

TRANSIT

8TH GRADE MILE MARKER

As your student's time in Transit comes to a close, we'd love to have it culminate in an experience that includes students and parents from the small group that has journeyed together for the past few years. We ask parents to write blessing letters to their students and read them aloud in front of the other parents and students in the group. The blessing letters should affirm and inspire, and the experience will be something students carry with them for years to come.

Sample Blessing Letter

When you finally muster the courage to unleash your blessing, what do you say to your teenager?

Share your dream for them over the coming year.

There's a fine line between controlling and guiding your teenager. Hidden within each blessing is a golden opportunity to guide your teenager with love. Here are some examples:

My dream for you over the coming year is that you will continue to grow in your love for others . . . that you would find ways to serve those around you . . . and that you would use your ability to make others smile.

My dream for you is that you will be a peacemaker. You have a calming presence about you that can be a great attribute to your friends who are in conflict.

I am so excited to watch you apply your strong work ethic to your life through school, sports, and other activities. There's no telling what will happen when you put such extraordinary effort into all you do. I am so proud of you.

My dream for you this year is that you'll find ways to use your gift of leadership that is so evident.

The key is to keep these "dreams" encouraging and general. Don't bring up specific examples, but give your teenager practical ways he or she can live out the character traits you've highlighted. If you say, "My dream for you this year is that you will use your brain to pass biology class for once," you've brought a negative scenario into what is meant to be an uplifting moment. There will be plenty of opportunities to discuss the poor biology grade, but the blessing is not that time.

Make sure your tone is positive and your words are inspiring. You can't guilt your students into changing; you can inspire them to change. A blessing is an opportunity to help them believe something about themselves that they might have otherwise never noticed.

Give an example of someone he or she reminds you of:

Younger teenagers will receive your blessing when you compare them to people they admire. This should be a clear, concrete comparison of the attributes you are trying to ascribe to them.

If you do this, you'll want to make sure these are people your students know and admire. Don't just mention people you like; make sure they will be inspirational figures to your teenagers. Here are some examples:

You remind me of your grandfather. He was one of the kindest men I have ever met. I sometimes have to do a double-take when I see the way you treat people. It looks so much like the way he treated people.

I am sure you have heard of Martin Luther King Jr. He was a man of peace. When the world threatened to respond to racism with violence, he taught a nation to respond with love. I see his spirit in you.

Your natural beauty is something I have seen before in the face of your mother. She is beautiful inside and out, and you were given that same gift.

In the Bible, a man named Joshua is described as a man of great courage. I often look at you and see that same kind of courage. You remind me of Joshua.

These comparisons can be so powerful in the lives of your teenagers. We have seen teenagers receive blessings like this, and sometimes the people they're compared to become their heroes.

Tips for what to avoid:

I love you because you scored 32 points in the game last night. I am proud of your success as an athlete, and I encourage you to score 33 points in the next game. Keep getting better.

Some of you may be thinking, What's wrong with that? When you bless your teenager's performance, you're saying that he can have your approval as long as he does something.

The beauty of receiving a blessing is that it isn't about what you do, but who you are. As parents, you know the hearts of your teenagers better than anyone. The blessings are times for you to hold up mirrors to their souls and explain to them who they are, not simply what they have done. Here are some examples of how to bless your teenagers' identities:

I know you to be a kind person who takes care of those in need.

I marvel at how patient you are. I want you to know that I see you are slow to become angry, and I admire that.

One of the things I respect the most is a hard worker, and when I watch you, I see a very hard worker.

You have a natural beauty that no make-up or outfit could ever enhance. You are truly beautiful.

When you walk into a room, you light it up. You have been given the gift of charisma—you shine from your soul for others to see.

I appreciate how you think before you speak. You are a deep thinker, and that is going to serve you well in life.

If you get stuck:

If you don't have anything nice to say to your teenagers, you're likely experiencing parental fatigue. There are seasons of so much fighting and angst that your parenting batteries will be drained. This is nothing to feel guilty about, but it is something to take action on.

If this describes how you're feeling right now, we encourage you to interview friends, teachers, and others with whom your teenagers interact. They will give you additional perspectives that you can share. It's great to quote other people and what they have said about your teenagers as part of the blessings.

Congratulations! You are now ready to write your blessing for your teenager.

Blessing script:

[Student's Name],

I want to take a few minutes today to tell you how important you are to me. I am so proud of the person you have become. You are so _____ (character trait you want to affirm). In fact, you remind me of _____ (person who embodies the character trait).

My dream for you over the next year of your life is _____. I want to give you this symbol that represents _____. When you look at it, I want you to always remember what I believe to be true about who you are. I love you. I am proud of you.

These kinds of statements cut to the heart of who your teenagers really are, not what they can do. These statements are the bricks and mortar with which your teenagers will build their self-images.

We don't want you to be afraid to brag on their accomplishments, but if that is the extent of the blessing, you might be sending the wrong message.

When you bless their identities, rather than their performances, they won't need to earn your approval. They will know they already have it.