

*“The hardest job kids face today is learning good manners without seeing any.”*

*-Fred Astaire*

By Ken Moore, Principal, Maplehurst Elementary

With the elections just completed, the last thing you want to hear about is the idea of conducting another poll. But stay with me for a few minutes, I hope to spark some interesting discussion and or thoughts based upon this “poll”. If such a poll was to be conducted with the question being, “Are the kids of today lacking in the learning of common manners as compared to the children of the past?” Many adults would most probably answer the survey with a resounding YES, kids today!! I would have been quick to agree with those results, until I came across the quote that titles this article. The quote itself sparks some thought, but also consider who said the quote. For those of you who do not know who Fred Astaire was, allow me to fill in a few blanks. He was a prolific singer, actor, and dancer to say the least. However, most importantly, for the intent of this article, he was born in 1899 and died in 1987. Fred Astaire may have uttered the quote in his later years of his life, which would imply the “today” in the quote was some 30, 40 or even 50 years ago! Were parents at that time (1960’s,70’s, & 80’s) faced with the same concerns with teaching their children manners as parents of today? The answer again is a resounding, YES!

The teaching of manners is first displayed in the home. Parents are the first teachers of these specific behaviors. “Please and thank you” are some of the first manners that infants are taught by their parents. Children today are exposed to much more of the world through technology, we are asking them to grow up so fast that some of the simple things are being overlooked, one of which is good manners. Here is a short and easy list to start with that we all can try:

1. Say please when asking for something.
2. Say thank you when receiving something.
3. Don’t interrupt when two people are talking.
4. If you need to get someone’s attention right away, say excuse me.
5. Use good words when talking about others.

If used properly this short list should be taught through example. Children should see and hear these manners each and every day from the adults in their lives. We, adults, like it or not are in the same fast paced world as our kids. We need to make it a priority to demonstrate good manners with others as well as displaying good manners in our children’s presence. Just a simple please and thank you or allowing others an opportunity to share ideas in a conversation without interrupting is being a great example to our youth. It is ultimately our (parents) responsibility to model those actions and manners we wish our children to embrace.

By surrounding our children with these positive mannerisms, they will receive more positive feedback from adults and peers, which will continue to boost their self-confidence and develop new skills and abilities that make it easier for them to excel in life. It is then that we can make “the hardest job kids face” that much easier for them to achieve.