

# The PoliteChild®... a business that makes its Name come True

## Brainstorm NW

As parents prepare their kids for the first autumn school bells to ring, many of them are making sure students have new backpacks, number two pencils, maybe laptop computers, and comfortable shoes...but what about good manners?

Growing up with the Rugrats or even Captain Underpants among their favorite stars can present unique challenges to parents who hope their kids will help a schoolmate who drops his book bag, wait patiently in line, make good choices about what to wear, and make eye contact while speaking with adults. Enter The Polite Child of Woodinville, Washington.

This little operation started in 2001 as an after-school program where elementary school aged kids learned basic manners and social etiquette. The company has now grown into a national enterprise with more than 2,000 alumni, and its owner, Corinne Gregory, has been featured on national television and in national magazines. So, what's so special about her classes and programs, and why are they more important than ever? And, shouldn't kids be learning this stuff at home?

"There are a hundred reasons why children today may not be learning manners and basic etiquette at home," Gregory says. And she happens to be very specific about what she means by etiquette. It's not all white tablecloths, using the correct fork for each course of the meal, and ballroom dancing. "Etiquette is, in this case, basic manners and being polite – asking for things instead of demanding them...not interrupting, waiting your turn, listening to others...every child should have these basic tools." As a mother, Gregory knows this as well as anyone. She knows that social skills are the foundation for many successes in life.

Gregory lists things like watching too much television, classrooms that are too large and do not allow for individualized attention to students, homes where both parents work long hours, or perhaps single parent homes as among the reasons why children today may not learn manners at an early age. Gregory also acknowledges that with our lives as busy as they are today, many families just don't have a lot of quality time together, and in those few hours each week when parents and kids can sit down and enjoy one another's company, what parent wants to be the Manners Police and correct the child for every little thing she does or says?

So Corinne Gregory started The Polite Child, a curriculum designed to make its name come true. The core lessons are very kid-oriented and show children from the start what's in it for them, which is a huge motivator for most youth. "They learn that if they are kind and if they follow basic manners, other wants to be around them ...other kids want to share their toys with them, to invite them to parties...teachers and coaches like kids who are polite and who interact appropriately and positively with others." Gregory explains that they even teach participants how to better communicate with their own parents by simply being polite when making their case for a new bedtime, for example. And everyone knows that showing respect for others will, ultimately, lead to being respected.

These manners are not taught in a lecture series – the sessions are very interactive, so students have an opportunity to put into practice what they are learning. There are three ways by which The Polite Child curriculum can reach

children: Private classes, which is how the business began operating in homes, churches, schools and community centers; In schools or other organized settings for groups of youth, such as Boys and Girls Clubs or YMCAs; or through Licensed Provider Programs where trainers are educated and develop an understanding and appreciation of the material before going out into their own local communities and spreading the word.

Corinne Gregory speaks to the importance of these classes, as well as to any training in basic social skills when she says, "Good social skills transcend social class, economic status, academic achievement, gender, and race." For more information on the Polite Child, go to the website [www.politechild.com](http://www.politechild.com).

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