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Siobhan McNally

DIARY OF A SINGLE MUM

It's time to end classroom war

Washing and hanging out my daughter's school shirts to dry on Sunday evening, I found myself ticking off number 49 on a "50 signs that show you're a competitive mum" list.

Then I signed a day trip consent form allowing the school to inflict Jesse on an unsuspecting public and popped it in her reading folder. Tick - number 47 on the list.

Emailing Jesse's aunts, I then typed, "Hi all - Jesse's class play is at 8.45am on Friday morning. Best to be there at 8.30am or you'll need a Go-Go-Gadget neck to see her blink-and-you'll-miss-it performance." And found myself ticking off apparently the most-hated number-one activity of competitive mums - trying to get FROW, aka front-row seats, at the school play.

Or any seats at all. I've been that late mum trying to watch my angel playing the triangle through a village hall window.

Next morning, I ticked number 50 on the list. My crime? Nagging, pleading and screaming the bloody house down in an attempt to get Jesse to school on time.



Jesse in glasses without glass...

"I was trying to find my glasses," Jesse yelled, as she dragged herself into the car. "You don't wear specs!" I exploded. "I do now," she replied. "Angela gave me her old ones without the glass," then cheekily added, "Hurry up, or we'll be late."

I know we all love mocking a yummy mummy, but sending your kid into school on time, in a clean uniform, doing a spot of school admin or watching them perform is the very least a parent can manage.

But according to a survey of 1,400 mums by kiddie cartoon makers Entertainment One, competitive parenting also includes making your child read 10 times a week instead of five (number 28), coaching them to ace spelling tests (number 43) and even spending weeks creating home-made outfits for school plays (number 10).

Granted, enrolling your child into after-school Kumon classes (number 17) is a bit poncey, but when did we become such bottom dwellers that basic parenting functions like making cakes for a bake sale (number 9) is seen as highbrow? Sneering at mums who join the PTA (number 20) and remembering when their child has a show and tell (number 13) is the reason why our education system trails way behind the rest of the world. It's not a class issue - it's a classroom issue.

I contribute to my daughter's school life to show how much I love her and to make her proud. I'm her role model - well, me and Taylor Swift - and she even copies my specs.

I want Jesse to know her mum values her education, her teachers and her homework. I want her to say: "My mum baked those wonky blobs for the bake sale - don't leave any or she'll make me eat them at home."

I'm her idol, well, me and Taylor Swift



Knitted dress with scarf, £45, M&S. Converse, £44.99, Office



Grey cardigan, £40, Topshop. White beaded top, £29.99, H&M. Grey knitted trousers, £45. Trainers, £35, both M&S



Oat cropped jumper, £56. Trousers, £36, both Topshop. Necklace, £12.50, Freedom @ Topshop

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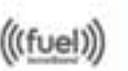
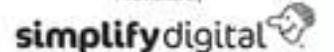
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