

## Twenty Questions and Answers About Your Son's Education

Visiting Parent: As Headmaster, you must have many parents anxious to find just the right school for their boy, but a little uncertain how to go about it. The difficulties of travel and the general uncertainties of the day seem to make it harder than ever. Perhaps you can help me.

Mr. Monks: I should be delighted to help you toward a wise decision in any way that I can. You are quite right in thinking that many parents feel as you do. Therefore it occurred to me that your questions and my answers might prove helpful to others as well. Would you object to my using them for that purpose?

Parent. I would be delighted if my experience could be of value to others similarly perplexed. For a start, could you tell me what sort of boys attend Lenox School?

Mr. Monks. They are probably a pretty fair cross section. Mostly they live in New England, New York or New Jersey, but happily we have always had a scattering from west and south, as well as missionaries' children from the Far East. At least half are from professional families, but a wide range of home background and economic status is represented.

Parent. There are a confusing number of schools that seem much alike. What do you consider distinctive about Lenox?

Mr. Monks. I hate to lay claims to being distinctive or to speak for others. For ourselves, I think a good guide is the verse describing the boyhood years of Jesus as being marked by a fourfold increase: "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." One can't go far wrong on such a program!

Parent. I notice that while you mentioned in your catalogue growth in wisdom, you apparently do not think of passing courses as the chief purpose of education. This is a welcome sign to me.

Mr. Monks. I am glad we agree on that point. Our concern is the growth of the whole personality. This does not mean that any valuable emphasis is left out; happily, it is not a case of "either-or", but of "both-and".

Parent. My boy is bright enough, but his teachers have always said that he had never learned how to study. Can you help him?

Mr. Monks. This is a very common situation; correcting bad study habits and forming good ones is not such a simple or automatic process as adjusting the engine of a balky car. But there is much that can be done, and especially in the lower forms, we have had many gratifying successes.

Parent. Our family has always gone to Hartonmouth, and naturally we would like our boy to go there, too. Does Lenox prepare boys for any special college?

Mr. Monks. We have a number of graduates there. But many other colleges, too, are frequently selected. I do hope you have not made a final decision on the matter just yet. It is our job, not simply to prepare a boy for entrance, but to help him to make a wise choice as to where he will go. Some should be dissuaded from going to college at all.

Parent. How are you able to meet such a wide variety of entrance requirements with the limited number of courses a small school can offer?

Mr. Monks. In practice, this is not as difficult as might appear. We have found that we can adjust our program to meet individual needs, and give pretty definite assurance that a boy who does satisfactorily in his work here will not only be able to get into the college of his choice, but, perhaps more important, will do commend-ably while there.

Parent. I am interested in hearing what you are doing in the way of a war program?

Mr. Monks. Who of us is not affected by being in a world at war? I know some schools are turning their programs upside down to meet the emergency demands. It is my sincere conviction that we, at any rate, can make our greatest contribution to the country by pursuing roughly the same lines as before, but trying to do a better job. I explained my feelings on this point a bit more fully in the catalogue.

Parent. How about sports? Have you had to cut them out for the duration?" My boy is fond of them, and I believe they have great value.

Mr. Monks. There need be no anxiety on that score. While we have had to re-duce our outside games, and while we have never taken sports in quite the life and death fashion of some schools I know, they have always had a large place in the life at Lenox and they still do.

Parent. I understand that Lenox is a self-help school. Just what does this mean?

Mr. Monks. The boys not only take care of their rooms, wait on the tables, wash dishes, clean the corridors and grounds, etc., but also assist in various supervisory and executive capacities. In brief, anything the boys can do, the boys do. We believe that the educational gains from this experience are very profound and far reaching in producing the sort of character we are after.

Parent. But doesn't it take too many hours from the all too short time available for other things?

Mr. Monks. It does take time, of course; half an hour a day suffices on the aver-age, but boys are constantly volunteering for jobs that take somewhat longer. I think you would be

amazed how smoothly and easily the system runs, and how highly the boys value the feelings of self-respect and self-sufficiency which it gives.

Parent. Aren't a lot of schools undertaking this sort of thing as a war measure?

Mr. Monks. Yes, indeed, and they are finding great virtue in it, too. We, who have always been enthusiastic about the system, and have never favored it primarily as a money saver, cannot help smiling at the way so many others are now getting excited about discovering values we have been finding all along! .

Parent. What part do your masters have in the life of the school?

Mr. Monks. I am glad you asked about that. Of course, a master has a job to do in the classroom, but that is where his responsibility starts, not where it finishes. He is the counselor and elder brother, if you will, who is helping a youngster in the process of growth. Every boy is assigned to one as an adviser. Of course, he will probably come to know many others well, too, but this does at least guarantee that no boy gets lost sight of.

Parent. Yours is a church school, is it not? Our family is not Episcopalians. Frankly, I am afraid we are not very much of anything, but we do recognize the importance of religion and want our boy to be more familiar with it than we were at his age.

Mr. Monks. I like to think that we are deeply, but not narrowly Episcopalian. Members of other denominations are completely at home here, but frankly I would hope that someone with a completely materialistic outlook on life would feel a bit like a fish out of water. We make no apologies for taking religion seriously, but we are convinced that forced feeding is a very poor way to promote religious growth.

Parent. Aren't large schools able to offer a lot more in the way of advantages than a small school?

Mr. Monks. If one is looking for prestige, buildings, equipment and "eye appeal", of course there can be no comparison. It is further true that some boys do better in the highly competitive atmosphere of a large school, but many who would surely have been lost in the crowd in a large group, have blossomed out in very gratifying fashion at Lenox. For a small school provides more personal attention, and just because the competition is less exacting, our boys have a much greater chance to occupy positions of some prominence and responsibility in some field, for there are, in proportion, more such positions.

Parent. I am a strong believer in democracy. Aren't there great advantages in having my boy rub shoulders with all types in public school?

Mr. Monks. I yield to no one in my enthusiasm for true democracy. Many public schools are doing a perfectly grand job, but I am afraid that too often their democracy is really a leveling down, rather than a leveling up process. Such a small proportion of high school

graduates go to colleges of high standing that a public school is often really not justified in giving such boys the intensive attention or exacting standards they really need.

Parent. What do you feel about country day schools? Such an arrangement allows a child to keep the influences of home, in addition to getting a well-rounded program of school activities.

Mr. Monks. True. The right country day school, if it is available, is often the best answer for a younger boy. But we feel that most boys will develop better if some time before college they have the experience of being on their own twenty-four hours a day, day after day. Boarding school is sometimes not the ideal answer, but is often much the best answer available.

Parent. Frankly, how do you manage to operate when most schools charge a good deal more than you do? Have you an endowment, or some sponsor to fall back on?

Mr. Monks. No, we have neither sponsor nor endowment, and I imagine we have our share of financial problems. But we do have the advantage of having, from the beginning, deliberately run the school on a simple scale. Every year we manage to cover our operating expenses by the tuition fees the parents pay.

Parent. What you say makes me doubly hesitant to ask about scholarships. I like what I hear about Lenox, but the expense is a bit beyond what I can handle.

Mr. Monks. The first decision must be whether the education Lenox offers is what you wish for your son. If that decision is affirmative, I would be glad to go into the whole financial situation fully and frankly with you. We do operate a modified sliding scale to make it possible for just such boys as your son to come here. Once we have covered our budget, the more we can help the greater number of people, the better we are doing the job we have set ourselves.

Parent. Thank you for giving me so much of your time. I have a much clearer picture of things now, and I think you will be hearing from me further.

Mr. Monks. I realize that Lenox is not the answer for all educational problems, and it may not be the answer to yours, but I have known a very large number of parents for whom it supplied just what they wanted. If you decide you want your boy to come to us, we will try to do all we can to assist him on his way, and from what you say, I feel we can do much.

For further information, write  
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