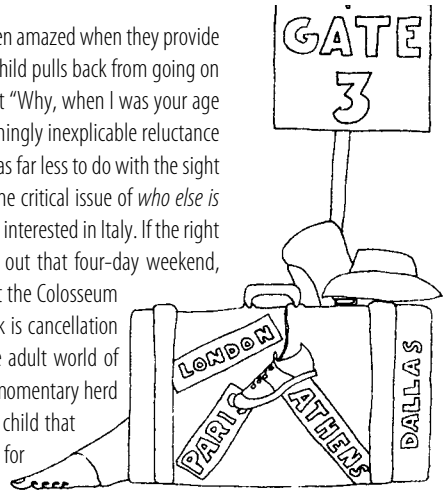
Point two is that the boarding school will have established a penalty which in its view is a complete and adequate punishment. Students become understandably outraged when they get punished all over again at home. This "double jeopardy" may be warranted if Mom and Dad know James well enough to know that what he suffered at school scarcely dented him, but any punishment at home should only balance what was done at school. Starting from scratch is probably overdoing it.

Conversely, it may seem to Mom and Dad that the school overdid it or that James was treated unfairly. Certainly James may have a vested interest in such an interpretation. It is difficult to understand, out of context, the gravity of certain behavior. What could be minor at home may be major when well over a hundred other teenagers might be tempted to try it. Punishments are geared to how serious a behavior is to the well-being of the community as well as to the moral gravity of the act itself. All of this involves a delicate balance and may be hard to understand from the outside looking in. At this point it is imperative that the parents support the school if their child is to continue there. Once the school's discipline is undermined by parents agreeing with James that he has been mistreated, it will be very difficult to ride out the year. But before such drastic polarizations have to occur, the wise parent who fears that the school may have reacted too harshly should immediately direct his questions to the school's administration before drawing conclusions. As everyone knows, there are two sides to every confrontation. The Dean of Students will no doubt be able to explain clearly the facts of the offense and the consequences he deemed appropriate. If Mom and Dad, having heard from both James and from the school, weigh the two reports and still feel that James has a case, they should then seek an understanding with the Dean of Students that does not undermine his disciplinary balance with the child and within the boarding community. If the parents are not able to retain their confidence that the school will be right enough, enough of the time, then a serious breakdown has occurred and a remedy will have to be sought.

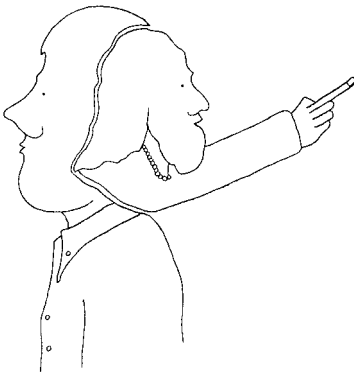
BACK-TO-SCHOOL TALK

Sometime before your child returns to school, you might want to review that earlier discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of boarding school. If you oversold, now is when you'll hear about it. In fact, you'll probably hear about it anyway. You risk hearing more than you want to hear about how "Boarding school isn't all it's cracked up to be," but you stand to gain a clearer focus for your child. You may have to sift through a few layers of what the crowd thinks before you're in touch with your child's own personal analysis of what he has gained and lost by attending boarding school; but it will be worth the effort if you send him back with a new resolve to think for himself, take responsibility for himself, and do something with his opportunities.

A specific you might discuss is school trips. Parents are often amazed when they provide funds and make arrangements, and then suddenly their child pulls back from going on a school trip. It can provoke an old fashioned but heartfelt "Why, when I was your age I would have given my eye-teeth..." Chances are the seemingly inexplicable reluctance has a simple explanation. The desirability of a given trip has far less to do with the sight to be seen and the experience to be enjoyed than with the critical issue of *who else is going?* If the right pals are going to Spain, no way is Susan interested in Italy. If the right pals are staying home, listening to music, and hanging out that four-day weekend, with maybe a party to go to, Susan may well decide that the Colosseum can wait. The practical consequence of this teenage quirk is cancellation fees or even a cancelled trip for lack of participants. The adult world of trips negotiated in advance and the adolescent world of momentary herd instinct are often incompatible. If you can convince your child that the travel has merit independent of the companions, good for you. It's worth a try at least!

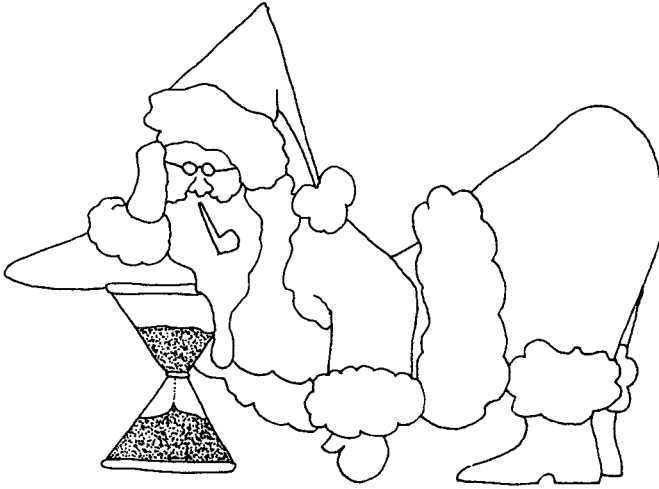


BACK-TO-SCHOOL BRIEFINGS



After all, you are a bit of an expert. A letter from you to the Head of the School, the Dean of Students, or your child's advisor could be very helpful at this point. What insights, observations, tips, concerns have resulted from this vacation together? Sometimes parents feel that they ought not to interfere or that they will be seen as troublesome or "hovering" if they express themselves. Nothing could be less true. A parent's-eye-view of a child can be invaluable. The mother who wrote describing the similarities between her daughter and a defensive but loyal pet dog gave the advisor an understanding he could not have gained nearly so soon. Another mother shared a short story she had written about her son's difficult childhood. Again, the concerned adults at school gained precious insight in a very short time. The conversational letter is welcomed and eagerly sought, and it is early enough in the year at this point to have some impact.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

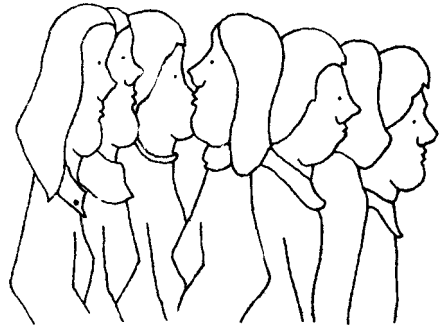


Post-holidays let-down is something we've all experienced, but to have a really first-class post-holiday let-down, you should probably try a boarding school. Once the initial excitement of greeting friends and tacking up the new poster is over, the February Blahs set in, It's a long, long time until spring vacation, longer still 'till summer. The year felt half-over at Christmas break, but the calender holds out for more time. Then the weather turns grey. Routines are dragging endlessly into the future. It's practically a conspiracy.

THE GROUP MOOD

The stage is now set for a curious phenomenon of boarding school life: the Group Mood. Personal moods always have a slightly arbitrary, irrational cast to them. Triggered though they may be by something real, they usually have an off-the-deep-end quality as well. Often one knows better but just can't shake it. That personal mood has points in common with the Group Mood.

Group Moods usually crystallize around something concrete: say, ten days without sunshine, the expulsion of a popular student, or laundry returned late. What happens is that a lot of people talk about how lousy they feel, crediting or not crediting the source. Eventually those



who only felt a little lousy find there's more to talk about if they feel a lot lousy. People who felt pretty good suddenly realize they're being left out. They're either ignored or, heaven forbid, viewed as downright peculiar for not agreeing to feel what, by now, EVERYBODY feels. The Group Mood is upon them, but they don't know it. An emotional "herd instinct" is in control.

Group Moods can be wallowed in deliciously. The more they spread, the more the sentiment is confirmed. There's the wondrous excitement of shared emotion. Twenty girls with eight boxes of Kleenex pack into one room to hug and cry, cry and hug. Boys work themselves up to some state of rowdiness none of them would have contemplated singly but which certainly feels terrific.

The shrewd parent can spot a Group Mood in several ways. Certain tip-off words occur: "everybody," "all the kids," "always," "everytime," "never." Especially when the reaction seems out of character, sudden, contrary to other signals your child has sent, you may be hot on the trail of a rampaging Group Mood.

Normally, Group Moods come and go, students and parents learn perspective, and life goes on. But occasionally there are casualties. Often casualties are economic. Mom flies in to find out what on earth is wrong; James has never sounded so distraught before. Usually she helps settle him down and nothing's lost but the price of a ticket and a hotel bill. Sometimes the casualty is academic as well if parents decide that James must fly home, thereby missing school. It does rarely happen that a bewildered parent succumbs and actually withdraws the child from school.

At any of these points, close contact with the school could save the situation. There are times when any experienced boarding school administrator knows that the hysteria-factor will soon peak and diminish. The best advice is to wait, go slow, not to panic, and possibly even squelch the emotional tide with some level-headed parental firmness.

PREDICTABLE BUMPS

The Great Depression days at school will surely take their toll at home. Just as students hit certain predictable bumps as the year progresses, if you haven't hit them ahead of schedule, now is when you can expect to be jolted by the following.

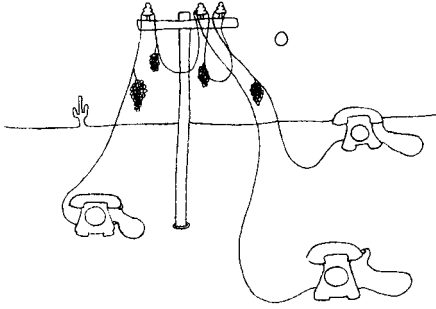
THE FIRST EXPULSION

This will happen to someone else's child of course; but when it does, chances are yours will react. Unless the student expelled wasn't much liked or his crime was horrendously low in the eyes of the community, there is bound to be a ground swell in support of the martyr. "It wasn't fair." "The teachers hate the kids." "This place is a prison." "All he did was..." Emotions run very high when a student is suddenly removed from the community. There's a sense of shock, loss, and for some, the fear that "It could happen to me." Because personal loyalties and friendships mean so much to teenagers, objectivity doesn't come easily at times like these. Bear with your child while the feelings run strong and expect a return to normal within a week or two of the expulsion.

THE FIRST DISCIPLINARY LETTER

Perhaps this one does happen to your child. If it does, hopefully some of the preceding nuggets will stand you in good stead. Your child may be testing the limits; he may be lashing out against routine; he may be telling you he wishes he were back at home. It all may just be part of growing up. For diagnosis of the gravity of the situation and in order to avoid "double jeopardy" punishment, contact with the Dean of Student Life is highly recommended.

DISAPPOINTING GRADES



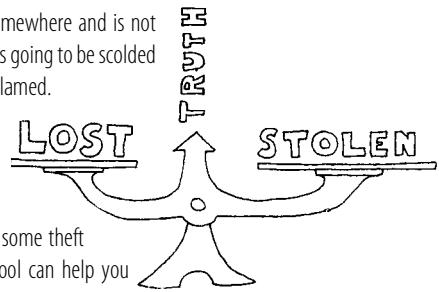
By the end of first semester that “adjustment grace period” is pretty well used up. Actually, the verdict is still out in some ways because certain children adjust more slowly than others; but it is probably time to understand where the problem lies. Is the academic program really too difficult? Is a tutor needed? Is there a specific problem? Is it delayed adjustment or that old but real standby, poor study habits? If the grades are different from what you had reason to expect, the best advice again is to be in close contact with the school.

I DIDN'T LOSE IT

Parents who spend good money on their child's possessions are often distressed by reports of theft. While theft does regrettably occur, the following scenarios occur as often, if not more often. Parents must sometimes listen carefully for the truth of the matter.

It is embarrassing when the student has left something somewhere and is not sure where. It is embarrassing especially when he knows he is going to be scolded if he lost it. He may reason that if it was stolen he can't be blamed.

An experienced boarding school staff knows that the category “theft” often covers much that is really carelessness or chicanery. Parents, too, should be aware that there may be a fine line between “lost” and “stolen.” However, since some theft does unfortunately take place, direct contact with the school can help you sort out the situation.



It is also easy to decide that a missing article of clothing was “lost” in the laundry. Once again, James won't have to hear about how he still can't keep track of his things if the laundry was responsible. Once again, experienced boarding people know that the laundry is a convenient scapegoat. Students may even honestly blame the laundry, only to find later that the roommate borrowed the shirt or that it turns up in the snack bar. The Dean knows that over half the items “lost” show up eventually. If the school adopts a “wait and see” attitude toward such losses, it is based on experience.

JUST AROUND THE CORNER

The best thing about February and March is that April and May are on the way. After the many warnings about what might go wrong, you should be ready to hear about things that go right. There may be a secret psychology here: expect the worst so that you can be pleasantly surprised. Maybe yours will be the year when the sun shines away the February Blahs. Maybe your child likes boarding life so much that your feelings are almost hurt. Maybe the Panic Phone Call never came through. Perhaps the Predictable Bumps lay in someone else's path. Be that as it may, the Year End Euphoria stage coming up is your well-earned reward for having seen your child and yourself through the worst of the first year of boarding school. It may not quite be time to celebrate, but it certainly is time to start planning that celebration!

YEAR-END EUPHORIA



The end of the year catches everyone by surprise, including the parents. Following the February Blahs and the March Melancholies, a fresh wind begins to flow. All of a sudden a variety of things happen all at once. The entire school returns from Spring Break rested, energized, and armed with stories to tell. The weather breaks. Now students can go to the beach, go camping, tromp around the local hills, and use the outdoor athletic facilities. Students begin comparing tans as well as grades. New school-wide activities take place. Warmer weather makes travel options more inviting, and faculty-student athletic competitions do wonders for togetherness.

Finally, faculty and students alike realize that time is running out. Seniors are graduating; some students are not returning because their families are being transferred; some faculty are changing jobs. Suddenly the members of the community become poignantly aware that they have shared much and grown together, and as a result, everyone genuinely likes one another. And now that the year is almost over there is a magic that exists.

It is a moving experience. Never before have so many individuals seemed so important. The reason is obvious; never before has the individual had to do so much for himself, and never before have so many people (students and teachers alike) helped him do it. Of course few students are aware in February that they will feel this way in May. Thus that euphoric feeling so characteristically present at the end of the year is often a delightful surprise. Once the group mood swings well into the happy zone, it is bound to affect everyone.

MYTHICAL MASS MIGRATIONS

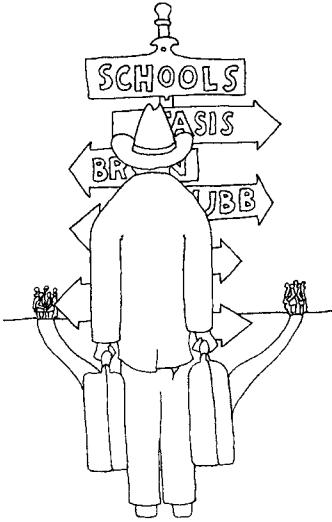
This sharp change of mood can easily confuse some parents. If they have responded to Panic Phone Calls, they may have invested much time and energy in hunting down alternative schools. There were counselors to be seen, letters to be written. In some cases parents will have placed expensive phone calls and actually will have flown to the new school to take a look around and finalize the transfer. They may even have resigned from a position they liked in order to reunite the family at home.

Imagine their surprise when their child a) is horrified beyond description that his parents "went ahead and arranged the new school and now I have to leave all of my friends and start all over again," or b) is adamant about even considering an alternative! "I'd go back to the States if you were transferred but no way would I consider going to another boarding school. I want to graduate from this one with my friends."

Very rarely do the mass migrations looming in February actually materialize in June.

By the end of the year students often conclude that their problems were with boarding school in general and not with the particular boarding school. At that point they generally prefer to stay with familiar surroundings and capitalize on adjustments made rather than start all over. This can cause real trouble if irrevocable arrangements have been set in motion. Moral of the story: try to postpone major decisions until End of Year Euphoria strikes. There may be some surprises.

FITTING BACK IN



Maybe in your own experience you've lived alternately in several countries. Perhaps you've worked abroad and vacationed at home, or perhaps you've regularly visited family in another country. You know that you adjust your mental gears from the one culture and lifestyle to the other when you change countries. The first few days or weeks may be transitional; you're a bit of an outsider until you grow back into it. Or, you've changed since your last visit.

It's hard sometimes for parents and children to realize that the currents of their lives have been flowing swiftly but somewhat separately for a year. When family life resumes, it will be between people who have done some changing and experiencing apart from one another. You certainly won't be strangers to one another, but there will be subtle changes. Trying to be exactly as you were before your child went away to school may not only be difficult but may deny and diminish some of his hard-won progress.

Very likely, your child is noticeably more mature, more able to take care of himself, more able to make sensible decisions, better able to accommodate the needs and rights of others. Actually, not only should you allow him the space to demonstrate this growth, it is even a good idea to see to it that he doesn't backslide into the old, familiar context of home.

The important thing is for you to welcome and support whatever strengths, growth and maturity have developed. If you expect it of your child and give it the space to show itself, you will probably be impressed with what your child has achieved.

And finally, that growth probably hasn't come easy; chances are your child has come to terms with himself and others, faced challenges, bumped off rough edges, survived depressions, and occasionally learned the hard way. Very likely it's been an exciting and strenuous year of incorporating change, forging relationships, stretching himself academically and socially. Now he's crossed the finish line of the first year and he deserves your respect and admiration for what he's done. Chances are he's been brave and beautiful in ways and moments you can only imagine. It's time to be proud of what he's done... and of yourself in a big way for helping him accomplish it.



APPENDIX: THE TASIS WAY

The information here will give you a general orientation to the various services TASIS provides you and your child.

DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM

Your Student Handbook will provide the specifics of which rule infractions are dealt with by the Disciplinary Board (DB), by the Disciplinary Advisory Group (DAG), and by the administration. It will also describe the composition and purpose of these Boards. The key points to be explained here are that penalties escalate with repetition or gravity of infraction, that lying is unacceptable and incurs additional penalty, that punishments are generally quite predictable, and especially that some of them must be taken very seriously. Parents will not necessarily receive an official letter from the Dean of Student Life for each and every incident, but do when the offense is serious enough to warrant DB or DAG attention.

Following the graduated penalties, such as assignment of extra tasks or camping, the especially serious DAG or DB responses are suspension and disciplinary probation. Both of these disciplinary responses are warnings to students and parents that a parting of the ways may be uncomfortably close. Suspension is always a drastic measure that everyone prefers to avoid. It entails family hardship, and removes the student from essential classroom instruction, both of which are undesirable consequences. What suspension does accomplish is to establish clearly that the school will not tolerate the behaviour in question. Students who will risk certain behaviours indefinitely as long as the penalty isn't too stiff will sometimes respond to the severity of suspension. Sometimes, too, students very much need that unexpected trip home so that Mom and Dad can exert strenuous influence in person.

The grim reality, of course, is that if suspension fails to solve the problem, expulsion will be the next logical step. However, often the school can see a problem developing in advance. In that case, gradual build-up of infractions along with a simmering attitude can culminate in social probation. This can be regarded as the anteroom to suspension or expulsion. It warns student and parents alike that the chances have been used up and the next step will be dire.

The best advice, if your child has disciplinary problems, is to contact the school. Your child will benefit from a united front, and the school will benefit from your expertise as your child's most experienced disciplinarian.

THE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Parents should familiarize themselves with The Handbook. It is a highly condensed insight into the real life of the school as well as a working tool employed constantly throughout the year. It is definitive. It is explained in its entirety when students first arrive on campus. "Read your Handbook," echoes in the Dean of Student Life's office as penalties are incurred. Every year it is meticulously revised and re-printed. It has been honed by nearly five decades of TASIS experience.

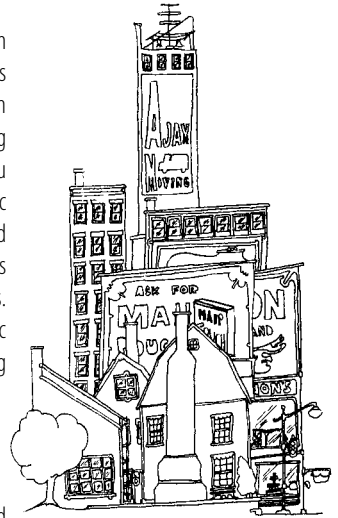
Ignorance is no excuse... on the part of the students or parents. When parents send a student to TASIS they know that these are the ground-rules. By enrolling the students, they have, in effect, agreed to help uphold these rules. By all means, read the Student Handbook with care and take the time to make sure your child understands it and accepts what it means.

ACADEMIC SYSTEM

The TESIS Schools send quarterly grade reports for your information. The grade reports have three significant parts. The letter grade is usually looked at first, but it may not be the most significant piece of information. It is primarily objective and measures the student by a certain yardstick. It is important because it is passed on in transcript form to colleges.

However, for information on where your child needs help, on what is going wrong, the teacher's comments and the effort grade are your best indicators. The teacher's comments are the teacher's message to you. The effort grade notes your child's use of potential. Parents should applaud a high effort grade even if the letter grade is mediocre; similarly they should urge improvement when the letter grade is high but the effort grade is disappointing. An 'A' grade with mediocre effort says that the student is not working to his full capacity. Probably at one time or another we've all played "the most grade for the least efforts" game, but even when we win, we lose in terms of what we could have achieved. TESIS stresses the importance of effort grades.

In addition to the grade reports mailed to you, internal systems may flash warning signals. Unsatisfactory progress reports are given to the student's advisor for follow-through at mid-term, thereby allowing time to turn in missed assignments or to study harder for tests. First term grades are a warning because they are not officially recorded on the transcript. But they do alert you at the halfway point in time to do something if there is a problem. Academic monitoring and probation will apply, once milder measures have proved insufficient. This system involves frequent reports from classroom teachers and various forms of limitation and supervision until the situation improves. Parents and students should be aware that if all measures including academic probation fail, the student will ultimately forfeit the privilege of attending TESIS and will not be invited to return the following year.



SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

TESIS provides support for students with various learning styles who have mild specific learning difficulties. TESIS does not provide special programs for students with severe emotional or severe learning problems. However, it does occasionally happen that a student may hit a snag academically or emotionally and could benefit from help outside the regular classroom. TESIS operates a Learning Resource Center for students who have been identified through testing as needing specialized help. A supplemental fee is charged according to the number of sessions required. Academically, teachers are prepared to provide reasonable out-of-class help, but if a heavy time commitment is necessary, you may want to authorize a tutor. Rates vary, so the Academic Dean can inform you of costs, discuss duration and objectives, and make arrangements. Sometimes even a short spell of tutoring can prevent a student falling hopelessly behind.

The school can also make referrals for professional psychological counseling if you so authorize. Again, costs vary, and how extensive or intensive the counseling should be, can be discussed with the Advisor, School Counselor, Dean of Student Life, and Head of the Upper School.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community Service is sometimes misunderstood or resented for the wrong reasons. Each TASIS student is required to contribute a small amount of time each week to serving either the immediate school community or the broader local community. From doing telephone duty, gardening, or laundry distribution to playing checkers in a retirement home, TASIS students learn to give as well as take. Tasks within the school may be likened to chores at home; they establish that the student is a contributor to the quality of life and not a pampered guest. Tasks outside the school provide the student an opportunity to do something for others... an important ingredient in building character.

ALUMNI TIES

In your first year at TASIS, the alumni program probably won't be the first thing you think about! We do, however, make sure we keep in touch with as many of our former students and families as we can to keep them connected to the school and with each other.

We have an active and growing alumni database and provide many ways to keep that TASIS connection alive. We produce an alumni e-newsletter; a magazine, and a website exclusively for alumni. We organize reunions, and we also encourage and provide help to groups of alumni who want to arrange something themselves.

We're looking forward to welcoming you and your young people to our family.

AFTERWORD

It hasn't quite been a bird's-eye view of a year in the life of a boarding school. It's been more like a helicopter view, skimming vast territories and then bumping down for a closer look. Of course the closer looks zeroed in on problem spots and skimmed over the warm, wonderful, enriching panorama of boarding life lived well. Let's face it, a balanced view of boarding life this isn't. But as a trouble-shooting manual it just might guide you through the rough times so that you can discover for yourself the value of the good times. That's the goal and our part of the bargain; working with us and letting us know how it goes is your side of the bargain. The TASIS people are eager to undertake the challenge; we hope you are, too.

TASIS



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN ENGLAND

Coldharbour Lane, Thorpe, Surrey TW20 8TE, England

Tel: (01932) 565252 • Fax: 44 (0)1932 560493

www.tasis.com

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