

Agile for Families

Iterating with Children



Session Overview

- The Cast and the Stage
- The List
- Incentives
- Artifacts
- Ceremonies
- Interviews with the Kids
- Our Conclusions

The Starr Family



Mom
"Keep your
work at work."



Bowman, 8
"The Provoker"



Mason, 12
Lacrosse Apprentice



Isabelle, 9
Loves Animals



Cutter, 11
D&D Journeyman



Dad and Butters
Can't leave well
enough alone

Pre-Conditions

- Individuals were assigned ad-hoc chores
- No standards for “a job well-done”
- Inconsistent follow-up from parents promoted apathy
- “Not my job” was frequently heard
- The noise level was HIGH



Mornings Were Particularly Bad

Did you eat
your
breakfast?

X2

Are you wearing
underwear?

X3

Did you brush
your teeth?

X4

Do you have
your book bag?

X4

Take
your medicine.

X3

Where's your
lunch?

X3

Did you put
away your
dishes?

X4

Wash your face

X2

Is that what
you think
you're wearing?

X1

Is your
bed made?

X3

Where's your
homework?

X4

Comb your hair.

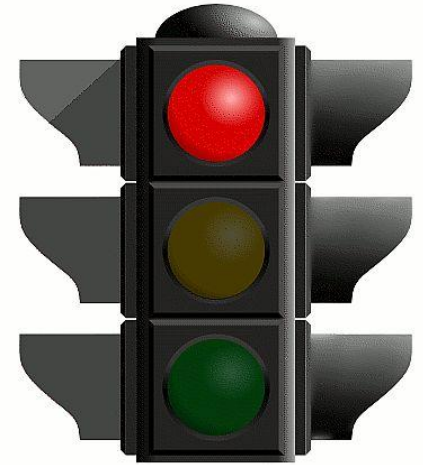
X3

The List

The first inflection point

Genesis of the List

- Information radiators were successful at work
 - Build lights
 - Defect tolerance lights



*If defects go out
of tolerance
light goes on
until
tolerance
is met again*

Accompany them with standards and things change

- If the defect light comes on, stop new work until the light goes off
- If the build light comes on, the person who caused it ensures it goes off before leaving

The Self Directed Morning Checklist

1. Take vitamins or medicine
2. Eat breakfast
3. Shower or wash face and neck
4. Take care of your hair
5. Do morning chores
6. Brush your teeth (2 minutes)
7. Backpack, shoes, and socks
8. Update information boards

What are you having for lunch?

What are you taking to school today?

What are you forgetting?



Results of the List

- Fewer prompts needed from parents
- Children began to self-regulate
- Children preferred sequential execution
- Some even began to *focus!*
- Noise level significantly reduced

Elle thought maybe
Dave wasn't such
a crazy fanatic

Dave thought it was
safe to push it
to the next level

Work and Home are Different

Professional Life	Home Life
Team members are volunteers	Team members are trapped on the team
You can get fired	No one gets voted off the island
The work is often creative Software development is about solving cool problems	The work is often repetitive No one get excited because the bathroom is clean
I can get a raise!	I can not get punished!

Work and Home Have Similarities

Professional Life	Home Life
<p>When the team has work, the usual suspects tend to slack or carry the weight</p>	
<p>Natural tensions exist within the organization</p>	
<p>Some tasks repeat, others are unique</p>	
<p>No one wakes up thinking, "Today, I plan to screw up royally"</p>	

Incentives

Kids don't care about raises

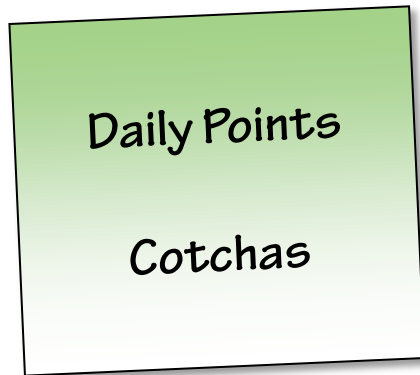
Incentive Models Considerations

Group accountability is ideal

And all but impossible with kids

Individual development is paramount

Individual incentive is key



The goal is create healthy adults

By stewarding a cohesive family

Incentive – Daily Points

- **Possible to get one per day**
 - Awarded each night
- **Awarded by consensus of the entire family**
 - With a possible mom / dad override
- **30 points earn a \$10 book coupon**
 - Trips to the bookstore are a big deal
 - This reward fosters a respect for reading
- **Book coupons**
 - Are cumulative
 - May be saved for more expensive books
 - Are sometimes bartered amongst the kids

Who thinks _____
deserves a point today?

*Did you meet your
commitments today?*

Were you well behaved?

*Did you cause promote
peace or turmoil today?*

Incentive – Cotchas

- **Tool for immediate feedback**
 - Cotchas may be earned or lost
 - At any time
 - For anything deemed good or bad behavior
- **Anyone may award or penalize**
 - Mom or Dad
 - Kids with a vote of 2 or more
- **20 Cotchas earn a family activity**
 - Sometimes activities are singular due to busy schedules
 - Older kids means fewer times when all are present



Cotcha
Caught Ya
Doing Something
Good

Typical Activities

- Skate rink
- Go fishing
- Picnic or hike
- Family D&D night

- Kid/parent date
 - Breakfast out
 - Movie
 - Motorcycle ride

The Family Methodology

Artifacts

- Task Cards
- Task Boards
- Checklists

- Cotchas
- Point Cards

Ceremonies

- Weekly Family Meeting

- Daily Standup

Roles

- Parents
- Kids

Everyone learns to facilitate

Mom and Dad can award/penalize autonomously

Methodology Vocabulary

Agile Term	Family Term
Iteration	A week
Acceptance Criteria	Can pass inspection (peer)
Task	Chore
Daily Scrum	Family Standup
Review and Retrospective	Weekly Family Meeting
In Process (workflow state)	Promised

Artifacts

Tools of the process

Check Lists

- For repeated tasks
- Actually marking the box
 - Shows historical performance over the course of the week
 - Is fun and feels like I got something done
- Refreshed every week
- Everyone can see how I am doing

Cutter the Putrid							
	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
Morning							
Morning Checklist	X	X	X	X			
feed cat	X	X	X	X			
fold laundry	X	X	X	X			
Evening							
Homework	X	X	X	X			
Practice Bass	X	X	X	X			
clear table	X	X	X	X			
fold laundry	X	X	X	X			
Anytime							
Exercise	X	X	X	X			
Afternoon list	X	X	X	X			

Index Cards

- For weekly deliverables to be done when I choose

- For one time or ad-hoc reminders

- Write my report
- Produce my podcast

- *These are white*
- *I have them again next week*

- For my personal responsibilities

- Clean my room
- Clean my pet's cage

- For family responsibilities

- Sweep the porch
- Clean the shared bathroom

- *These are pink*
- *Rotate to someone else next week*

Kid Information Boards










	Kid Board
To Do	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;">Personal Weekly</div> <div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;">Shared Weekly</div> <div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;">Daily Point Card</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;"> Daily Checklist <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> ✓ ✓ ✓ </div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;">Cotcha Holder</div> </div>
Promised	<div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 5px; margin: 5px; width: fit-content;">Personal Weekly</div>
Done	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;">Personal Weekly</div> <div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;">Shared Weekly</div> </div> <div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 5px; margin: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-top: 10px;">Personal Weekly</div>

← Weekly cards start here

← Move here for tomorrow

← When done

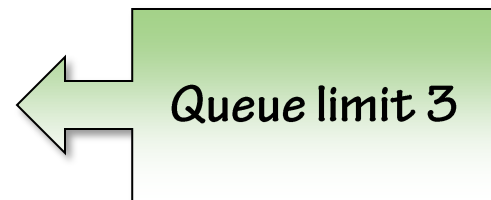
Parent Information Boards

	Parent Board
To Do	  
Promised	 
Done	   

All cards are ad-hoc work

Parents use a continuous flow model

This is great for real life!



Some Task Cards

- Produce that podcast
- Go to the grocery store
- Send that invoice
- Deliver that course module
- Get the car oil changed

Some Daily Tasks

- Feed the dog
- Exercise
- Water the plants

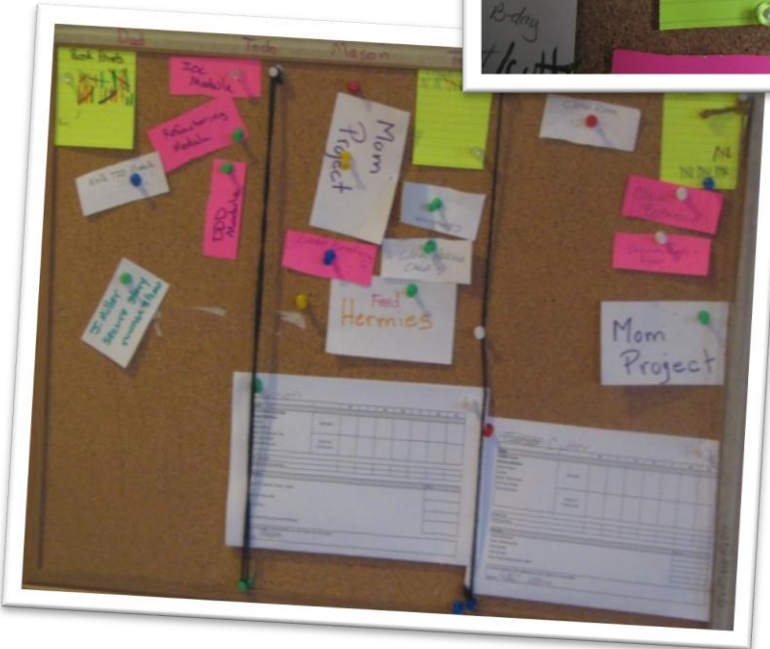
*This is really
just a public
TODO list*

*And the kids
get to hold us
accountable*

It All Looks Like This

	Parent	Kid Board	
To Do	<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Task</div> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 80px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Daily Point Card</div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; width: 100%;"> Daily Checklist ✓✓✓ </div>	<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Personal Weekly</div> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Shared Weekly</div> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 80px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Daily Point Card</div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; width: 100%;"> Daily Checklist ✓✓✓ </div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Cotcha Holder</div>	<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Personal Weekly</div> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Shared Weekly</div> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 80px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Daily Point Card</div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; width: 100%;"> Daily Checklist ✓✓✓✓ </div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Cotcha Holder</div>
Promise	<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Task</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Task</div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Personal Weekly</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Shared Weekly</div>
Done	<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Task</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 60px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Task</div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; width: 60px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Task</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Personal Weekly</div> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Shared Weekly</div> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Personal Weekly</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Shared Weekly</div> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; width: 80px; height: 60px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">Personal Weekly</div>

It All Looks Like This



Ceremonies

Because it is a better word than Meetings

Daily Family Standup



Each night before bed.

Kids even do this when mom and dad are out for the night.

1. How did you do today?
2. What will you promise for tomorrow?
 - Should you move a promise card?
3. Do you need any help?
4. Who thinks _____ deserves a point?

Weekly Family Meeting

- Monday night
- Everyone participates

3 distinct phases

1. The Week in Review
2. Allowance
3. Next Week Planning

The Week in Review

- Everyone gets a chance to talk

- Parents go last

1. What went well this week?

2. What could be better next week?

3. What changes would help?

- Any topic is open for discussion
- This helps put the kids in control of the process
- Answers are posted for all to see

The issues brought up
are often personal.

“Mason hit me.”

“Bowman annoyed me when...”

Allowance

- \$ 1 per week for *each year old*
- 10% minimum to *charity jar*
- 10% minimum to *savings account*

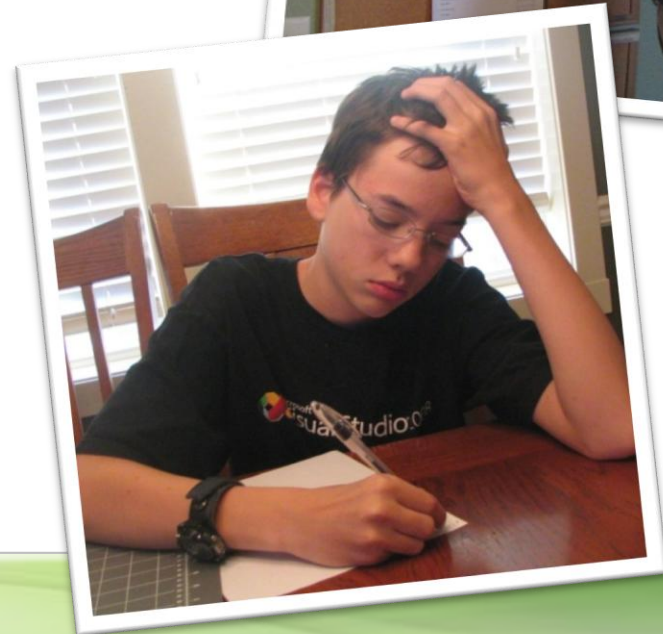
Children pay for their own lives

- 20% of all sports activities
- 100% of all holiday and birthday gifts
- 100% of all hobbies
 - D&D supplies
 - Magic cards

- **Nothing to do with the methodology**
- **Provides a break point in the meeting**
- **Can be useful to change the mood 😊**
- **Takes about 10 minutes**

Next Week Planning

- What commitments do you have for the calendar?
- What ad-hoc tasks do you need to track for next week?
- What changes will we commit to for next week?
 - Personal behavior
 - Process change
- Rotate the share chore cards
- Queue up the new check lists



The Summer Responsibility Experiment

- Each child owns a room for the week
- Each room is kept intact at all times
- Daily points are based on effective stewardship
- **Results**
 - Mixed. Some kids like it, some don't.
 - Kids express more feeling of accountability with lists and tasks.
 - Kids struggle without checklists or cards

*Ownership
over
obligation*

Results

- **Mornings aren't awful**
- **Family members work together to improve**
 - How I like being in the family
 - How the family experience can be better
- **Less noise, more communication**
- **Kids develop their own improvements**
- **Performance transparency drives individual improvement**



Interviews with the Kids

What does the team think?

How has the process changed things?

People actually do their stuff that they need to do.
The parents don't yell at us because we're not
taking good care of the house. - Isabelle



The house is more organized, and it's easier than mom
always telling me to do stuff.
I have more responsibility than I used to have. - Mason

We work more as a team in the kitchen.
I don't like stand up, or chores. - Bowman

The house is a lot cleaner,
and the cat isn't
starving. - Isabelle

What do you like about it?

If we didn't have the boards
we pretty much wouldn't
get anything done.
- Bowman

I also really like earning new books and going on family activities. I like that things are easier to clean, and people don't fight over chores, because it's written out on the board. - Isabelle

Helps me be more organized with my chores.
It also helps me with school when I put
school projects on the board. - Mason



I like that it helps me get stuff done without mom having to tell me. It keeps me on track and let's me know what I have to do every day. - Cutter

What should change? What don't you like?

Less work on the boards, and
the chores would be smaller. - Isabelle

I don't like that mom doesn't forget my chores, because
they're on the board, and I have to do them. - Mason

Standing is unnecessary, we could pay perfectly fine
attention when we're sitting. I don't like all the cards,
and wish everything were on a list.
I'd rather have a check list for every day. - Cutter

I don't like it when mom
and dad forget to
reset boards. - Bowman

I would take away the "promise" slot, because either it's
finished or it's not. - Cutter

Conclusions

- **Big Visible Charts change fundamental human behaviors**
 - **Kids crave predictability**
 - From parents and each other
 - It feels safer
- **Changing artifacts frequently keeps interest alive**
 - The color of cards
 - The routine of the standup

*Many Agile practices
are simply
effective behavior
modification
techniques*

Conclusions

*Without discipline,
any process will
trend toward entropy.*

*With discipline, even a
poor process can be
more effective than
not having one.*

- **For our kids, ownership is not as powerful as security**
 - Kids want to be approved of
 - Ownership is scary
- **Personal accountability improves with group inspection**
- **Kids and adults have very different motivations**