

Parents to Parents Comments on 7th Grade Year **“A Year of Transition”**

The JBS Family Network in conjunction with the JBS Counseling Department hope these guidelines will be helpful as we strive to promote a safe, healthy path during this exciting time in our children’s lives.

The Age & The Environment

Our 7th graders at JBS experience many of the typical developmental issues related to body image, social pressures, and the beginning of experimentation, which occur at all schools. In addition, your children are introduced to the activities of older students in small doses, especially through morning assembly. Ask your child to tell you about assembly from time-to-time. Check assembly special events/topics on JBNET.

These early teen years include an increased use of electronic communication:

- Seventh graders rely on the Internet, instant messaging and text messaging to communicate with peers the way our generation used the phone.
- Parents should remain vigilant regarding with whom and why your child is communicating via the Internet, including web sites they may access.
- Your child may receive unsolicited e-mails that may not be age-appropriate. For additional information and resources visit Parents.The Anti-Drug website www.antidrug.com.

These are the years when it is important to clarify boundaries with your young teens:

- Slowly give them more control and freedom as they grow older.
- Keep communication open, even when your children may begin to communicate less.
- The boundaries, the communication, and the vigilance should extend into the summer months as your children prepare to enter 8th grade and possibly extend their friendships to include teens from other schools.

The Social Scene

- A predominant form of social activity is the sleep-over. Networking with other parents regarding sleep-overs is crucial.
- Monitoring your child’s level of fatigue is critical at this age.
- It is recommended that friendships be limited to one grade older or younger.
- Acquaint yourself with your children’s friends and their parents, both in and out of school. Establishing this expectation now will set the precedent for staying involved in their lives.
- A curfew of 10:30 p.m. for 7th and 8th graders is recommended in the Student-Parent Handbook and agreed to by eight private schools. According to the St. Louis County curfew ordinance, children under the age of 17 may not be outside the company of parents Sunday-Thursday 11:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m. and on Friday and Saturday from 12:00 a.m. – 6:00 a.m.
- Boy-girl relationships may be described as “going out.” This term may apply to events ranging from a phone call or instant message, to an actual movie date or visiting a mall. Parents will want to discuss how they choose to handle these new experiences, ideally before questions arise. This may be a good time to readdress earlier discussions on sexual topics stressing both the biological facts as well as the emotional impact of these new relationships.

The Events

- Attending classmates’ Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations is a focal point of the 7th grade social life.
- In addition, several schools in the community sponsor mixers on their campuses with supervision provided by that school’s parents and/or staff.
- These events provide some of the first opportunities for children to test curfews. The subject of whose curfew to follow if a sleep-over ensues will be another important issue to consider and discuss prior to the event.
- Events for 7th graders provide an opportunity for parents to network concerning rides, curfews, sleep-overs, etc.
- Getting to know the other parents now will go a long way in reducing parental anxiety and providing the security that comes from familiarity with a whole community of families.