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Parenting
TOOLS

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file: parent tools

P A R E N T I N G S K I L L S :

21 Tips & Ideas to help
you make a difference

⊙ T R U T H .

T H E A N T I - D R U G .



Photo courtesy of Annie Leibovitz.

Getting someone pregnant can detour your dreams. So either don't have sex or use protection every time. In other words, be responsible. To learn more, check out the link at www.granthill.com

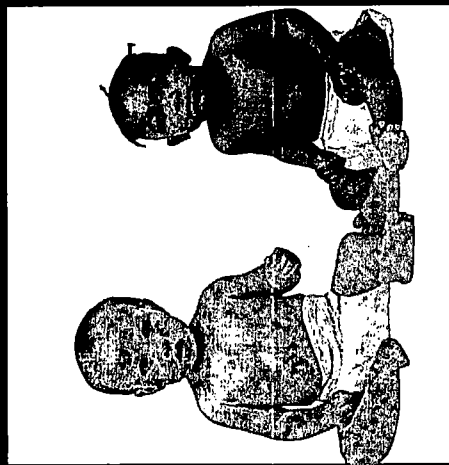
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www.teenpregnancy.org

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They need their parents

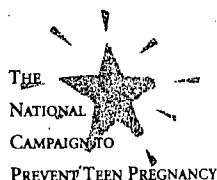


just as much as they do.



Whether they're toddlers or teens — your children need your love, support and attention.

Supervising them, and knowing where they are and what they're doing doesn't make you a nag; it makes you a parent.



www.teenpregnancy.org

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How Parents Can Help

It's a difficult time for the whole family, but there are ways to make these years easier. Your kids still need you.

By Claudia Kalb and Pat Wingert

One day they're crawling around in the sandbox; the next day they're prowling the Internet. Tweens like to think of themselves as all grown up — but they still need plenty of support and guidance from parents. Some tips:

BODY CHANGES. Girls may begin to develop breasts as early as 8, and some now get their periods at 10. To prepare for puberty, many boys' and girls' bodies also bulk up during the tween years. Experts warn against putting children on diets or making them feel self-conscious about their weight. Instead, reassure kids that there's a wide definition of "normal" at this age.

SEXUALITY. Few tweens are actually having sex, but they're busy trying to understand it. Some will begin to struggle with sexual orientation. This is a window of opportunity for parental involvement and guidance — once tweens become teens, they're more likely to turn to peers or popular culture for sex ed. They're also sometimes exposed to explicit material on the Internet, and this may confuse and upset them. One good source for parents: the book "Now What Do I Do?" available from the nonprofit group Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (www.siecus.org).

SCHOOL. Classes get harder and homework increases as kids move to middle school and junior high. If they're trying hard but still not doing well, parents should talk to teachers about potential learning disabilities that may require special instruction. Overall, parents should coach and support children in homework, but should never be trapped into actually doing it. For general catch-up, after-school tutors can help.

FRIENDS. For young children, family is the center of the universe. But friends and peer approval become increasingly important during tween years. Cliques emerge and fashion begins to define what's "cool." Still, parents continue to exert the biggest influence on children when it comes to morals and lifelong goals. Get to know your children's friends and their parents. Ask your kids about peer pressure, rather than waiting for them to raise the issue themselves. And act as a role model, exhibiting the kind of behavior around friends and family that you hope to foster in your kids.

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How Parents Can Help: page 2

INDEPENDENCE. Tweens have one foot in childhood, the other in adolescence. But they're eager to grow up. Experts say the rush is partly due to popular media — especially teen magazines and television shows. Being raised by single parents or in families where both parents work can also accelerate their desire for independence. Parents should not expect to have absolute control over their tweens, but they should set limits. Regulate the number of hours kids watch TV, and monitor movies; say no to too much violence or graphic sexuality. Make sure you know what they're doing online as well.

MIND AND MOOD. Peer pressure and new academic challenges can overwhelm tweens. Look for symptoms of stress: headaches, stomachaches, sleeping or eating problems. Shifts in hormone levels as tweens advance toward puberty can also cause temporary mood swings. Don't ignore or punish tweens when they become emotional; encourage them to air their feelings. Internalizing sadness or anger is unhealthy. Some tweens can even be clinically depressed. Early signs: feelings of hopelessness, withdrawal and irritability. Parents should intervene and seek professional counseling.

Newsweek, October 18, 1999

Parenting website

U.S. Department of Education
Office of the Secretary
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

FAX COVER SHEET**TO**: *Ann O'Leary*Fax Number: *456-2878*(Number of pages, including cover sheet:)**FROM**

Adriana de Kanter
Special Advisor on Afterschool Issues
(Telephone: 202/401-3132)

WORKING MOMS

When kids and careers collide, women find solutions online

The Internet is a powerful tool for working mothers. It offers ways to organize and save time, and it also provides a community that working mothers have previously lacked.

Sites devoted to working mothers are as diverse as the population they serve. Some sites are formal, slick and corporate; others are home-based and intimate. All of them tackle a common problem: the struggle to accomplish a lot in a small amount of time.

"Working mothers are so very busy, and their time is in such demand," says Betty Ann Habig, producer of the Job Wise section of Moms Online. "When they come to the Internet, they're coming in to get something specific that they need."

Mothers want to change their career, negotiate a job change or market their own business. They want to get a toddler to stop hitting, talk to a teenager about drugs or help their baby sleep. They have specific questions and want quick answers.

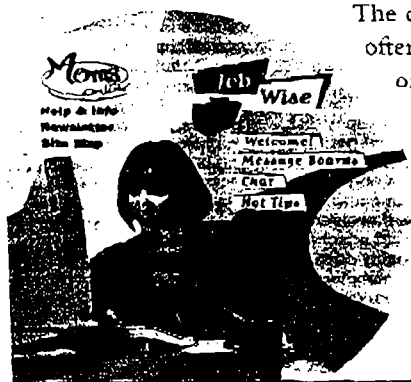
Another Internet boon for working moms is the convenience of online shopping. Ordering diapers and buying birthday gifts online eliminates mall runs and lugging kids on errands. Click-and-deliver online supermarkets replace rickety shopping carts and fidgety kids with the "gimmies."

But the Internet's most valuable asset for working mothers is still greatly untapped: the ability to connect with other mothers.

The daily rush between day care and the office often isolates working moms. They miss out on insightful observations on potty training and sleep strategies—the ones passed from mom to mom at the park or playground.

The Internet can provide that all-important park bench for working moms—even if they can't take a seat until after the kids are tucked into bed.

—Laura Doyle

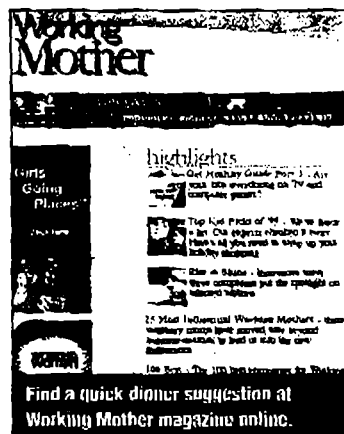


QNI JOB WISE
www.momsonline.com/jobwise
Working mothers who need to quickly find information should bookmark this excellent site. Moms Online and Oxy-There are resources to find day care, start a job search or the job you have so that you can spend more time with kids. Start a business, get tips on childproofing your home or take steps to living a

simpler life. The articles also address workplace issues such as maternity leave, breast-feeding and flex-time. The active chat rooms and message boards offer lots of support. ★★★★★

PARENTSPRACE.COM: WORK
www.parentspace.com/work
There's a bevy of useful articles for working parents at this site from iVillage. The homepage is updated frequently with featured

articles and links to various chat rooms. Use the Inside the Work Department box to the left to pull up articles on parenting issues such as household organization, maternity leave and deciding whether to stay home or work. You can also investigate child-care options by state. There are dozens of message boards devoted to everything from lunchbox ideas to working mom guilt. ★★★★★



PARENTTIME: WORK & MONEY
www.pathfinder.com/parenttime/work/home

This site that has ties to Parenting magazine has a deep archive of articles on work, family and how to balance the two. The featured articles are updated often and address topical issues such as scams aimed at work-at-home moms. The message boards and chats in the Community section are active, but you have to register to participate. The Toolbox has a child-care finder and a worksheet/calculator to help determine if you can afford to stay at home with the kids. ★★★★★

MYRIA, THE MAGAZINE FOR MOTHERS: WORK
www.myria.com/directory/Work
Learn to avoid the morning rush, organize your home office on a shoestring budget and shine at work with help from this section of Myria. Expert advice and profiles of other working moms combine to provide tools to balance work with taking care of children. The Home and Money sections (use the pull-down menu) offer additional useful information. Mac users with the Internet Explorer browser may have trouble viewing articles. ★★★★★

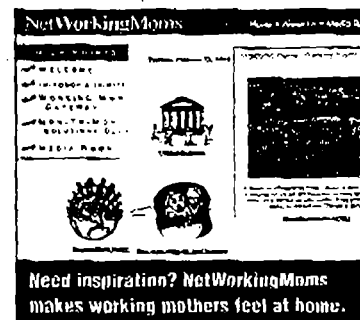
WORKING MOMS REFUGE
www.momsrefuge.com
Escape to this site to connect with other working mothers and soak up some knowledge by reading the vast collection of parenting articles and career advice. The design is clean and simple, and

the search engine makes finding information quick. The Family section has pediatric advice and news alerts about product recalls. Career caters to entrepreneurs and telecommuters, and includes company profiles in the Business Notes Archive section. Dads and single moms will find areas devoted to them. ★★★★★

WORKING MOTHER
www.workingmother.com
The online version of Working Mother magazine appears to still be in its infancy, although it

does have some useful information. The homepage links to articles on child care, balancing your time, profiles of influential working moms and quick dinners. The navigation menu to the right includes the Resource Center, with links and articles about work flexibility and diversity. The articles on the left from sister publication Working Woman offer strategies and inspiration for succeeding at work. ★★★★★

NETWORKINGMOMS
www.networkingmoms.com
Inspirational art and words greet visitors to this site that aims to make working mothers feel right at home. During our last visit, the site had some broken links, but the Moms in the Spotlight (found through the Mom-to-Mom Solutions Club section) and the relatively well-used discussion boards make NetWorkingMoms worthwhile. Exchange advice and ask questions of other women with kids and jobs in the Community Forums. The Working Mom Gateway offers some helpful Web links to experts and resources. ★★★★★



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20201

PARENTS

FACSIMILE COVER SHEET

TO: RUBY SHAMIR

ORGANIZATION: DPC

FROM: JULIE BOSLAND

TELEPHONE #: 401-2887

RECIPIENT'S FAX NUMBER: 456-2878

NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING THIS SHEET: 2

REMARKS: FOUND THIS AND THOUGHT YOU WOULD
BE INTERESTED GIVEN THE FOCUS
ON PARENTS FOR THE YOUTH CONFERENCE.

Fax (202) 205-9721

IT IS NOT A NEW ANNOUNCEMENT
BUT FIGURED YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IT.

PARENTING IS PREVENTION

THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION CENTER FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

OVERVIEW

CSAP's Parenting Initiative reflects that *Parents can and do make a difference in their children's lives.*

In support and implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy and the Secretary of Health and Human Services Initiative on Youth Substance Abuse Prevention, CSAP has created multi-faceted components to raise awareness, train, and engage parents at every level. Efforts are underway to reach parents at home, through their children's school, through places of worship, media campaigns and all accessible media formats, community events and organizations, and the workplace.

PARENTING IS PREVENTION (PIP) SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

- PIP mobilization training curriculum and resource manual are being used in communities nationwide.
- Through a PIP community mobilization project, a national database of over 2,500 individuals and groups involved in prevention and mentoring has been created. During 1999, the concepts and resources of PIP were introduced at various national parent conferences and meetings. A website: parentingisprevention.org has been created under this project and has become a valuable resource for parents and prevention professionals.
- Available on-line through the above website are: **PIP Resource Guides** developed for the workplace and community-based parents.
- A 1999 four-part PIP Teleconference Series is available to the public on videos as a cost recovery item through the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI). The NCADI website is health.org. The topics of the parent-focused series are: 1) Building Healthy Families; 2) Building Healthy Dialogue; 3) Building on the Past for a Healthy Future; 4) Building Healthy Communities. The teleconferences can also be viewed on the internet through accessing the parentingisprevention.org website.
- A PIP insert appeared in the July 1999 issue of **Reader's Digest**. Requests for the pamphlet can be made to NCADI at health.org.
- Ninety-three grants have been awarded throughout the country entitled **Parenting and Family Strengthening Prevention Interventions** to help build local capacity to implement best practices in family strengthening programs.
- Under a new PIP contract, Parent Action Groups in two pilot States (NJ and TX) are working on implementing community-based sustainable parenting programs.

For further information, please call Mary Louise Embrey (301-443-8725) or Dr. Bettina Scott (301-443-2658)

file: Parent 1005

copy for Ann + Sonia

We should call ~~her~~ the

Q who signed this letter to

- talk with them about our

conference - if someone can do
it this week, great - if not I'll do
it when I get back

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April 21, 1999

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
The White House
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Hillary Clinton:

We are writing to suggest a little creative synergy!

On May 3rd, you are hosting a White House event with the Advertising Council on the issue of "Helping Parents Help Kids." We believe this is an ideal occasion for you to announce plans for a White House Conference on Parenting entitled *New Solutions for a New Century*. The conference—currently in the development stage—will focus on the parent time famine and celebrate models that work. The conference would be co-sponsored by the Ad Council and the National Parenting Association and would take place during the millennium year.

As you may remember Sylvia Hewlett and Cornel West of the National Parenting Association (NPA) originally proposed this idea of a White House Conference on Parenting at a dinner you hosted with President Clinton last August. NPA then participated in two brain-storming sessions with Bruce Reed and the Domestic Policy Council staff in September and December. In January, following a memo Cornel West and Sylvia Hewlett prepared for the State of the Union Address, NPA was delighted to learn that the President supported our initiative for a White House forum that will advance win-win solutions to the parental time famine.

The time has come to start the concrete planning process for a White House Conference on Parenting, particularly in light of several recent developments:

- On the morning of May 3, the Ad Council is releasing updated research on "Kids These Days" (conducted by Public Agenda). The research concludes even more strongly than the study two years ago that few Americans believe that today's children, once grown, will make the country a better place. Overwhelmingly, the public feels that the cause of this disappointing state of kids is the failure of parents to do their job properly. The research identifies some of the very real barriers to the work of parenting at the end of this century. A White House Conference on Parenting will try to examine some of these barriers to prepare for a much needed revitalization of parenting in the 21st century.

COPY

Shirley

I met w/ the new Pres (Wooden) on 4/10. Her that a WH conference was unlikely (we had considered it during the SOTU). I told her that the thought of it exhausted me.

- The "Kids These Days" findings and the "Helping Parents Help Kids" theme will be highlighted by the Ad Council at its May 3rd White House event. Then, we hope you will help increase the visibility of this important theme by announcing a White House Conference on Parenting. In response, the Ad Council is prepared to amplify your commitment by devoting a significant portion of the \$1 billion of donated media it receives annually to messages with pro-parenting themes.
- Specifically, we propose that the Ad Council and the NPA jointly work with your staff to undertake the planning and execution of a White House Conference on Parenting. The two groups have cooperated in the past on this issue. For example, Reader's Digest featured an Ad Council insert prepared by the NPA and Reader's Digest. In addition, we are delighted that Ruth Wooden, an NPA Board member who recently announced that she was stepping down as President of the Advertising Council after 11 years, has agreed to become President of the NPA as of July 1, 1999. Clearly there will be close synergy to make this White House Conference a substantive, dynamic, and solutions-focused event.
- The NPA is in the process of raising money for a conference on Parenting, like the one we are proposing to the White House, and anticipates receiving a planning grant from the CS Mott Foundation shortly. The Ad Council is prepared to provide funding as well.

A White House Conference on Parenting would have a tremendous impact in pushing forward an agenda that promotes a new generation of practical solutions with an emphasis on models that work for families, without crippling the small firms that drive economic growth. It would be a valuable opportunity to bring the private sector on board by showcasing and celebrating policies that emphasize flexibility and imaginative management rather than costly benefits. Examples are practices like: flex-time and -place, part-time jobs with pro-rated benefits, trade-ins of pay for extra leave, and seasonal job sharing.

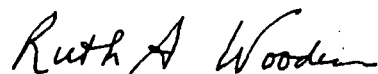
As you know, options like these help all working parents in the tough job of raising kids—but they particularly enable parents making the transition to work or in low-income jobs to support their children without neglecting them.

We are excited about the possibility of moving ahead on this conference. Sylvia Hewlett recently sent a letter to Nicole Rabner (April 14, 1999) laying out some of the background. We will call to follow up and obviously would be eager to meet with your staff and the Domestic Policy Council to discuss next steps.

Sincerely,



Sylvia Ann Hewlett
President
National Parenting Association



Ruth A. Wooden
President
Ad Council

cc: Melanne Verveer
Nicole Rabner

file parent too

PLAYING THEIR PARTS:

PARENTS AND TEACHERS TALK ABOUT PARENTAL
INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUPPORTING TABLES

TABLE ONE: Parents' Views on Schools and Children

How close does each of the following come to your own view? [Insert Item]—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to your view?

PARENTS	Very or Somewhat Close	Very Close	Somewhat Close
The most important thing parents can do to help their child succeed in school is to provide a stable, loving home	99%	87%	12%
I want school to be a fun and enjoyable experience my kids will remember for the rest of their lives	95	76	19
As children get older, it's important that they increasingly handle schoolwork on their own	93	72	21
Today's teachers have to deal with a lot more discipline problems than in the past	92	76	16
Today's teachers often use very different techniques to teach their subjects than when I was in school	89	61	28
As long as they try hard, children should never feel bad about themselves because of poor grades in school	88	65	23
Most children go through times when they are distracted and slacking off at school	87	51	37
When my child comes home happy from school I know they're doing well	85	56	29
One of the main reasons I live in this neighborhood is the quality of its schools	73	53	19
I would be very disappointed if my child got average grades in school this year	60	34	26
It's OK to let a child skip a school assignment on special occasions	27	10	16

A full questionnaire with all answer categories is available from Public Agenda in the Technical Appendix for this study. Percentages in tables may not equal 100% due to rounding or missing answer categories. Rounding may also cause slight discrepancies between numbers in the text and numbers in the tables.

Parents: n=1,220

TABLE TWO: Parents' Views on Parental Involvement

Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. [Insert Item]—do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

PARENTS	Strongly or Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree
As much as parents try to help, children's academic success still has a lot to do with their natural abilities'	89%	45%	44%
It is always the same group of parents who are helping out at the school'	87	59	28
Parents should never criticize a teacher in front of their child*	85	64	21
Too many parents expect the school to do their job for them*	82	54	28
Kids whose parents are not involved at school sometimes get shortchanged and fall through the cracks'	72	38	35
When it comes to behavior and values, it's at school that my child often learns the wrong things*	52	16	36
The schools sometimes unfairly blame parents for things that should be the schools' responsibility'	46	16	30
Parents should avoid disputes with their child's teacher because the teacher could take it out on the child'	43	15	27
I need to keep a close eye on the teachers and school to make sure my children get treated well*	42	16	27

*Split sample: n=659

'Split sample: n=611

TABLE THREE: Reasons Parents Become Less Involved in Later Grades

Here are some reasons why parents may become less involved in their children's education in later grades. For each, please tell me if you think this is a major reason parents become less involved, a minor reason, or not a reason at all.

HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS		Major Reason
Schoolwork becomes more difficult for parents to help with		46%
Kids are embarrassed if their parents get too involved		35
The high schools and middle schools make less effort to get parents involved		28
Kids can handle school on their own and need parents less		25
There are so many teachers in later grades that it is hard to keep contact with them		24
Parents run out of the energy they had when their kids were little		20

High School Parents Only: n=507

TABLE FIVE: Teachers' Ratings of Schools and Parents

Overall, how would you rate the following?

TEACHERS	Excellent/ Good	Fair/ Poor
The quality of the teachers at your school in terms of their ability to teach	92%	8%
The students at your school in terms of their ability to learn	71	29
The reputation your school has among other teachers in the district as a desirable place to work	70	29
The students at your school in terms of their behavior	67	33
Your school's principal in terms of leadership and effectiveness	61	38
The parents at your school in terms of their involvement with their children's education	34	66

Teachers: n=1,000

TABLE FOUR: Parents' Responses to Ideas for Parental Involvement

Now I'll read you some ways to try to get parents at your school more involved in their children's education. How much do you favor or oppose each of these ideas for your school? How about [Insert Item]—would you say you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose this idea?

PARENTS	Strongly or Somewhat Favor	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor
Offering working parents school appointments in the early morning or evening so they can meet with teachers*	96%	79%	18%
Giving parents advice on how to get kids excited about learning†	96	68	28
Giving parents more information about how their schools compare with other schools in their area*	90	63	27
Giving parents advice on how to supervise their children's schoolwork*	90	46	43
Giving parents more information on the qualifications of their children's teachers*	87	54	33
Requiring the parents of failing students to attend programs that teach them how to help their kids learn*	81	51	30
Requiring parents and teachers to sign contracts that spell out what each is expected to do to help students succeed*	69	38	31
Requiring teachers to visit the homes of children whose parents have never come to school*	52	24	29

*Split sample: n=643

†Split sample: n=561

TABLE SIX: Teachers' Complaints About Students

How serious have the following student problems been in the classes you have recently taught — very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not serious at all?

TEACHERS	Very or Somewhat Serious	Very Serious	Somewhat Serious
Students who try to get by with doing as little work as possible	69%	26%	43%
Students who don't do their homework	55	16	39
Students who are disruptive in class	42	11	32
Students who are chronically late and unprepared for class	40	9	31
Students who are violent or physically threatening in class	15	4	11
Students who come to class hungry because of poverty	15	3	13

Teachers: n=1,000

TABLE SEVEN: Teachers' Views on Parental Involvement in Schools

How close do the following statements come to describing your experiences with the parents at your school—very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all?

TEACHERS	Very or Somewhat Close	Very Close	Somewhat Close
It is always the same group of parents who are helping out at the school	98%	76%	22%
Without involved parents, it is very hard for a student to succeed in school	81	39	42
My school tries hard to get parents involved but there's just no reaching some parents	79	38	41
Most parents of underachieving kids wait for their children to fail before they intervene	78	36	43
Too many parents have little idea of what is going on with their kids' school and education	78	35	43
Most parents respect their children's teachers	77	19	58
Too many parents automatically take their children's side when there is a conflict with their teacher	72	28	45
You cannot count on most parents to watch out for other kids—they are mostly interested in their own children's progress	65	26	38
Most parents try their best to help their kids succeed in school	61	15	46
Some teachers are too sensitive when parents make suggestions about their classrooms	55	7	49
Kids whose parents are not involved at school sometimes get shortchanged and fall through the cracks	48	14	35
Sometimes parents are right when they challenge teachers on grades or discipline matters	46	10	36
Some parents don't trust teachers who are of a different race	29	9	20
Parents are so worried about threats to their kids such as drugs that academic achievement is way down on their list of concerns	22	4	18
It is more difficult for me to have productive conversations with parents who are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds	11	2	9

Teachers: n=1,000

TABLE EIGHT: Teachers' Views on Parental Role at Home

Based upon your experiences and observations at your school, how serious a problem are each of the following — very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not serious at all?

TEACHERS	Very or Somewhat Serious	Very Serious	Somewhat Serious
Parents who fail to set limits and create structure at home for their kids	83%	36%	47%
Parents who fail to control how much time their kids spend with TV, computer and video games	83	34	49
Parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable for their behavior or academic performance	81	31	50
Parents who allow sports and social popularity to be their kids' biggest priority*	66	19	47
Parents who are so tired of battling their kids over homework that they give up	53	12	41
Parents who are so focused on their own careers that their children's schooling is not a priority	50	12	38
Parents who go directly to the principal when there is a problem instead of talking to the teacher first	47	13	34
Parents who blame teachers for their children's failures	46	11	34
New teaching strategies and approaches that confuse parents	33	4	29
Parents with unrealistically high expectations for what their children can achieve academically	31	5	26
Parents who put too much pressure on their kids to get good grades	31	4	27
Parents who are so concerned that their kids have fun and enjoy school that academic achievement takes a backseat	25	5	20
Parents so attached to old ways of teaching that they resist innovative and improved teaching methods	19	3	16
Parents who are so active at their child's school that they stifle the independence and maturity of the student	16	3	13

Teachers: n=1,000

*This question was asked only of middle school, junior high school, and high school teachers: n=427

PUBLIC AGENDA

* I have report if anyone
wants to look - H. E.



FOR RELEASE
ON OR AFTER MARCH 17, 1999

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Margaret S. Dunning 212/686-6610 ext. 37
Matthew Schuerman ext. 40

RAISING KIDS, NOT RUNNING SCHOOLS, IS TOP PRIORITY **New Survey Shows Agreement on Most Urgent Type of Parental Involvement**

NEW YORK – Most parents and teachers agree on the most important way for parents to be involved in their children's schools, according to a new study by the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Agenda that takes a detailed look at one of the most prominent, if amorphous, trends in education.

The report, *Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools*, finds that parents and teachers have mixed feelings about parents taking part in a school's hiring and curriculum decisions. But the two groups heartily endorse a different kind of parental involvement: having parents raise polite disciplined children who come to school enthusiastic about learning. The study was sponsored by Kraft Foods, an operating company of Philip Morris Companies Inc.

"What many policy makers and reformers are talking about – getting parents involved in school governance – misses the most bedeviling concerns teachers and parents face," says Deborah Wadsworth, executive director of Public Agenda. "Most teachers and parents see an urgent need for the type of parental involvement that starts at home, promoting good behavior and a strong work ethic."

Playing Their Parts finds that eight in 10 parents (83 percent) say the most important role they can play is checking homework and encouraging their children to learn. Only 4 percent say instead that parents' first priority should be to help hire staff and shape curriculum.

The desire to expand parents' role in school management has inspired numerous "site-based management teams" throughout the country as well as part of the federal government's Goals 2000 platform. But most parents say they simply feel uncomfortable and unqualified to take on management duties. "I'm involved in my daughter's classroom, but choosing the topics, that's not my area," a New Mexico mother said. Given a choice of 10 activities they could do at school, parents are most likely to say they are very comfortable chaperoning a class trip or party (73 percent). Only a quarter (25 percent) say the same about helping plan curriculum.

-more-

arguments with their child over assignments "where there was yelling or crying." "I wanted this time to be quality love time, and it couldn't be because of this homework," a Birmingham mother says. That frustration has led one in every five parents (22 percent) to admit having done their children's homework themselves.

Applied research. In the coming months, two nonprofit organizations will use *Playing Their Parts* in community engagement projects also funded by Kraft. The Public Education Network, a consortium of school reform groups throughout the country, will host forums with four of its members: the APPLE Corps in Atlanta; the Charlotte-Mecklenberg (N.C.) Education Foundation; the Paterson (N.J.) Education Fund and the Portland (Ore.) Public Schools Foundation. The National Association of Partners in Education, a 30-year-old alliance devoted to partnerships between schools and communities, will make use of the research in day-long seminars at five sites across the country, later publishing the action plans that result. To focus educators' attention on parental involvement, Public Agenda will present *Playing Their Parts* at teachers' and administrators' conferences throughout the year.

Playing Their Parts is based on surveys conducted in the fall of 1998 of 1,220 randomly chosen parents of public school children and 1,000 public school teachers from across the country. The margin of error for either sample is plus or minus 3 percent. In addition, Public Agenda held eight focus groups and conducted 25 interviews with experts. The report was written by Director of Research Steve Farkas and Director of Programs Jean Johnson, both senior vice presidents; and Ann Duffett, assistant director of research; with Claire Aulicino, a research assistant; and Joanna McHugh, a research associate.

To order a copy of *Playing Their Parts* (\$12.50, shipping included), call (212) 686-6610. Excerpts will be available March 17 on Public Agenda Online (www.publicagenda.org). The Web site includes additional research on education and the family from Public Agenda and other organizations.

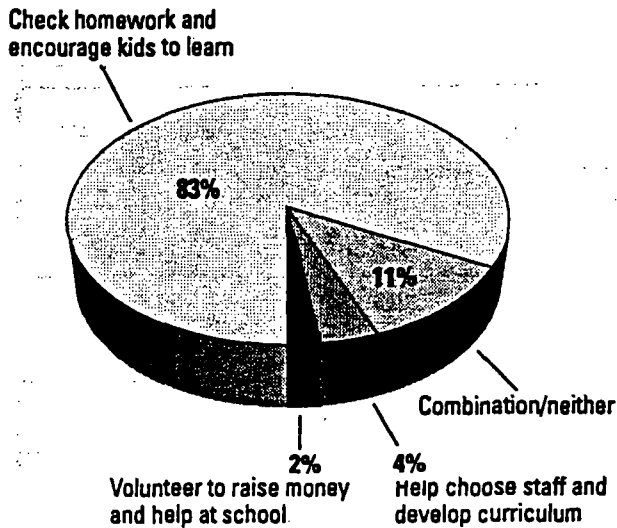
Public Agenda is a nonpartisan, nonprofit public opinion research and education organization working to help citizens better understand complex policy issues and to help the nation's leaders better understand the public's point of view. It was founded in 1975 by former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and social scientist and author Daniel Yankelovich.

#

Most Important Role for Parents

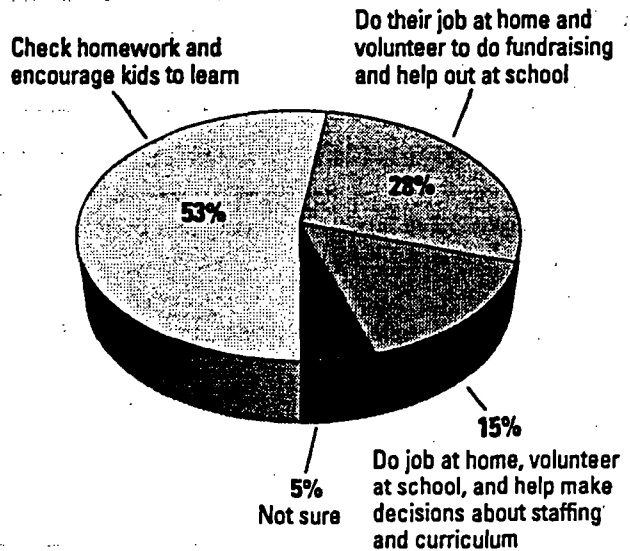
PARENTS

Which is MOST important for parents to do in the partnership between parents and school?



TEACHERS

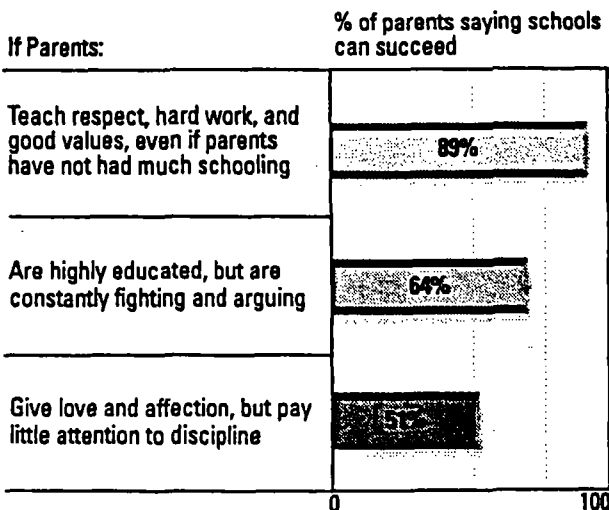
Which description of the partnership between parents and school comes closer to your own? For parents to:



PARENTS

Schools Can Succeed If...

Suppose a child has parents like the ones described below. Do you think the schools should still be able to do a good job of teaching this child or not?



PARENTS

Homework as Parents' Headache

% of parents saying they have done the following:

Have had serious arguments with child where there was yelling or crying over schoolwork	50%
Have walked away and let child deal with the consequences of not doing their schoolwork rather than dealing with child's constant stalling	49%
Have done part of child's homework because it was too difficult for them or because they were too tired	22%

Full Questions



Parents can and do make a difference in their children's lives.

PARENTING IS PREVENTION



Parent Power!

Science informs us that parents who are actively involved in their child's life, who establish a strong relationship with their child, and who are aware of the child's activities, are more likely to prevent their child from getting involved with alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. And these are the same things you can do to ensure your child's success in school and the future.

Darryl R. McCaffrey

Director of the President's Office of
National Drug Control Policy

Most parents have an incredible influence on their children, despite their worries about the negative effects of peer pressure and pop culture. New research has identified how parents can use their influence to prevent children from getting involved with alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. And these are the same things you can do to ensure your child's success in school and the future.

Prevention takes more than just a single conversation; parents need to stay involved with their kids throughout childhood and the adolescent years. Building a close relationship with young people and providing a positive

environment are keys to good child development. That means a strong community involving schools, religious institutions, sports and recreation opportunities, businesses and others that contribute to a healthy and safe upbringing.



'' It's so easy for kids to get drugs these days.

How can I **protect** my child? ''

Why be concerned?

It's never too early to start educating your children about the dangers and effects of substance abuse. Consider these alarming facts:

❖ More 12- to 17-year-olds named drugs as the most important problem they face (more than social pressures, violence, crime or any other issues) for the fourth straight year.¹

❖ By age 13, half of the nation's teens say they can buy marijuana and 43 percent of them say they can buy acid, cocaine or heroin.²

❖ Marijuana use among teenagers has been increasing. Adolescents ages 12 to 17 who use marijuana weekly are nine times more likely than nonusers to experiment with other illegal drugs and alcohol; six times more likely to run away from home; five times more likely to steal; nearly four times more likely to engage in violence; and three times more likely to have thoughts about committing suicide.³

❖ Alcohol is the most frequently used substance among adolescents. In 1997, 11 million children and adolescents were drinkers and more than 40 percent of them were binge drinkers (that is, they had five or more drinks on one

Sources: ¹ National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse. *Back to School 1998-CASA Teen Survey IV*. ² *IBID*. ³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Adolescent Self-Reported Behaviors and Their Association with Marijuana Use, 1998*.

**"I know what
my daughter is
up to because
we talk every
day about what
is happening
in her life. It
pays to be a
good listener."**

or more occasions in the past month). Research indicates that the earlier an individual begins to use alcohol, the greater the chances of developing a serious substance abuse problem.

❖ Smoking has increased dramatically among young people. In ages 12 to 17, the rate of adolescents first trying cigarettes increased by 30 percent, and those smoking daily increased by 50 percent, between 1988 and 1996.⁴

❖ Teen substance abuse cuts across all socioeconomic, racial and ethnic lines.

"Where we once saw hopeful signs of declining lung cancer among minorities in the early years of this decade, we now see striking increases in smoking by minority youth. Unless we can reverse these trends, they are bound to result in more lung disease and early death for these populations."

David Satcher, M.D.
U.S. Surgeon General

So why do kids use drugs?

Young people give five main reasons for using alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs: to feel grown-up, to fit in and belong, to relax and feel good, to take risks and rebel, and to satisfy curiosity.

It's a simple but proven fact: Young people are much less likely to use drugs

Source: ⁴Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, October 9, 1998

"HOW CAN I POSSIBLY COMPETE WITH PEER PRESSURE AND THE MEDIA?"

when they have something positive to do and when caring adults are involved in their lives. The fact is, most teens who don't use alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs credit their parents for their decision. Gary Fields, an Illinois high school superintendent, notes that, in his experience, the number one reason children decide not to use drugs is a fear of disappointing parents and family.

Marty H., Cincinnati, Ohio, a married father of five sons, ages 8-18, observes: "It's helpful to give your kids an excuse to say no to drugs. They can say 'I'd love to try it. I'm as cool as you are, but my parents are wackos.'"

"If the foundation of prevention is good parenting, then the heart of good parenting is communication. We can't talk with our kids about drugs if we're not first listening to them talk about what's important to them."

National Family Partnerships

Parents possess a unique power to help their children stay healthy and drug-free. Fathers and mothers are often identified by young people as the most trustworthy sources of information and guidance on drug use and other

serious issues. And adolescents and teenagers want and need this information from their parents.

Most parents agree that it isn't hard talking to their kids about drugs once they know what to say and how to say it.

What can parents do?

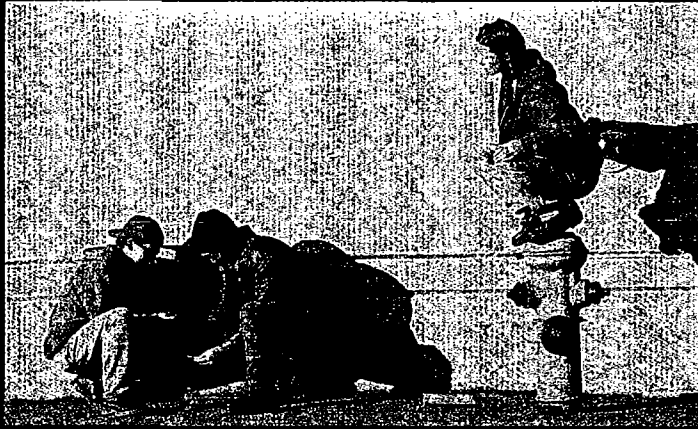
Here are some ways you can foster an open and communicative relationship with the children in your life.

1. Establish and maintain good communication.

Parents who talk to their children about what's happening in their lives are better able to guide their children toward more positive, skill-enhancing activities and friendships. As a result, their children are less likely to experiment with alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs.

You can establish good communication by getting into the habit of talking to your kids every day. When you





"When Michael started middle school, we were scared to death, but **it has really helped to make some rules** about how he spends his time after school."

show interest in what they have to say, they'll begin to open up. One technique to show you're listening and understanding is to paraphrase what your child tells you.

"Opening a conversation with your child about substance abuse begins when you first listen to them about what is important in their lives."

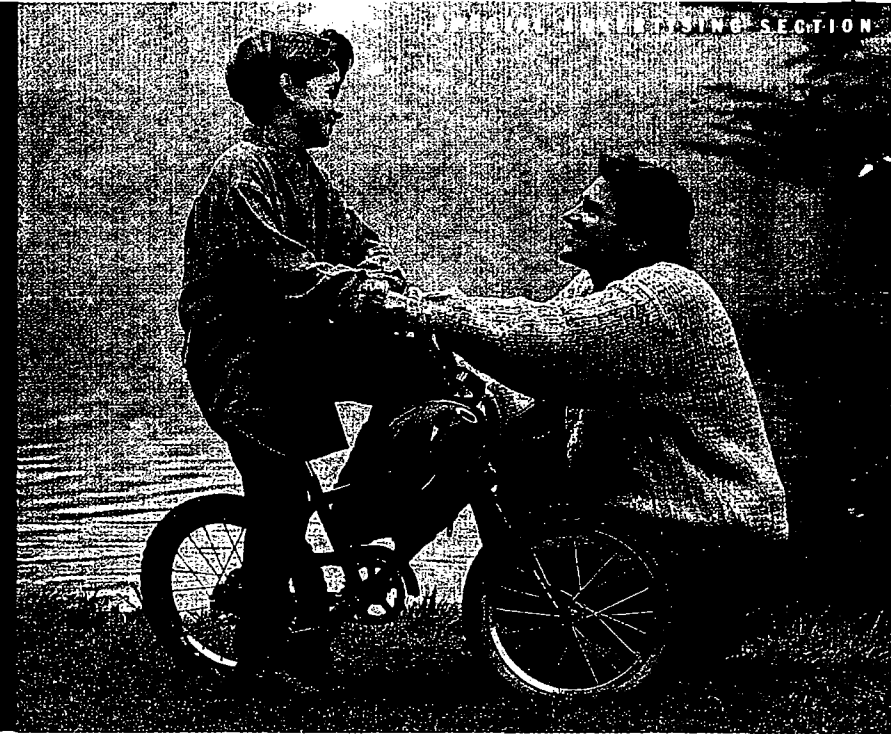
*Nelba Chavez, Ph.D.
Administrator, Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services Administration*

And it's important not to be critical: Parents who criticize their children out of embarrassment or uneasiness are

seldom successful in changing their children's behavior.

2. Make clear rules and enforce them with consistency and mild consequences.

Let your children know up front that you don't want them using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs. Research shows that young people are less likely to use drugs if their parents and schools set clear rules and respond with mild consequences when these rules are broken. Severe punishments will only undermine the quality of the parent-child relationship and are no more effective than more moderate, consistently applied consequences. Parents only need a small number of



consistently enforced rules to guide their children in establishing daily habits of self-discipline.

"Although negative peer influence is the major reason kids use drugs, research suggests that positive family influence is the main reason kids don't use drugs."

*Karol Kumpfer, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Substance
Abuse Prevention*

3. Be a positive role model.

Do not engage in any illegal, unhealthy or dangerous drug use practices. In other words: "Walk the

walk." Children, even at very early ages, imitate and are influenced by adult actions and behaviors.

4. Appreciate a child's individuality.

Provide unconditional love and support to your child and encourage their unique talents and personality. Make it a point to praise and reward appropriate behavior.

5. Help children deal with peer pressure and media messages that may trivialize drug use.

Practice ways for kids to refuse drugs in ways that fit their personalities. Try

role-playing what to say at a party or on a date. You can use drug-related messages in the media as a springboard to discuss your kids' beliefs about alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Young people generally do not recognize that media portrayals often underplay the harmful effects of drugs and can unintentionally encourage their use.

6. Monitor your children's activities.

Be sure young people have easy access to a wide range of appealing, drug-free activities and that they have safe, monitored areas where they can go after school. Kids are more likely to experiment with drugs if their friends do, and if they spend a lot of time together without adult supervision. Get to know your children's friends and their friends' parents. It's important that parents create rules that ensure their children aren't spending lots of unsupervised time with friends, especially after school.

Parents who are actively involved with their children's lives can positively influence their successes in school and encourage involvement with appropriate friends. They can also guide children away from risky situations, dangerous behaviors and negative peer influence.

Where can you get help?

All parents need to learn how to better communicate with their kids about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs.

**"My daughter is 17.
I feel like it's
too late to talk
about drugs."**



Yet many find it very difficult. They are hesitant to believe that such a problem could occur in their family, they can't find the right way to start up a conversation and, in some cases, they feel reluctant because of their own past use. Regardless, it is critical for parents to sit down regularly with their children and talk about substance abuse and other issues that are important to their good health and future.

To initiate a conversation with your child, try using information from the new National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. In addition, the resources listed on the following pages are not only free of charge, but provide the latest information on drugs and drug use, how to discuss sensitive issues with children, parent education and training programs, and community organizations.

**"I don't
know
what
I'd do**

**if I
thought
my child
was
getting
high.**



ALCOHOL AND DRUG PREVENTION

Office of National Drug Control Policy

www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov or www.projectknow.com

ABC/Disney

www.freevibe.com

Partnership for a Drug-Free America

www.drugfreeamerica.org

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

1-800-788-2800 or www.health.org

SAMHSA maintains a national clearinghouse of printed and audiovisual materials on a wide range of topics (se habla español).

Parenting Is Prevention Project

1-703-448-5729 or www.emory.edu/NFIA/PIPP/

America Online's Parent's Resource Center

Keywords: drug help

Information and advice about illegal drugs. Provides a gathering place for concerned parents.

TOBACCO PREVENTION

The Office on Smoking and Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

1-800-CDC-1311 or www.cdc.gov/tobacco

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

By volunteering just a few hours of time, caring parents and adults can help young people develop life skills, build self-confidence and resist peer pressure to begin using drugs. Volunteers and mentors not only have the satisfaction of knowing they've helped a child in need but they'll learn from this special experience. If you want to volunteer, call 1-800-788-2800 or visit www.health.org to be linked to participating local organizations and programs.

YOUTH AND PARENT PROGRAMS

For creative ways to educate youth on preventing alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use and to promote drug-free lifestyles, check out these programs:

Your Time—Their Future

1-800-788-2800 or www.health.org/yourtime

A SAMHSA campaign featuring mentoring and volunteer opportunities for adults.

Reality Check

1-800-788-2800 or www.health.org/reality

A SAMHSA campaign developed to help combat the rising use of marijuana among America's youth. Request a free copy of *Keeping Youth Drug-Free*, a special guide for parents on how to talk to their children about substance abuse.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

1-800-CDC-1311 or www.cdc.gov/tobacco

Request a copy of *MyKids*, a 30-minute video showing parents how they can positively influence and interact with their children to prevent alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use.

Also request *MediaSharp*, a multimedia program for educators, parent groups and youth civic leaders that teaches the fundamentals of analyzing media messages. Co-sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Education Association.

U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program

1-877-4EDPUBS or www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS

Call or log on for your free copy of *Growing Up Drug-Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention*.

The Department of Justice

1-800-638-8736 or www.ncjrs.org

Provides a wide range of materials on drugs, crime and prevention programs.

The American Academy of Pediatrics

www.aap.org

Contains information for parents and caregivers on alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use, and media literacy.

"We know that parents, grandparents, foster parents and older siblings can play a major role in helping young people avoid the dangerous minefields of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. The support and guidance we give to young people today will help determine the kind of adults they are tomorrow."

*Donna Shalala,
U.S. Secretary of
Health and Human
Services*

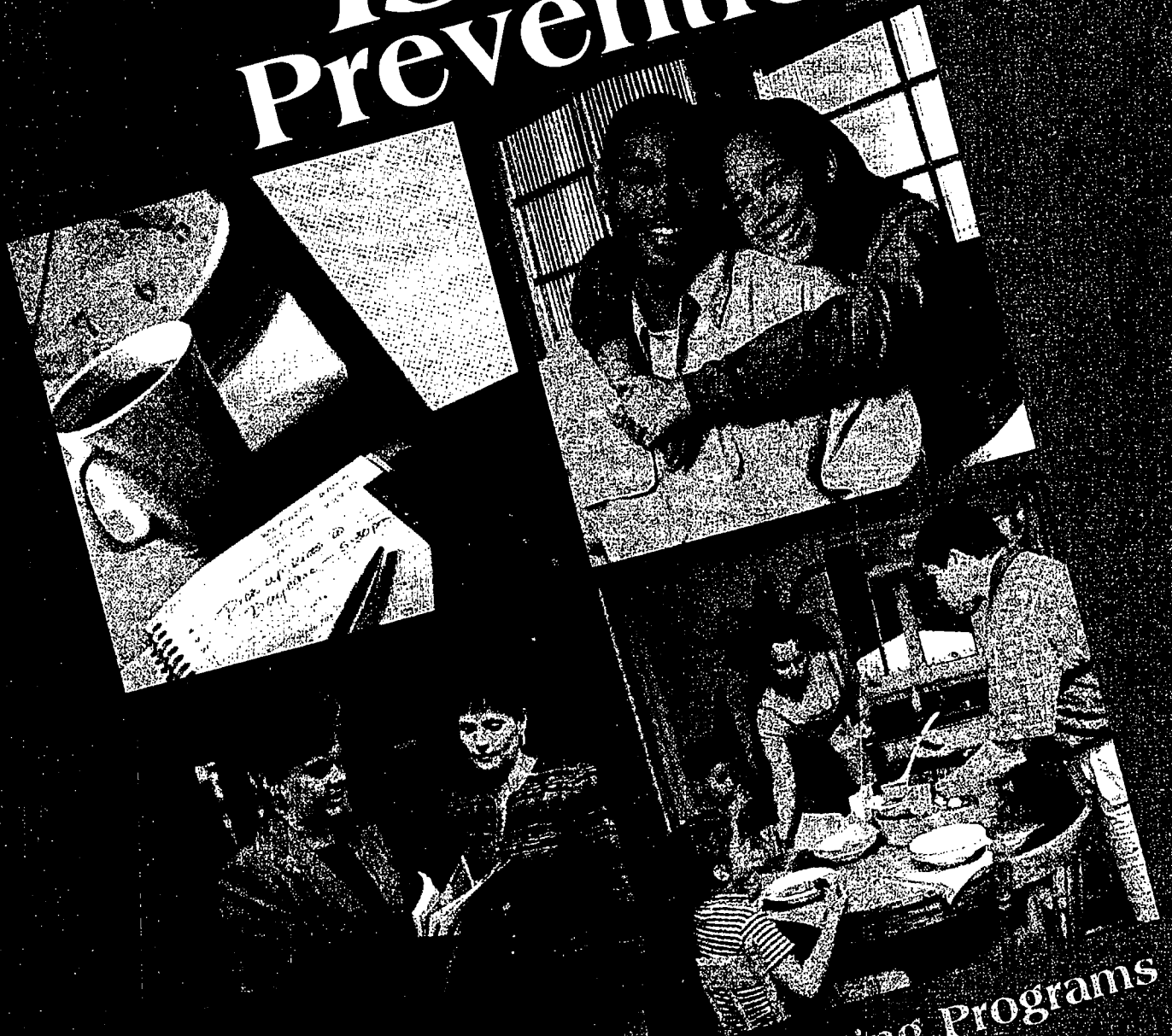
**OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY &
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

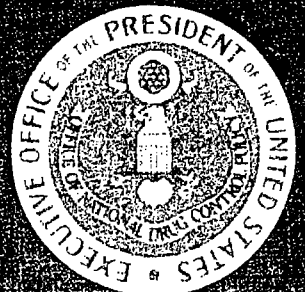
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Office on Smoking and Health



Parenting IS Prevention



Resource Guide to Parenting Programs
and Training in the Workplace



Section 3

Synthesis of Approaches to Workplace Parenting Programs and Training

3.1 Workplace Parenting Programs and Training Models and Methods

Diverse principles drive the types of services provided to the employees in workplace parenting programs.

Although all of the programs and training described in this Resource Guide focus on empowering parents to deter children from engaging in antisocial behaviors, some programs have chosen to target balancing work with home life. The focus of the program may mandate development of a support group for parents who receive the training. Another program may stress a healthy lifestyle and focus on changing parents' drinking habits and behaviors that center around substance abuse. This type of program promotes a sound diet, stress management techniques, and exercise.

Some programs address parenting issues relevant to certain age groups of children. These programs identify various developmental challenges parents face as the child matures and assist in increasing the parents' level of comfort in addressing developmental issues. Programs that target substance abuse as the center of curriculum concentrate on increasing parents' awareness of both protective and risk factors that may negate or promote substance abuse in their children. Activities incorporated within this type of program may include role play with the objective of

helping the parents to become proactive in their child's life. It may portray actions parents should take if their child has a substance problem. It may also identify and expel misconceptions concerning drugs and alcohol.

Although each program appears to have unique principles driving the methods and objectives promoted through the various activities employed, a constant element observed in all programs is the emphasis on communication and empowerment. At the core of each program is the goal of providing parents with the tools for effectively communicating with their children and other family members. The program may suggest family meetings and outings. It may suggest that parents clearly list and express their expectations of their children. Parents are empowered when they become familiar and comfortable with information regarding drugs, alcohol, sex, and other disquieting issues families face as children mature. The sessions and information provided by the various programs focus on helping parents see the importance of their role in providing their children with the necessary survival skills to resist negative societal influences and embrace positive ones.

A panel of experts who are providing parenting programs and training in the workplace convened on September 28, 1998 (see Executive Summary of Proceedings) to assist CSAP in

identifying the core elements and issues in facilitating a parenting workplace program. As a result of this meeting, 11 key programming elements were identified, which are:

1. The programs are comprehensive for children and parents.
2. The programs focus on training for children as well as for parents.
 - They include activities that parents can do at home between training sessions.
 - They suggest participation in community activities such as sporting events, health fairs, etc.
 - They cover practice activities within the sessions, if the sessions are 1-day or weekend seminars.
3. The correct “dosage” is important.
 - Generally, the longer the program, the better.
 - However, if the program is too long, it may need to be modified because it could become discouraging.
4. The program must be tailored to cultural traditions.
 - This includes the workplace culture.
 - It also means addressing family cultures appropriately and providing an opportunity to share across cultures.
5. If the focus of the program is directed to different age groups of children, it should be developmentally appropriate.
 - In large workplaces, trainers can divide parent groups according to the age of their children.
6. The location of training is very important.
 - This type of program may be difficult in small workplaces because there may not be a sufficient number of parents with children in each age group to form groups.
 - The workplace environment changes the dynamics of the training.
 - There should be a focus on transferring parenting skills learned at the workplace training to the home environment.
7. Discussion of dysfunction in the home environment is a key program element.
 - There is a need to define what is functional versus what is dysfunctional.
 - The programs assist parents in identifying dysfunction at home.
8. Components of effective programs include strategies for improving family relations and communication.
 - Skill area training incorporates strategies for strengthening family communication.
9. Recruitment and retention of parents for the entire program is important.
10. Videos
 - Demonstrating or modeling good and bad parenting is desirable. However, some

parents who view the video may not correctly identify an example of poor parenting.

- Videos provide an extra dimension of privacy because they can be viewed at home or alone.
- If parents in the workplace do not identify with the parents on the video due to differences of race, family structure, lifestyle, etc., the impact of the program may be compromised.

11. It is critical to use trained and dedicated facilitators.

- Facilitators must be committed to the idea that training parents is important.
- They must be knowledgeable of the workplace.
- They must be entrepreneurial.
- They must have confidence in the information disseminated and enthusiasm in promoting their program.
- They must treat parents with respect and instill confidence.
- They should ask questions and encourage parents to think for themselves.
- They should "keep it simple."

3.2 Company Implementation Approaches to Workplace Programs for Parents

There are several different designs companies can consider when they initiate a workplace parenting program. Time and location are major considerations, as is the ability to reach the most employees who could benefit from training. In this section, several approaches are discussed.

Onsite Training Sessions

Sessions during work hours or during the lunch hour are convenient for employees and do not interrupt the daily work schedule. This approach allows parents to take home the information learned and implement it immediately, so they can observe their effectiveness within the family setting. The parents then bring the results back to the next session and receive feedback from the facilitator as well as other parents on methods to improve techniques. A potential positive consequence of interaction among parents may be an informal support group that continues beyond the formal sessions provided by the company. Interaction among parents serves a twofold purpose. First, parents see that they are not alone and are not inadequate parents. Second, interaction provides parents with a support system that, if it continues, maintains a vehicle for sharing information and experiences.

One disadvantage to providing lunchtime sessions is that all employees do not take lunch at the same time. Therefore, sessions may not be available to all employees. Sessions conducted during the work day may not be long enough to both cover the information and receive feedback from parents as well. Location is important too. Companies must provide areas that are conducive to training, provide reasonable privacy, and discourage interruption by other employees.

One-Day and Weekend Training Sessions

One-day or weekend sessions outside the workplace are intensive and focus on meeting goals and objectives

established at the beginning of the sessions by the facilitator. This format allows more time for dealing with various issues adequately. Breakout sessions are used to discuss and practice activities learned. There is less room for disruption during the sessions. Although this format appears to have many advantages, all-day or weekend seminars may be inconvenient for parents. Parents must find child care or change their weekend routines. In addition, if the program is limited to one long workshop, there can be no benefit from parental feedback and repeated chances to implement the lessons learned. Interaction among families is often an effective means of helping to achieve the goals of the program.

Self-Instructional Programs

Self-instructional programs provide more personalized services that are private and give parents more control over when and where they receive parenting training. These services are provided through parenting hot lines, interactive CD-Rom with

activity packets, and videos with workbooks that include activities to practice at home. The advantages to these methods are that information is available to parents when they need it and intervention is immediate. In contrast, parents must wait for prescheduled, structured, facilitated sessions. Services delivered in the privacy of the home may engender a certain level of comfort; the parent may feel less intimidated about recognizing weaknesses that need improvement. Finally, this type of program can reach more parents within the workplace because it allows employees access to the information at their own convenience. A disadvantage to this approach is the lack of interaction with other parents who experience similar challenges within their households. CD-Rom and video with workbook activity methods are difficult to evaluate. They do not require feedback on how the techniques worked within the families. This is essential in determining if the strategies suggested are actually effective.

3/28/00

copy for team

Ann &
Amie
G

Dear Shirley, Mary Ellen,

Enclosed you'll find two articles that may be of interest as you prepare for the conference on teenagers. Also, have you heard of the new parenting guide from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry? It's called Your Adolescent. On web at www.aacap.org.

Sincerely,

Laura

Laura Sessions Stepp

Roseanne

Laura Sessions
Stepp

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 - [Newsmakers](#)
 - [Last Word](#)
by Anna Quindlen

International Edition**Special Issues****SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY****The Nature of Nurturing**

A new study finds that how parents treat a child can shape which of his genes turn on.

By Sharon Begley

Newsweek, March 27, 2000

Since people, not to mention families, are so infernally complicated, consider the rat. As soon as their wriggly little pups are born, rat mothers lick and groom them, but like mothers of other species they vary in how obsessive they are about getting every one of their offspring's hairs in place. Pups whose mothers treat them like living lollipops grow up different from pups of less devoted mothers: particular genes in the pups' brains are turned on "high." These brain genes play a pivotal role in behavior. With the genes turned up full blast, the rats churn out fewer stress hormones and, as adults, are more resistant to stress, finds Michael Meaney of McGill University. These rats don't startle as easily, are less fearful in the face of novel situations and braver when they have to explore an open field. In rats whose mothers did not lick them so much, the brain genes are not turned up so high (though they are very much present), and the pups grow up to be jumpy, angst-ridden and stressed-out—Woody Allens with whiskers. All because of how much Mom licked and groomed them.

Thanks to experiments like these, the age-old nature-nurture controversy—is the person we become shaped more by the genes we inherit from our parents, or by our life experiences?—is growing up. Now the consensus is that we are shaped by both nature and nurture, also known as heredity and environment. But while this wishy-washy conclusion offends neither naturists nor nurturists, it hasn't explained much either. That is changing. An ambitious study of 720 pairs of



Do-it-yourself gene therapy? New theories on nature vs. nurture (Penny Gentieu — babystock.com)


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More on how
 parents matter
 - note this is a
 study of adolescents
 by local scientist
 Laura Stepp

adolescents with different degrees of genetic relatedness (from identical twins to step-siblings) reconciles nature and nurture by explaining how genetic tendencies are encouraged, or stifled, by specific parental responses. "Biology is not destiny," psychologist David Reiss of George Washington University writes in the new book "The Relationship Code," which describes his 12-year study. "Many genetic factors, powerful as they may be in psychological development, exert their influence only through the good offices of the family." And that means that how parents raise their children actually does matter.

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To understand why, take a trait like shyness, which seems to be partly heritable. But it is not heritable the way, say, eye color is. If parents coddle and overprotect a shy toddler, she will probably remain shy; if they encourage, even force, her into spending time with other tykes, she has a good chance of overcoming it. Exactly how these different parental responses encourage or suppress, at the molecular level, genes that predispose for shyness remains a great unknown. But the general message is clear: gene expression is not foreordained. To have any effect, genes must be turned on. (A quick glance at your hand will show this: the cells in the skin contain the same 80,000 or so genes as the cells in your pancreas, but the gene that codes for insulin is turned on in your pancreas yet silenced in your skin.) Whether, and how strongly, genes that underlie complex behaviors are turned on, or "expressed," says Reiss, depends on the interactions and relationships a child has with the important people in his or her life.

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Already scientists who have been foursquare in the nature camp are having second thoughts as a result of the study by Reiss, Robert Plomin, Mavis Hetherington and colleagues. "It's a tour de force," says David Rowe of the University of Arizona, who has long argued that genes, not families, determine how children turn out. "It will be very influential and, in the long run, very important." Behavioral geneticist Kenneth Kendler of the Medical College of Virginia praises the study for "going beyond what anyone has ever done before in trying to bridge family research and genetics." Building that bridge would tax any scientific construction crew. On the one side, many psychologists believe that environment is all: children of abusive parents often become antisocial and sometimes delinquent, children of cold parents struggle to form emotional bonds. On the other side, behavioral geneticists conclude that a child's fate is in his genes. Their evidence: identical twins reared together are no more alike than identicals reared apart. Apparently, being raised in the same way by the same parents added nothing to the twins' similarities in self-esteem, intelligence, personality, anxiety and other traits. And unrelated children who are adopted by the same family are no more alike than two kids chosen at random from a community, again casting doubt on the power of environment.



The scientists reach a different conclusion. Yes, genes matter: any new parent can see that children are born with innate temperaments. These

traits—cuddly or cold, cranky or calm—"cause their parents... to respond to them in a certain way," says Reiss. If a baby is unresponsive, most parents show her less affection; if the child is a holy terror, most parents scream, punish, hit or otherwise lash out. Reiss and his colleagues argue that it is these very responses that determine whether the gene underlying the trait is expressed or silenced, turned up or turned down. "Genetic factors initiate a sequence of influences on development, but certain social processes are critical for the expression of these genetic influences," says Reiss.

With a problem kid, who is perpetually disobeying, acting out, threatening, hitting, parents typically meet threat with threat, violence with violence and coercion with coercion. That is likely to exaggerate the child's innate proclivities and even increase the chances that he will become seriously antisocial and even criminal. "Family is like a catapult," says Kendler. "Kids with a difficult temperament can be managed and set on a good course, or their innate tendencies can be magnified by the family and catapulted into conduct disorder. This is a concrete, testable model of how genes and environment interact." On a happier note, genes seem to have an early effect on verbal IQ. A highly verbal toddler will likely elicit hour after hour of reading from her parents; that probably stimulates her innate cognitive tendencies. Later, she also develops self-confidence in her academic abilities, seeks out challenges and gains a reputation as a studious, bright kid. All this may act to maintain and even amplify her cognitive gifts into adolescence and adulthood until she leaves her peers in the academic dust—even if her (hypothetical) IQ genes are only the slightest bit smarter than those of the other kids.

Figuring out which environments turn up a gene and which turn it down is like trying to match the right soil to a delicate flower, only harder. Still, scientists have identified some links. Besides intellectual achievement, genetic factors seem to influence the first stirrings of sociability and antisocial behavior. These glimmerings typically evoke parental responses that reinforce the nascent trait. A child with a difficult temperament—irritability, aggressiveness—brings on parents' harsh discipline, verbal abuse, anger, hostility and relentless criticism. That seems to exacerbate the child's innate bad side, which only makes parents even more negative, on and on in a vicious cycle until the adolescent loses all sense of responsibility and academic focus. "Heritable characteristics of the child shape the level of parental hostility toward that child," says Reiss. "Parental hostility then intensifies the child's characteristics, making antisocial behavior more likely." But a sociable baby brings out a mother's affection and encouragement, which reinforce those initial tendencies toward sociability.

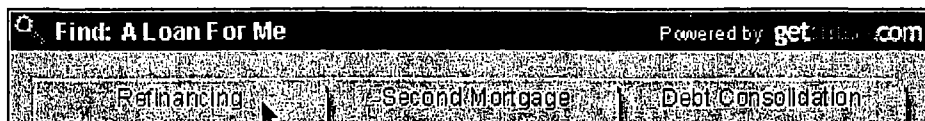
The controversial 1998 book "The Nurture Assumption" argued that the way parents treat their children matters not a whit to how their sons and daughters turn out; whatever traits genes don't determine, peers do.

Although the book was roundly criticized for its weak science, it did have one thing going for it: it let parents off the hook. Now parents are right back on it. But if Reiss and Plomin's explanation of how children develop is correct, it offers hope that with appropriate parenting, a child's sociability, sense of responsibility and cognitive development will bloom, and his tendency to antisocial behavior, academic failure and emotional problems wither.

Such "parenting against type"—pushing your shrinking violet into the social whirl rather than coddling her, reading and reading to a child who shows little interest, cuddling a baby who doesn't cuddle back—won't come easy. But it can happen. So-called intervention programs, which teach parents to respond to their infuriating child not by escalating the anger but by firm discipline, have brought about remarkable changes in children, slowly making them less impulsive and hostile. Similarly, parents can be taught not to close their hearts to their fussy baby but to soothe her, which improves both attachment and the child's ability to soothe herself. "We're close to designing these interventions," says Reiss. "If they work, we'll be changing a genetic trait by changing the family environment." Mothers and fathers would be doing gene therapy on their children simply by raising them.

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Scared by Columbine, Parents Flock to Workshops, Forums; Tactics for Raising Teenagers

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I facilitated this forum in Arlington. Can get you phone nos. of the parents behind it (they're the same people who do the summer job fair. Laura Stepp

<Text Start>

With her paper name-tag slapped on her fuzzy pink sweater, Mary Ann Moran stood in front of a group of concerned-looking parents. She read off a series of questions: "What assumptions do we make about our teenagers? Are they competent members of the community or are they aliens?"

Silence filled the room.

Some parents looked down. Others still dressed in their work clothes sighed and rubbed their eyes. She posed another question to the Arlington group: "Are we the people who can make a difference with our teenagers? Yes or no?"

Another moment of silence. Some more folks rubbed their eyes, until the awkward stillness was broken with a resounding chorus: "YES!"

Parents across the Washington suburbs are gathering in record numbers for evening workshops like this one, according to counselors, community groups and school officials. The programs center on an age-old question: How do parents communicate with teenagers and become a part of their lives? Although the problem is a familiar one, the hunger for answers has grown noticeably since the Columbine High School shootings last spring, parenting experts say.

"We don't know what our kids are doing," said Jeysi Aguilar, explaining why she came to the recent forum in Arlington with her 12-year-old daughter, Nancy. "I don't want her to push me away and live in a world I don't know about. Maybe I can learn something here."

The getting-to-know-your-teen workshop dates to the 1980s in concept, but the sessions have become more common in the last year, said Rob Guttenberg, director of parenting education for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase YMCA, which is sponsoring several forums on parenting teenagers and preteens.

This month, for example, a worried parent could choose among a seminar on "Talking With Your Teen to Build Self-Esteem" at the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia; a session called "Talking About the Tough Topics With Your Adolescent" in Tysons Corner; and a workshop

Children's Time

Children today spend about two hours more per weekday in a preschool or school program than they did in the early 1980s.

This is one of the findings by PSID researchers Sandra Hofferth and Jack Sandberg based on data many PSID families provided us last year. They were able to compare the activities reported in time diaries by children and parents with an earlier study on children's use of time done in 1981. About 2,394 households, including about 3,600 children, newborn to 12 years old, participated in the PSID Child Development interviews.

We wanted to discover how children actually spend their time. Where does this extra time in school come from? What other changes have occurred since 1981? Here are some of the results for children ages 3-11.

■ **School** Children are spending much more time in structured environments (school and daycare). Weekday time for playing, eating, and watching TV decreased. Free time—time left over after eating, sleeping, school, etc.—decreased from 40% to 25% of a child's day.

■ **Work** Very few kids in the study had paid jobs, such as a paper route or baby sitting. They did do more household work in 1997 than in 1981.

■ **Academics** Boys spent more time studying on weekdays, increasing average minutes from 14 to 21. That's not that much in minutes, but it's a 50% gain. Girls didn't spend that much more time (from 19 to 22 minutes). On weekend days boys spent an average of 4 minutes a day studying and girls 9 minutes in 1981, compared to 5 to 6 minutes each in 1997. These numbers differ by age group. For instance, 9-12 year olds spend 35-40 minutes studying on weekdays, 11 on weekends.



Neither boys nor girls spent more time reading, and times were similar for weekdays and weekends. In 1997, girls spent about 11 minutes a day while boys spent an average of 10. Time spent in reading varied little by the child's age.

■ **Leisure** Participation in organized sports rose for both boys and girls. But boys still spend twice as much time this way as girls do. In 1997, boys spent 38 weekday minutes and 67 weekend minutes in sports compared to 19 and 38 minutes respectively for girls. Very little time was spent in other leisure activities such as hobbies or art. Outdoor activities time declined, perhaps because more outdoor time is now spent in sports.

■ **Television** The average amount of time spent watching TV on weekdays actually declined slightly from 2 hours in 1981 to 1½ hours in 1997, for both boys and girls. On weekend days, boys' viewing declined (from 3 hours to just over 2½) while girls' increased (from 2 to just under 2½), making the two sexes more similar than in 1981.

The 1981 study did not look at children younger than 3. The PSID study found that infants and toddlers spend on average 2 hours per weekday in early education programs or childcare. Other activities were sleeping (12 hours), playing (3 hours), eating (1 hour, 40 minutes) and watching TV (1 hour, 10 minutes). Differences between weekends and weekdays are small at this age.

As children age, they spend less time on weekdays sleeping and playing, and more time in school and studying. Gender differences become more notable around age 6-8. Boys favor sports activities, while girls favor household work, personal care, visiting and art. Unstructured play declines faster for girls than for boys as they age.

The researchers also wanted to know the effect of other factors, such as the parents' income, education, and employment status, on what kids do. They found that:

■ Children in families with either two breadwinners or a single working parent spend less time in free play than children in families with a male breadwinner and female homemaker.

■ Children do more household work in male breadwinner/female homemaker families than in any other family type.

■ Children in single-parent families spend less time reading. Children in a family with a more educated head of the household spend more time reading. Children of older parents are more likely to read than children of younger parents.



■ Girls spend less time in sports and boys spend more time as they grow older. When other factors are held equal, black and Hispanic children spend less time in sports than white children. In all families, the parents' income, employment status or education level did not make a difference in the amount of time their children spent in sports. Nor did family structure (presence of 1 parent or 2).

■ Children in two-income families watch less TV than children in male breadwinner families. They spend less time at home and are likely to be in school. Children of better educated parents watch less TV than children of less educated parents. Children with more brothers and sisters watch more television.

Your information shows that children's lives have changed substantially in the past 16 years. Influences outside the family are increasingly important. The Child Development Study staff will continue to analyze the effects of home, school and neighborhood influences on child development over the coming months.

At a Glance

► The Child Development Study is a supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. It provides researchers with a comprehensive, longitudinal, nationally representative, data base of children and their families. Only with access to this type of information can researchers study how children develop into productive members of society.

► In 1997, the PSID asked each of its families with children under age 13 to participate in the Child Study. The study obtained information on 3,586 children in 2,394 households.

► In each family, we conducted personal interviews with the primary caregiver about up to two of the family's children. We used standardized tests taken in the home to assess the achievement of children aged 3 to 12. The parents reported on their perceptions of the child's progress to the interviewers. They also filled out a self-administered questionnaire and a 24-hour diary about one week day and one weekend day for each of their children who participated.

► A second caregiver (spouse, grandparent) also filled out a questionnaire. Involvement of non-residential fathers with their children was asked of the father through a separate personal telephone interview.

► The parents' permission was obtained to contact the child's teacher and school. Teachers and child care providers filled out additional information on the child and one of his or her school days.

The University of Michigan

News and Information Services

News Release

412 Maynard
Ann Arbor, Michigan
48109-1399

November 6, 1998

America's Children---Part I: How they spend their time

ANN ARBOR---American children spend 1.3 hours a week reading, 1.7 hours studying, and 12 hours a week---one-quarter of their free time---watching television, according to a University of Michigan study that provides the first look since 1981 at how U.S. children spend their time.

Based on a nationally representative sample of 3,586 children, ages 12 and under, the study also provides a wealth of other information about children's health and development, including how much time parents spend with them.

Conducted by sociologist Sandra L. Hofferth and colleagues at the U-M Institute for Social Research (ISR), the study was funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the W.T. Grant Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is part of the larger Panel Study of Income Dynamics, co-directed by Hofferth and U-M economist Frank Stafford, conducted by the ISR for the last 30 years.

"Major changes have taken place in how children spend their time," says Hofferth. "For example, children ages 3 through 11 today spend about six hours a day in preschool or school, compared to about four hours a day in the early '80s."

Children are also spending more time every day doing household work, including shopping, she reports. Girls, ages 3 through 11, log nearly 1.5 hours of such activities on Saturday and Sunday, boys slightly less.

Today's children spend about 30 minutes less a day, on average, in unstructured play and outdoor activities, Hofferth reports.

"Taken together, these data show how children's lives are being affected by the family time crunch," says Hofferth. "They're spending more time in day-care and pre-school, and accompanying their parents in household tasks and errands, and they have less time for free play."

Another indication that the work-family time crunch is hitting children: they spend nearly 20 percent less time eating on an average weekday than they did in 1981. Altogether, free time---defined as time left over after eating, sleeping, personal care, attending school, preschool or day-care---has decreased from 40 percent to 25 percent of a child's day. And one-quarter of that free time is spent watching television.

For the study, researchers asked children, with help from their parents if necessary, to fill out two days' worth of time diaries, then analyzed the results and compared them to the earlier U-M time-use study, which covered children ages 3 through 11.

Among the highlights:

□ **Sports**---Participation in sports by boys and girls rose more than 50 percent from 1981 to 1997. Boys still spent twice as much time participating in organized sports as girls, however. The 1997 figures for boys were 38 minutes on weekdays and 67 minutes on

weekends, compared with 19 and 38 minutes, respectively, for girls.

□ *Studying*---Time spent studying on weekdays did not change for girls but rose slightly for boys. Overall, boys spent about 21 minutes studying on weekdays, on average, and four minutes on Saturday and Sunday. Girls spent about 22 minutes studying on weekdays, and about six minutes on weekends. These numbers vary widely by age group, with 9-to-12-year-olds spending about 40 minutes studying on weekdays and 11 minutes on weekends.

□ *Television Viewing*---The average amount of time spent watching TV on weekdays actually declined from 2 hours in 1981 to about 1.5 hours in 1997. On weekend days, the average amount of time spent watching TV was about 2.5 hours.

□ *Time with Mom and Dad*---Parents spend an average of 17 hours a week directly talking to, working with and playing with children under age 13, Hofferth found. Among the activities parents and children were most likely to have done together in the month before they were surveyed: shopping, cleaning house, preparing food, reading books, working on homework, talking about the family, and participating in sports or outdoor activities.

While the 1981 U-M study did not cover children age 2 and younger, the new study also details how babies and toddlers spend their time. They spend about 12 hours a day sleeping, 3 hours a day playing, 1 hour and 40 minutes eating, and one-hour and 10 minutes watching television, Hofferth found. But in the course of a week, they also spend nearly 10.5 hours in child care or preschool, 3.5 hours visiting, and half an hour in church.

The researchers also examined factors associated with the amount of time children spent in various activities. Children whose mothers worked outside the home, for example, spent more time in school and day-care and less time in free play, on average.

Many of the changes in how children spend their time are the result of widespread demographic changes in U.S. families, Hofferth, notes. These include increases in households headed by single parents and in maternal employment.

HOW U.S. CHILDREN SPEND THEIR TIME
Source: University of Michigan Institute for Social Research
Panel Study of Income Dynamics
Child Development Supplement
1997

**ESTIMATED MEAN WEEKLY HOURS:MINUTES SPENT IN MAJOR
ACTIVITIES BY AGE**

Activity Age (years)	0-2 N=(705)	3-5 N=(686)	6-8 N=(625)	9-12 N=(885)	Total N=(2900)
Market work	0:00	0:00	0:04	0:15	0:05
Household work	4:33	6:10	5:05	6:06	5:31
Personal care	9:21	8:39	7:58	7:54	8:27
Eating	11:40	9:07	7:58	7:24	8:58
Sleeping	86:03	76:19	70:44	67:34	74:48
School	10:24	20:05	33:54	33:50	24:54
Studying	0:10	0:36	2:03	3:37	1:44
Church	0:29	1:05	1:21	1:28	1:07
Visiting	3:34	4:13	3:25	3:41	3:43
Sports	1:10	2:56	4:38	5:14	3:34
Outdoors	1:37	0:45	0:32	0:47	0:55
Hobbies	0:01	0:04	0:04	0:09	0:05
Art activities	0:31	1:05	0:45	0:56	0:50
Playing	23:15	17:00	11:26	8:44	14:48
TV	8:20	13:28	12:38	13:36	12:05
Reading	1:14	1:25	1:14	1:16	1:17
Household conversations	1:10	0:45	0:32	0:28	0:43
Other passive leisure	2:43	3:00	2:32	3:34	3:00
Total	166:15	166:42	166:53	166:33	166:34
NA	1:45	1:18	1:07	1:27	1:26
Percent of time accounted for by Activities	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%

Notes: Source :PSID-CS 1997

*Total weekly time in hours:minutes =168:00

Weekly times for individuals derived as the sum of 5 times weekday time + 2 times weekend day time

America's Children---Part II: At home and in school

America's Children---PART III: How parents affect children's adjustment and achievement

(10)

Contact: Diane Swanbrow

Phone: (734) 647-4416

E-mail: swanbrow@umich.edu

The University of Michigan

News and Information Services

News Release

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November 6, 1998

America's Children---Part II: At home and in school

ANN ARBOR---Half of American children ages 12 and under are in excellent or very good health, and have no chronic conditions that limit their activities, according to their parents. Half are not. Most children are cheerful, happy, polite, curious, and easy to get along with, according to their parents. But one out of five are fearful, anxious, unhappy, sad, depressed, or withdrawn. Two out of five are impulsive, disobedient, or moody. About one in 25 have a behavior problem at school.

About 66 percent of parents say they're close to their children emotionally, and hug their child, tell the child "I love you," or joke or play with them several times a week. But the nature of the relationship changes as children age and spend more time with peers. Almost 80 percent of parents of preschoolers report a lot of warmth in their relationships, compared with only 57 percent of parents of school-age children. Children have four friends, on average. But 12 percent of school-age children have no friends or only one.

These are a few of the wide range of findings from a new University of Michigan study of a nationally representative sample of 3,586 U.S. children. Funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the W.T. Grant Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the study is part of the ongoing Panel Study of Income Dynamics, conducted at the U-M Institute for Social Research for the past 30 years.

Conducted by sociologist Sandra Hofferth and colleagues, the study provides a national snapshot of the physical, emotional, and social health of American children in 1997. It also analyzes how children's well-being and academic achievement are related to race, family structure, parental education and income, and to such factors as how children spend their time, and how much time parents spend with them.

For the study, Hofferth and colleagues interviewed parents, primary care-givers, and teachers, as well as the children themselves. They asked a wide range of questions designed to provide detailed information about children's relationships with parents, peers, and teachers, as well as their health, well-being, and achievement.

Among the major findings:

❑ **Medical Care---**About 36 percent of children did not have a routine medical check-up in the year before they were interviewed. But only 12 percent did not see a doctor for any reason, including illness or injury. About 10 percent of children had no health insurance coverage when their families were surveyed, and 18 percent lacked coverage at some time during the previous year.

❑ **Health---**While 84 percent of the children studied were in excellent or very good health, according to their parents, 6 percent had fair or poor health, or a limitation on their activities. In general, children's health decreases with age: only 3 percent of infants had poor health, compared with 8 percent of school-age children. Having a limitation on their activities is linked with lower achievement test scores and more behavior problems, Hofferth found.

❑ **Family Life---**Children from families headed by a single parent had lower achievement

test scores and more behavior problems than other children. Of those studied, 42 percent lived in two-parent families in which both parents worked; 25 percent lived in two-parent families with the father working; 4 percent lived in two-parent families in which the mother works and the father doesn't, or in which neither parent works; 20 percent lived in families headed by one working parent; and 8 percent lived in families headed by a single parent who does not work.

□ **School**---About half the parents were involved in five or more different school activities in the year before they were interviewed. Parents who were more involved with their children's school had children who did better on achievement tests, Hofferth found. Almost 75 percent of parents reported having regular conversations with their children about school activities, subjects being studied, or school experiences. Just over 70 percent of parents expected their children to complete a college degree. About 5 percent of children changed schools in the past year, with nearly 2 percent making two or more school changes. Those who experienced several school changes had more school problems than other children, Hofferth found.

□ **Activities**---Only about one out of five children ages 9 through 12 use a computer, Hofferth found, for an average of about one hour a week. Boys spend almost twice as much time using computers as girls---1.4 hours a week compared with three-quarters of an hour. While children spent little time reading, about 1.3 hours a week on average, those who read more achieved at higher levels than those who did not read at all or who read very little. In contrast, children spent 12 hours a week, on average, watching television, and those who watched more did worse on tests of verbal and math achievement.

America's Children---Part I: How they spend their time

America's Children---PART III: How parents affect children's adjustment and achievement

(11)

Contact: Diane Swanbrow

Phone: (734) 647-4416

E-mail: swanbrow@umich.edu

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News Release

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America's Children---PART III: How parents affect children's adjustment and achievement

ANN ARBOR---What can parents do to influence their children's academic achievement and emotional adjustment? A new University of Michigan study of a nationally representative sample of 3,586 children and their families identifies several key ways.

□ Parents can have high expectations for their children and spend time doing things with them. "Parents who do both have children who achieve at higher levels," reports Sandra L. Hofferth of the U-M Institute for Social Research. "And parents who also have a warm relationship with their children---hugging them, telling them they love them, and are proud of them often---have kids who are happier, less withdrawn, and have fewer behavior problems."

In fact, after controlling for race, health, and other influences beyond the control of even the most conscientious parents, Hofferth found that expecting a child to finish college is associated with an increase of six full points on a child's reading test score.

□ Parents can avoid changing a child's school more than once in a single year. Changing schools more than once a year was the single biggest predictor of school problems in children ages 12 and under, Hofferth found. Children who had attended two or more schools in the year before they were surveyed had six times as high a score on a scale of behavior problems.

□ Parents can complete as much schooling as possible and limit the size of their family. For each additional year of schooling a parent has, a child's verbal and math test scores increase by one-half point, on average, Hofferth found. The average household in the study had three children, but researchers found that each additional child in the family was linked with a 1.5-point reduction in a child's verbal test scores.

□ Parents can monitor how children spend their time. On average, Hofferth found, children today spend about 12 hours a week watching television, and 1.3 hours reading. Each additional hour a week spent reading is linked with math and verbal test scores 0.5 point higher, while each additional five hours of watching TV translate into test scores that are 0.5 point lower.

□ Parents can provide a stable home environment. "Children do worse in families headed by a single parent," says Hofferth, a sociologist at the U-M Institute for Social Research and the principal investigator of the study. "They score 2 to 7 points lower on standardized verbal test of letter-word identification and reading passage comprehension." Children from single-parent families also have more behavior problems than children from two-parent families. "Things over which parents have little or no control, such as race, verbal ability, and their child's health, also contribute to children's achievement and emotional well-being," says Hofferth. "But there are plenty of other things under the parents' control that do matter."

The study is part of the larger Panel Study of Income Dynamics, conducted at the U-M Institute for Social Research for the last 30 years. It was funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the W.T. Grant Foundation, the Annie E.

Casey Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

America's Children---Part I: How they spend their time

America's Children---Part II: At home and in school

(12)

Contact: Diane Swanbrow

Phone: (734) 647-4416

E-mail: swanbrow@umich.edu

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New study shows what children do after school

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2000

CHICAGO---About 3.5 million American children between ages 5 and 12 spend some time home alone after school. But the average amount of time isn't much---only about an hour a day, according to a University of Michigan study presented here Sunday (April 2) at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence.

The study of a nationally representative sample of 1,500 children was presented by Sandra L. Hofferth, a sociologist at the U-M Institute for Social Research (ISR), the world's largest academic survey and research organization.

The research was funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Family and Child Well-being Research Network. It is based on data collected as part of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, funded by the National Science Foundation and conducted by the ISR for more than 30 years.

For the study, Hofferth and research associate Zita Jankuniene analyzed 1997 data from time diaries detailing the activities of children ages 5 to 12, and from interviews with their parents, to discover what the lives of U.S. children are like from the time they get out of school until the time they go to bed.

They found that 73 percent of children go straight home from school, while only 11 percent go to child care, either in someone else's home or in a formal child care center. Another 8 percent stay at school. That leaves about 8 percent of children who go somewhere else, including the mall, indoor or outdoor recreation facilities, or their parents' work places.

[\[Chart of findings\]](#)

[\[Download an Excel file of the findings\]](#)

The 19 percent of children who are in supervised after-school care either in child care or at school is much lower than the two-thirds of school-age children in the study whose mothers are employed. Many parents are able to arrange their schedules so that at least one parent is home at the end of the school day, either by working part-time or by adjusting work hours, according to the researchers.

Still, a sizeable proportion of children spend time alone. Overall, Hofferth and Jankuniene found that 26 percent of American children spend some time after school completely alone, including time spent getting from one place to another on their own. Only 14 percent spend time alone at home, and 2.5 percent spend time alone elsewhere. The average amount of time spent at home unsupervised by adults was just one hour, varying with age from 47 minutes for children ages 5-to-7 to one hour and 15 minutes for children ages 11 and 12.

After controlling for differences in maternal employment, the researchers found that the children of older mothers and mothers who had attended at least some college were more likely to be home unsupervised than children of mothers with a high school education or less.

They also found that children who lived in socially cohesive neighborhoods were more likely to take care of themselves for some time after school. These are neighborhoods in which parents consider it very likely that neighbors would do something if they saw someone breaking the law or saw their kids getting into trouble. Overall, 85 percent of the parents reported their neighbors were very likely to do this.

Children of higher income parents are less likely to spend time alone than children of the lowest-income parents, Hofferth found. "The ability to afford after-school programs," she says, "may play an important role in parents' considerations."

But parenting patterns, neighborhood characteristics, and children's own personalities are also linked to the likelihood a child will spend some time at home without adult supervision. "More educated mothers may feel comfortable allowing children some autonomy at younger ages," she says. "And children described as shy and withdrawn are much more likely to spend time home alone than children described as aggressive, suggesting that parents may feel less need to monitor their behavior closely."

So what is the first thing children do when they get home from school? Hofferth and Jankuniene found that 27 percent eat, 19 percent engage in personal care, including washing, bathing, dressing, and "none of your business," 15 percent watch television, 13 percent study, and 9 percent play.

How much time children spend on these activities yields a slightly different perspective on the after-school life of U.S. children. They spend the most time---100 minutes---watching television, compared with an average of 74 minutes playing, 60 minutes studying, 60 minutes in sports, 30 minutes doing household work, 30 minutes reading, and 20 minutes in conversation.

"What children do depends largely upon where they go after school," says Hofferth. "If they stay at school, they're more likely to have adult supervision and participate in structured activities like sports and youth groups. They're much less likely to watch TV, study or just read."

An earlier report based on the same time diaries showed that children spend two more hours a day in school than they did in 1981. One of the consequences of spending less time at home is an increase in structured activities and a decline in free play, according to Hofferth. As the time children spend at home declines, reading for pleasure is also at great risk, she notes. "Children just don't read for pleasure anywhere but at home," she says.

The trade-off is that at home, children are also more likely to spend time alone. But while unsupervised after-school time may create the potential for problems, Hofferth points out that it also has potential benefits as well. "Spending a little time alone may not be bad, given the hectic, highly scheduled quality of contemporary family life," Hofferth adds. "It gives children a chance to relax and do what they want, including just vegging out."

Established in 1948, the Institute for Social Research (ISR) is among the world's oldest survey research organizations, and a world leader in the development and application of social science methodology. ISR conducts some of the most

widely-cited studies in the nation, including the Survey of Consumer Attitudes, the National Election Studies, the Monitoring the Future Study, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, the Health and Retirement Study, and the National Survey of Black Americans. ISR researchers also collaborate with social scientists in more than 60 nations on the World Values Surveys and other projects, and the Institute has established formal ties with universities in Poland, China, and South Africa. Visit the ISR Web site at www.isr.umich.edu for more information.

Contact: Diane Swanbrow
Phone: (734) 647-4416
E-mail: swanbrow@umich.edu

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NMSA Research Summary #5

Young Adolescents' Developmental Needs

Question: What are the specialized needs of young adolescents ages 10- 15? (i.e. Why develop curricula and educational programs tailored to these unique needs?)

Seven key developmental needs

The uniqueness of the phase of early adolescence stems from a variety of developmental needs, variations in the maturation rate, and complexity due to their simultaneous occurrence. Seven key developmental needs (Scales, 1991) characterize early adolescence:

- positive social interaction with adults and peers
- structure and clear limits physical activity
- creative expression
- competence and achievement
- meaningful participation in families, school
- communities, opportunities for self-definition

Expressed another way, "Every child wants to believe in himself or herself as a successful person; every youngster wants to be liked and respected; every youngster wants physical exercises and freedom to move; and youngsters want life to be just" (Stevenson, 1992). Not meeting these needs often results in alienation from school, loss of general self-esteem and a sense of belonging, and destructive methods of coping, including delinquency and drugs.

Why develop educational programs to meet these needs?

Growing numbers of at-risk students

Growing numbers of at-risk adolescents and recognition of early adolescence as the last primary bulwark of intervention have focused attention on developmentally appropriate education and the effect of school setting on adolescent development. Scales (1991) noted that about 80% of young people do not experience a stressful adolescence. Yet, a growing number of these young people are "at risk of being unprepared and unsuccessful in the modern social and economic world" (p.3). These growing numbers of at risk students accentuate the importance of helping young adolescents form coping strategies, a positive self-esteem, and a social support system.

Decline in self-esteem and self competence

Wigfield & Eccles (1994) found a decline in young adolescents' self-esteem, values towards school subjects, and competency beliefs in the transition from an elementary sixth grade setting to a departmentalized junior high setting. Of special concern was the negative change in competency beliefs which may indicate the potential for some young adolescents being at risk for school failure.

A growing body of research addresses young women and minority students achieving a sense of identity. Researchers noted early maturing females score lower on measures of self-esteem than do early maturing males, indicating the need for addressing gender role socialization at the time when young women discover the disparity in power and prestige associated with life options for males and females (Gilligan et al., 1989; Offer et al., 1988;

Orenstein, 1994). When conflicting messages from the majority culture are particularly confusing to minority youth, addressing ethnic issues is another area of importance in helping all students develop a sense of identity (Phinney, 1989).

Inappropriate school environments

Causes of decline in beliefs, values, and self-esteem have been explained in part by school settings not meeting the developmental needs of young adolescents (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). On the one hand, young adolescents possess an increasing desire for autonomy, a growing orientation to peers, a concern about social acceptance, an increased need to resolve identity issues, and an increased tendency for an egocentric orientation. On the other hand, these attributes are at odds with traditional junior high settings of larger and less personable schools, less positive teacher-student relationships, stricter assessment measures, more competitive and controlled environments, fewer opportunities for decision-making, choice, and self-management, with more whole class practices, and more social/ability comparison.

Wigfield and Eccles (1994) concluded, "As schools change in ways that may better match early adolescents' developing characteristics, perhaps the declines in adolescents' achievement beliefs and values observed... will diminish" (p. 133).

Programs which meet developmental needs

Middle school programs and practices address developmental needs through a variety of activities and strategies. As young adolescents have an orientation toward peers and a concern about social acceptance, work in small groups and advisory programs promote opportunities for interaction with peers and adults. Task-focused strategies divert attention from social and ability comparison to task completion and achievement (Urdu, Midgley, Wood, 1995). Interdisciplinary team organization fosters feelings of belonging to a group of 100-140 fellow students, while advisory groups allow time and a small group for discussion of issues. Achievement and competence is achieved through authentic assessment based on personal goals, progress, and improvement, challenging intellectual material focused on relevant problems and issues, and with recognition by peers and adults.

The increase in the desire for autonomy and resolving identity issues can be addressed through learning strategies involving choice, a curriculum based on social and individual interests (Beane, 1990), opportunities for exploration of topics in exploratory programs, and the prevalence of a safe environment for experimentation. Non-competitive intramurals, flexible classroom structures, and hands-on activities incorporate the need for physical activity and movement. Service projects and project-based learning strategies capitalize upon young adolescents' creative expression and need for meaningful participation and experimentation with aspects of identity within a community, including the need for ethnic expressions of identity.

Such a curriculum combines the needs of young adolescence with societal expectations and forces to provide learning experiences which promote healthy self-images and relationships, academic stimulation and challenge, and moral and physical development.

Related Articles

1. Summary of Young Adolescents' Developmental Needs, from "Creating a Developmental Framework: The Positive Possibilities of Young Adolescents," in *A Portrait of Young Adolescents in the 1990s*, by P. Scales. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute Center for Early Adolescence.
2. "Tasks of Adolescence" by R. Simmons and D. Blyth, 1987, in the introduction to *Moving Into*

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American Demographics, December 1997

About Time

The Children's Hours

by John P. Robinson and Suzanne Bianchi

As children grow, they spend increasingly less time sleeping and eating, but more time on virtually everything else life has to offer.

Reams of research have explored how children grow, develop, and become adults. Until now, however, we've had little information about how they spend their time and how this changes as they grow. The 1993-95 Americans' Use of Time Project for the first time collected national data on people across the full age spectrum, literally from cradle to grave.

The survey interviewers called households across the country and selected one person, no matter their age, to complete a time diary. Children aged 9 and older completed the 24-hour diaries on their own. Those aged 6 to 9 got help from an adult. If the designated respondent was a child under age 6, the adult in the household most knowledgeable about their schedule filled out the diary on their behalf. The completed sample of more than 1,500 children under age 18 provides a fascinating and often unexpected view of how children's time use shifts on their voyage toward adulthood.

One finding that won't surprise any parent is that the first big shift is in the amount of sleep children get. Newborns average more than 90 hours of sleep a week, while the average for all children under age 5 is closer to 86 hours. This drops about 12 hours to 74 hours a week for children aged 5 to 11, drops another 7 hours during the early teen years, and another 5 in the late teen years. By the time they are older than 18, nonworking young adults are sleeping about 35 hours less per week than at birth, which is a 40 percent decline.

The Preschool Years

Aside from the half of their time spent sleeping, infants spend 11 hours a week eating, and 7 hours being bathed and changed. This leaves just 65 hours to spend in more engaging activities, particularly play. Indeed, play takes up 30 hours of an infant's average week. Many child-care specialists interpret this activity as the "work" children do to acclimate themselves to (and learn to manipulate) their environment. Very young children also spend another 3 hours a week in outdoor play activities.

The next most time-consuming activity in preschool children's lives is television. Although toddlers watch less TV than everyone else, shows like "Barney" and "Mister Rogers" still rank as the second most important focus of preschool children's "discretionary" time. In contrast, children under age 5 spend less than an hour a week with books, and they devote almost no time to radio/music listening.

The third most prevalent activity is preschool education, mainly in the form of time spent in organized day-care centers. Preschoolers also spend almost 5 hours a week in the company of parents who are shopping, and another 5 hours visiting others' homes, probably with their parents. They spend a little more than 5 hours a week in transit from one place to another, but that increases 1 to 2 hours a week once they are in school.

Early School Years

As they reach their school years, children also spend less time eating in addition to their decreased sleep. Kids aged 5 to 11 spend about 3 hours a week less than their younger siblings on meals. Other personal-care activities -- bathing, dressing, and grooming -- also drop off a little as children become

somewhat less inclined to soil clothes, spill drinks, and rub food into their hair.

By this age children have something else to do with their time, of course -- school. Those aged 5 to 11 average about 22 hours a week at school and on homework (this average is spread across the calendar year, so time spent during the school year is higher).

This means that "free" time for primary-school students is about the same as for preschoolers, just over 50 hours a week for both groups. Play remains the dominant recreational activity, but time spent on it drops about 12 hours a week, from 31 hours to 19 hours. Weekly TV viewing time picks up half of that drop, almost doubling to 14 hours a week. Again we cannot be sure if this is a direct trade-off, but it's a likely suspect.

Other free-time activities pick up, too. Time spent on outdoor and sports activities takes up 3 to 5 more hours a week than for younger children. Religious and organizational activity takes up 1 to 2 more hours. Socializing and visiting with other children and adults get a little more attention, too. These increased social and outdoor activities, along with school, probably account for why children this age spend 1 to 2 hours more per week in travel than younger children. Time spent going to fairs, movies, or concerts, engaging in home conversation, reading (or being read to), and listening to the radio or recordings all remain about the same.

Adolescence Hits

If you live with a 15-year-old who's capable of sleeping until noon, you might not believe it, but kids aged 12 to 17 sleep about 8 hours a week less than those aged 5 to 11. Teens also report 2 hours less than young children in weekly meal time. Boys spend less time than their little brothers bathing, dressing, and grooming, while girls spend more time than their younger sisters.

Adolescents spend 7 hours a week more in school and on homework than do those aged 5 to 11. They spend 1.5 hours a week more helping around the house. They also average about 1 hour a week in paid work, compared with virtually none for younger children. They spend about the same amount of time as younger children shopping, which may come as a surprise to parents of teens or anyone who spends time at a shopping mall. They probably do more shopping on their own at this point, though, rather than with parents.

After all these shifts in personal, school, and work times are taken into account, the surprising result is that the 51 weekly hours of free time of adolescents is almost identical to that available to pre-teens and pre-schoolers. Of course, they don't use it the same way.

First of all, they watch even more TV, 4 to 6 hours more per week than children aged 5 to 11. They add an hour or two of reading, radio/music, and movie/concert time. Adolescents spend a little more time visiting than do younger children, but they spend a lot more time talking at home and visiting. The importance of "girl talk" in particular is confirmed by their diary reports.

With all these increases, something has to give. It comes almost entirely from one free-time activity -- indoor play, which drops 8 hours a week for boys and 11 hours for girls. This doesn't mean they don't enjoy themselves. Sports, school, and other social activities may be the teen equivalent of the fun and games of pre-teens.

Young teens also spend a little less time than preteens on religious activities, about half an hour a week on average. This is the age at which many Christian and Jewish children reach the age of majority in their respective faiths; some inevitably decline to participate after years of parentally enforced Sunday School or shule attendance.

Thus, the passage to the teenage years means less sleep and meal time, but more paid work and unpaid housework. Less structured play is replaced by more attention to mass media -- not just TV, but radio, print, and cinema as well.

Adulthood, Ho

Sleep time continues to drop as youths reach the college years and young adulthood. Those aged 18 to 24 who don't have a full-time job spend about 3 hours less sleeping per week than do those aged 12 to 17. Like earlier transitions, this one involves a decline in eating time, of about an hour a week; however, more of those meals are eaten away from home. Grooming time rises. This may be attributed in equal parts to the quests of impressing employers and attracting mates.

Our average time-use figures for nonworking young adults are somewhat misleading because they disguise the different paths taken at this stage of life into full-time and part-time students and those without a job. For example, nonworking young adults average 4 to 11 hours less per week on average in school and doing homework. But this figure disguises the difference between full-time college students who spend many more hours and those who are not employed or attending school at all. This age group does pick up 3 to 5 hours a week in paid work over younger teens. Again, it is important to remember that students in dormitories, who concentrate most on studies, are not included in our sample.

The average 18-to-24-year-old nonemployed woman spends 14 hours a week in family-care and shopping activities, up from 8 hours for those aged 12 to 17. Some of them have full-time parental duties. In contrast, young men this age spend just 8 hours a week on household-related tasks, 1 hour more than those aged 12 to 17.

If they're not full-time workers, young women and men have about the same free time as those aged 12 to 17, but this is due to a new gender gap -- 3 fewer hours a week for women and 3 hours more for men than in their teen years. However, TV is not affected; it actually increases by about 1.5 hours a week for young women. Sports and outdoor activities decline about 3 hours a week for them also. The play time that so dominates the free hours of little girls shrinks to a total of about 3 hours a week by this age (5 hours for young adult men), much of it probably spent on a young-adult favorite -- computer games.

There is an overall decline in religious/organizational time for men and in reading for women. Listening to music, or attending movies, concerts, fairs, and the like increase for men. Socializing shows the biggest increase, by 7 hours a week for men and 3 hours a week for women compared with the teen years.

In this passage to adulthood for nonworkers, then, gains in paid work and housework offset much of the decline in school time, particularly for women. Women devote more time than men to housework and family care, which may partly explain some of their decline in sleep. For the first time in their lives, young women face a decline in their free time, but they seem reluctant to take time away from TV, movies, or religion. That decline does not deter them from developing a more active social life, which reaches a peak in young adulthood.

Minimal Gender Differences

Boys and girls of all ages spend the same amount of time sleeping and eating. They spend roughly the same amount of time watching TV, playing, attending movies and other events, being involved in religious activities, and traveling. Before age 18, they even spend almost the same amount of time in that most politically sensitive and contentious of "gendered" activities -- household and family care.

Girls report only slightly more time than boys on housework and family care until age 18, when the 2-to-1 female to male ratio familiar to adults begins to emerge. How that ratio evolves is not clear, but it isn't clearly evident in the early socialization process. Similar diary data for earlier cohorts of young children also show about equal time spent on housework by boys and girls prior to adulthood. It's still possible that these data are picking up on a generation of children for whom equality in household responsibility will persist into adulthood.

Boys report somewhat more educational activity as they grow older, counter to the stereotype of the greater studiousness of girls. Girls, however, tend to report more reading time. Consistent with stereotypes, boys spend more time on sports and outdoor activities, and girls on socializing and conversation. By the early teen years, girls spend twice as much time as boys talking, on the phone and elsewhere. In the teen years, girls also begin to devote more time than boys to grooming and hygiene.

Parental Influences

Many parents and teachers feel childhood should be a time of preparation for adulthood: a time to build skills and learn responsibility. Four important activities that reflect a child's healthy development include reading, schoolwork, household work, and TV. Reading, studying, and doing household chores help children achieve these goals, while too much TV may detract from healthy development. We have explored family characteristics that might influence children's time in these activities.

One important family characteristic is the mother's employment status. Many feel that children with working mothers are developmentally neglected, but we found that they spend no less time reading, doing schoolwork and housework, and no more time watching TV. These results hold up when controlling for the education, income, and other characteristics of the parents.

A second characteristic involves single parenting -- specifically, whether there is a father present in the home. Again, we find no significant difference in the time children spend on the four activities with regard to the presence or absence of a father. Birth order also has no effect on time spent on this set of activities. Parents' education, however, does have a significant effect. Children of college-educated parents spend more time reading and studying and less time watching TV. Controlling for other family characteristics does not change this finding.

Our earlier analyses did indicate that children with working mothers or no father in the home spend less time with parents.* However, these situations are not associated with "bad outcomes" such as decreased reading and studying or more TV. How often and competently adults interact with their children undoubtedly affects how well they will develop. But these data suggest that the time parents spend with their children doesn't necessarily affect the time children spend on activities that contribute toward that development.

About the authors

Dr. Robinson and Suzanne Bianchi are professors of sociology at the University of Maryland in College Park, where Dr. Robinson directs the Americans' Use of Time study and Suzanne Bianchi directs the program on Gender, Work and Family.

Times for Kids

(average weekly hours spent in selected activities by boys and girls under age 25, by age and sex, 1993-95)

SECTION: STYLE; Pg. C04; STYLE PLUS

HEADLINE: Keeping the Ties That Bind Parent and Child

BYLINE: Laura Sessions Stepp, Washington Post Staff Writer

Linda Jessup, mother of seven and a parenting teacher, offers her audiences a metaphor when talking about staying in touch with their teenagers. Little League games, fishing trips and summer vacations are "the embroidery on the edge" of kids' lives, says Jessup, executive director of the Parent Encouragement Program Program in Kensington. The fabric itself has to be stitched together each day in regular routines, rules, relaxation and conversation.

In the aftermath of Littleton, Colo., as we ask what the parents of killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold knew and wonder what we know about our kids, it helps to remember Jessup's image. The murderous rampage of these two disturbed young men has raised calls for parents to become vigilantes, to rifle through their kids' possessions and read their diaries to understand their world.

What must be said, however, is that if a parent feels compelled to snoop, the thing that will most protect the teenager from acting up -- the parent-child relationship -- already is in trouble. If there is any fabric at all, spying may tear it asunder.

"I've done a lot of different things as a mother," says Jessup, who twice felt compelled to look through a child's possessions because of suspicious behavior. "The thing I suggest parents ask themselves is, 'Would I be comfortable if my child showed up at the door? If not, what am I doing here?'"

Jessup admits that some extreme cases call for espionage -- strong suspicion of drug use, for example, or early sexual activity. But affording children a good amount of privacy is essential to the parent-child bond, she says, and is necessary for the teenager who is trying to construct a strong, healthy identity.

Lorin Buck, a Reston mother of three, including two teens, agrees.

"I think the issue of privacy is really an issue of respect," she says. "It's a way we parents show our kids that we respect them and their needs. It starts when they're little and we respect their right to use the bathroom alone, when we teach them about their private parts and how no one else has access to them. It continues with honoring a closed door when they're in elementary school, with not opening and reading their mail, with making their rooms off limits to siblings unless the sibling has permission to come in, with not reading their diaries, except in certain cases.

"This respect for privacy," she continues, "teaches kids how to set boundaries, that they have the right to set boundaries. If we don't allow them to set reasonable boundaries, then kids start looking for ways to sneak around and hide things from parents."

The good parent usually knows what is going on behind that closed door without peeking through the keyhole, according to family experts. How? By staying involved and focused. Tops on their to-do list is one we've heard before: sharing at least one meal every day. "Before I went into any backpack, I'd ask myself how many dinners and breakfasts I was having," says Peter Bearman, professor of sociology at Columbia University.

Involvement in your kids' schools and talking regularly to teachers and counselors is another way of learning their world, Bearman says. The high school is a hothouse of negative emotions, he adds, and "adolescents don't want to tell parents how isolated they are."

Meal
time


Isolation from classmates and friends is a sure sign of trouble, as Harris and Klebold demonstrated. So is hanging out with the wrong friends. But how is a parent to know which are the wrong friends? One way, often overlooked, is to observe the relationship a kid's friend has with his or her own parents. Kids who are close to their parents generally are pretty good kids, according to research released this week by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

That means a parent has to keep occasional company with those other moms and dads. Jessup, the parent educator, says that when her kids were growing up, she would invite their friends' parents over for coffee, all together, several times a year.

After the idle chitchat died down, she and her husband would begin a discussion with questions such as, "Do you have a curfew in your house?" "How do you monitor telephone use?"

"Some of the parents were pleased to be talking to us, some were defensive and some thought it was ridiculous," she says. "I'd say to them that I would take notes and send them on so they could keep abreast of what was going on. After a couple of times, they started coming."

Other parents can play the role of "additional eyes" on a child, says psychiatrist Stuart Hauser. They can and should be encouraged to report signs of distress, for no matter how strong the relationship between parent and teenager, the fabric may begin to tear and the parent may not notice right away. Alerting a kid's parents to his or her extreme behavior is particularly important, says Hauser, president of the Judge Baker Children's Center in Boston.

Sometimes, the parent-teen relationship does fray but it can be restitched, Jessup says. Sharing meals, sharing chores and monitoring use of the computer are important to do even if you get a late start.

"You can say, 'I don't like how our life is going so I'm going to deal with this now,' " says Jessup. "Teenagers will say 'That's stupid,' and you can say, 'Maybe so. But I am missing you, so indulge me.' "

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SECTION: STYLE; Pg. C01
HEADLINE: Why Johnny Can't Feel; Poor Relationships With Adults May Explain Youth Alienation

BYLINE: Laura Sessions Stepp, Washington Post Staff Writer

Picture Holden Caulfield, the 16-year-old social misfit of "Catcher in the Rye," watching his Pennsylvania prep school football team from afar and feeling totally dissed by the student body he was about to abandon. Then fast-forward 50 years later to real-life Littleton, Colo., where Eric Harris, an 18-year-old about-to-be murderer, is slouched in front of his home computer, perhaps designing a bomb.

Both belong to that tiny minority of teenagers who reject society's norms and feel rejected, in turn, by society. Almost all teenagers experience occasional bouts of nihilism or disengagement, but these periods generally last only weeks or months and most kids outgrow their defiance and go on to lead productive, even considerable, lives. But for youths like the fictional Caulfield and the real Harris, disaffection came to define their identities.

There are proportionately no more hard-core disaffected teens today than there were in the 1940s, say social scientists and therapists. But in that small group, the disaffection goes deeper -- and lasts longer -- than the feelings experienced by similar kids of past generations.

There's little in the way of statistical evidence here. Instead, these conclusions are gleaned from years of studying, treating and writing about individual kids. Still, the experts are almost unanimous in their impressions: When the disengaged teens come to therapy today, they exhibit more serious problems from the first visit. Many already are using drugs heavily. While treatment used to be confined to months or maybe a year, many of today's alienated youth stay in therapy for several years.

Until recently, these troubled teenagers "deplored conditions of the world, but they had a vision of how to make it better," says Jeffrey Arnett, a developmental psychologist at the University of Maryland and author of the book "Metalheads: Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation." Caulfield was the perfect literary example of this earlier mind-set, he says, "painfully eager to make the world better."

The kids Arnett interviewed for his book, most of them thoughtful and "very nice," he's quick to point out, had no such perceptions. "They had given that up," he says. "The only alternative was to live your own life the best you could. Institutions were corrupt, and the hell with it."

He remembers a young man from Atlanta who was estranged from his family and had spent time in a hospital for drug abuse.

When Arnett asked the youth to name the three people he admired most, he said, "Me, myself and I." When Arnett asked him what he saw himself doing in 10 years, he replied: "I don't know. I don't look that far ahead. My head spins if I do. That's when you get to depression.

"I don't think I'm ever going to get anywhere or make anything of myself without doing it myself," he said. "I keep pretty locked up for right now as far as feelings and letting anybody in to touch me. It's been a long life."

He was 18.

Wayne Wooden, a sociologist at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, found the same philosophy among some of the suburban middle-class teens he interviewed for his book "Renegade Kids, Suburban Outlaws." "Holden had an altruistic motive to try to save his generation and others like himself before they fell off into the abyss," Wooden says. "Today's group is full of gloom and doom, and

nothing is worth saving. Some have so internalized their bleakness that they strike out and back, using the very instruments of rage and power that the broader culture is using."

Pollsters such as J. Walker Smith, managing partner of Yankelovich Partners, say milder versions of this disengagement and angst show up in the general youth population. Smith likes to use the metaphor of the 1964 World's Fair. "For young boomers, life was always going to be better. We might have to fix things up, but we'd end up on the monorail. Kids today have no vision of 1964. They don't even know if they'll make it beyond January 1, 2000."

In a recent poll she supervised, Jean Johnson, senior vice president of Public Agenda, says more than half of teenagers said that young people would not make much difference to the country or would make things worse.

The factors making a child vulnerable to isolation, depression and anger have not changed, according to Rolf Loeber, professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh noted for his long-term studies of serious delinquents. We've heard them all before: physical abuse, poor supervision by parents, alcoholic or drug-abusing parents, living in a neighborhood with high levels of violence and crime.

But there are differences today that aggravate those factors. No. 1 on the experts' list is the small amount of time that kids spend with adults. Felton Earls, professor of child psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, says such "time poverty" applies not only to time spent by parents but also to time spent by teachers, police officers, neighbors and other authority figures.

Even when kids get time with an adult, it may not be helpful, Earls says.

"Adults are pretty uncomfortable talking to kids and often are dealing with personal problems that are complex and unresolved," he says. "When kids look to adults for advice about racism or attitudes toward other people, the answers they are searching for are not clarified even in the minds of the adults."

"As far as the Trenchcoat kids are concerned, who ever sat down and talked to them about why they were forming that group?"

Another factor is the easy availability of stimulants and hallucinogenic drugs, says Herbert Nieburg, director of behavioral science at Four Winds Hospital near Westchester, N.Y.

Still another is that public high schools have gotten larger. In schools with thousands of students, cliques usually form among kids seeking some sense of community, leaving students who don't easily identify with groups feeling painfully rejected.

Even normal kids find high school a tough place these days, says Public Agenda's Johnson. In the survey she did two years ago, a majority of students said neither their peers nor their teachers treated them with respect. Only one out of three said they had teachers who cared personally about them.

Rejected students can easily find others like themselves, however, on the Internet. Although not all the experts agree with him, Wooden believes computers allow the alienated to "hide out in their rooms, away from parents and any meaningful social interaction," feeding on one another's frustrations.

Of course, the same might be said of television -- or even books.

Isolation also feeds paranoia. Michael Peck, a Los Angeles psychologist who works with suicidal teens, says his clients tell him that society is not to be trusted, and they point to the mass media for support. "From watching TV, something like The 'X-Files,' you come away with the impression that the government is conspiring to do horrible things to you every minute."

It's only a short hop from the government to other institutions and groups, he continues: "They're trying to get us; we better get them first." This is a particularly dangerous line of thinking if your parents believe it also, or aren't around to convince you otherwise.

The fear of bad things happening -- shootings, for example -- is growing among all kids, says Walker of Yankelovich. And so is the amount of stress that teens say they feel. If the alienated sit on one end of the youth spectrum, the other end is inhabited by teens who lead overly scheduled, academically pressured lives. The two groups usually coexist peacefully in high school, but sometimes the pressure builds. "And when you squeeze this balloon hard enough, Walker says, "the place it's going to break is the weakest spot."

Jeffrey Arnett, left, author of a book on "metalheads"; and Michael Peck, who works with suicidal teens.

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June 28, 1998, Sunday, Final Edition

SECTION: OUTLOOK; Pg. C03

HEADLINE: A LOOK AT . . . Adolescence; What Do Teens Want? To Be Heard

BYLINE: Laura Sessions Stepp

About 18 months ago, I was sitting in a restaurant eating pork barbecue and fried chicken with a 13-year-old girl and her mother, when the daughter casually asked: "Mom, would you take me to buy some new clothes this weekend?"

Her mother sighed and sipped her Dr. Pepper. "I just took you shopping two weeks ago," she replied. And then, to her daughter's wide-eyed disbelief, she turned to look at me and continued, "Sometimes, I wish I had never had children."

Sound unlikely? What's striking to me about this scene is not how exceptional it was, but how typical. In the two years that I've spent researching a book about 10- to 15-year-olds--an age group that psychologists consider especially vulnerable--I've witnessed dozens of such painful exchanges. Many adults say demeaning things in front of adolescents, even if unintentionally. They also ignore them and dismiss their needs.

I've observed this behavior in extended visits to three U.S. communities--Durham, N.C.; Ulysses, Kan.; and Los Angeles. In each city, I lived alongside youngsters at home and in school, attended their parties, hung out in their favorite shopping malls and ate more pizza than I care to remember. Sure, I was there as an observer, but I also gradually became part of the communities, a familiar figure to the kids and their parents. Most were average students, black, white and Hispanic, from working-class and middle-income families. They were lively, interesting kids, who were, without exception, struggling to communicate with their elders.

Take one 11-year-old boy I got to know in South Central Los Angeles. I remember a particular day I spent with him and his family when his father started teasing him about girls. "Have you kissed a girl yet?" his dad asked.

"First kiss? Not yet," replied the boy, a skinny creature who barely came up to his father's ample waist.

"You ain't kissed no girl--that girl you liked, she didn't give you no kiss?"

"Nope."

"Do you look at their bods?"

"Their what?"

"Their booties. Have they got nice booties?"

"This is nasty. I don't want to talk no more."

"I think he's scared of girls," the father suddenly said to me. Then turning back to his son, he asked, "You scared of girls?"

This line of questioning didn't appear to be mean-spirited, but it continued for several minutes despite pleas from his son to stop. Finally, the boy left the room and returned seconds later, tears in his eyes and a blue tissue in hand.

"He's temperamental," his mother told me.

Most of the young people I talked with tried not to reveal how hurt they feel, but some confessed that they nurse a very private anguish over parents, teachers and club leaders who once doted on them and now act as if they are the enemy. "We used to have these long conversations," one girl said about her uncle. "Now it seems he's always on my case. He no longer knows how I really feel."

In fact, by the time their children reach adolescence, many adults seem to have lost pride in them. Compare how differently some parents react to the explorations of a toddler and a teenager. When a toddler says his first words, they applaud and run for the baby book. When she walks across the room, they call grandmother. When she tumbles from the tricycle, they reach out to comfort and then urge her to try again. But when a young adolescent uses his new reasoning skills to question a decision, he's called impudent. When a girl skips class to see her boyfriend, she's reprimanded. It's not that one shouldn't discipline young people who break family rules, but there's no need to interpret all the changes of the early adolescent years as bad; they're also evidence of new-found intellectual and social skills.

Few adults choose to focus on these positive trends, though. Instead, many I've spoken with recently think teenagers are out of control--and have offered as proof the highly publicized slayings of classmates in Oregon and Arkansas. Similarly, schools have moved to step up surveillance, legislators have proposed charging the offenders as adults, and the media have pumped out stories about a generation of kids without a conscience.

The shootings have served to reinforce myths about adolescence that have hung around since the turn of the century. From the clinical work of psychologists G. Stanley Hall in the early 1900s to Erik Erikson in the '50s, we've learned to accept that psychological problems are to be expected among adolescents, that turmoil between parent and child, teacher and child, is the inevitable byproduct of "raging hormones."

More recent research suggests something quite different. Indeed, Daniel Offer, a professor of psychiatry at Northwestern University, argues that if you look at normal (as opposed to clinical) populations, these assumptions about adolescence are grossly exaggerated. Of course, children at this age are going through a period of rapid change: Between the ages of 10 and 15, their bodies and brains grow fast. By sixth grade, most kids are able to comprehend fully what people think of them--and they alter their behavior accordingly. Research suggests that the way adults react to puberty most affects how a normal adolescent behaves. When parents back their children's decisions to take on new challenges and responsibilities, adolescence often proceeds smoothly, with only a few bumps along the way.

Given a chance, the young people I observed embraced their new responsibilities. One 11-year-old girl, whose mother was particularly supportive of her daughter's new ventures, told me proudly, "Because I'm a lot older I can try out more things, go places by myself, do more jobs like babysitting. I'm more responsible, and I think more people can trust me." This ability to take on new challenges shouldn't be so surprising when you think that, earlier this century, adolescents worked alongside adults on the farm, in the factory and in the family business.

But these days, girls in particular seem hindered by limited expectations. A 12-year-old California girl told me she never joined her younger brother in the family's carpentry business after school. Her father simply hadn't thought to invite her. She tended to spend her afternoons on the telephone or wandering around the local shopping malls with her friends. And midway through seventh grade, when she decided to search for volunteer work mentoring a younger child, she was told by various youth organizations she contacted that she was "too young."

As that incident reveals, institutions often fail kids as much as individuals do. This was evident in the middle schools I visited. Increasingly able to analyze and synthesize, draw conclusions, and reason about right and wrong, adolescents want to exercise more control over their environment. Yet once

they reach middle school or junior high, they often encounter a rote curriculum and more rules than in elementary school. Restrictions--from dress codes to assigned seating at lunch--may be designed to protect kids, but frequently alienate them unless the kids feel a strong, positive connection to the rulemaker.

Several teachers I observed acted as if they wanted to be anywhere but with their students. At a school in Kansas, one young sixth-grade teacher, who was standing in the hallway watching her students file back to class, whispered to a colleague, "Maybe we could just stay out here." Her favorite period of the day, she later told me, was Sustained Silent Reading, a 15-minute span of time when her students read privately and she was able to sit down, at least briefly, with her latest John Grisham novel. Like many of the teachers I watched, she seemed frustrated by too many pupils, a curriculum that boxed her in and her lack of understanding of how to relate to adolescents.

Several students I met said their schools don't respect the way they like to learn. Ask a teenager what class he or she remembers most vividly and odds are it will be one in which students worked together on projects involving discovery, reflection and presentation. Frequently they receive this kind of group instruction in elementary school, only to be assigned in middle school or junior high to class lectures, memorization and drills.

I'll never forget watching one North Carolina sixth grader writing out the answers to questions in her social studies book. When she finished the assigned chapter, she started on the next. "Don't go any farther," her teacher barked. "We're doing this in unison." That same girl, in an English class taught by a different teacher a few weeks later, wrote and acted out, with three other students, a folk tale of their choosing. The group evaluated their own performance and then the teacher evaluated them. Guess which exercise--and which teacher--this girl remembered in fond detail six months later?

Teenagers know only too well that they don't make a good impression. I asked a ninth-grade English class in that same North Carolina community which adjectives adults would use to describe them. The answers spilled out quickly:

"Weedheads."

"Sex-crazed."

"Thugs."

Can we change our attitudes and behaviors so that young people think better of us, and of themselves? If not--if we continue to belittle their potential and berate their actions rather than respect and help develop their new skills--we shouldn't be surprised if they seek relief in ways we don't approve.

Laura Sessions Stepp, who is on leave from the Style section of The Post, is working on a book about the interaction between adults and adolescents.

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September 2, 1999, Thursday, Final Edition
SECTION: STYLE; Pg. C04
HEADLINE: Far Beyond 'Just Say No'

BYLINE: Laura Sessions Stepp, Washington Post Staff Writer

The federal drug czar and his deputies have a message for parents this fall. Go out for a pizza with your kid.

In a barrage of new public service announcements, videos, brochures, and even suggested filler for annual financial reports, the Office of National Drug Control Policy will tell parents and other adults that it's not enough just to talk to kids about drugs. Parents also need to discuss Kosovo, listen to their kids' favorite CDs, ride bikes together--in other words, stay involved.

Gone are the days when anti-drug campaigners told kids to "just say no," putting the burden for solving the drug problem on the shoulders of those younger than 18. Today, the campaigners have joined other social reformers in touting parent responsibility. Phrases such as "parenting skills" and "personal efficacy" roll off their tongues as easily as THC, the active ingredient in marijuana.

"Kids don't have problems, adults have problems," said drug czar Barry R. McCaffrey, a retired Army general. "If we do the right things, chances are they'll be all right. They don't want to self-destruct."

The campaign's message arrives at a time when many parents apparently question their influence, even if their kids do not. In a recent survey of parents and teens by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, almost half of the parents said they believed their children would try illegal drugs in the future. At the same time, a similar proportion of teens who had never used marijuana credited their parents for that decision.

The conclusion? Parents have more power than they think.

About half of the federal campaign's \$ 185 million budget this year focuses on kids, and that effort claims the lion's share of media attention. A campaign-financed, bright blue bus with eight teenagers, for example, toured shopping malls and drug rehab centers along the East Coast last month, attracting TV crews eager to show the young reporters interviewing other teens about drug abuse. The "Straight Scoop Road Tour" will be aired later this year on MediaOne cable.

Pushing the 'Anti-Drug'

But the rest of the budget is devoted to parents and other adults, falling under a new theme: "Love [or Truth, or Honesty or Communication]. The Anti-Drug." One page out of a three-ring binder that staffers carry around like coffee explains: "The goal of this advertising is to reinforce to parents that they are the number one deterrent to drug abuse. They can make a huge difference and we will equip them with the skills they need to succeed."

The campaign already posts tips for parents on its America Online Web site (keyword Drug Help), garnered from a panel of experts with whom it consults. A videotape for parents is in the works, as are brochures for parents as well as teachers, coaches and chief financial officers. "We're saying to CEOs, 'Here's information for your newsletter or your annual report,'" said Alan Levitt, McCaffrey's senior adviser.

The campaign also solicits McCaffrey, a straight-talking father of three, to speak to groups of parents. McCaffrey says his most difficult task on such occasions is to convince his audience "that their children are listening to them. Kids are waiting for Mom and Dad to say, 'In this family, we don't drive

drunk, smoke dope or have premarital sex.'

"I don't think you have to talk about drugs a lot," he continues. "The best anti-drug message is kicking a soccer ball with your daughter, or sitting down and eating dinner together."

McCaffrey turned to the "Straight Scoop" kids this week to ask what they had heard about parents from the dozens of teens they had interviewed. "Do you think some parents give up on kids?" he asked.

"Oh, yeah," several said in unison.

But don't confine your concern to parents, the kids told McCaffrey.

"We talked to a number of kids who felt betrayed by adults, including coaches who gave kids drugs after basketball games," Dela Grantham from Richmond said. Later, she elaborated: "Kids see a lot of two-faced adults, partying and drinking and not paying attention to them."

Barry McCaffrey, U.S. drug czar, talks with teens who interviewed their peers about drug use on the "Straight Scoop Road Tour." A new prevention campaign focuses on parents.

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May 08, 1999, Saturday, Final Edition

SECTION: STYLE; Pg. C01

HEADLINE: The Boy Who Learned to Count on Love; Mayor Anthony Williams Recalls an Early Life of Neglect, and the Family That Changed It

BYLINE: Laura Sessions Stepp, Washington Post Staff Writer

There is something that D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams wants you to know. Something that may help explain his natural shyness and his affection for the absurd, as well as a recent passion for pulling children into political conversation, as in: "This city is like a little precious baby that keeps getting its butt kicked."

Forty-seven years ago, Williams was a precious little baby abandoned by a teenage mother. As he tells it, he spent the first three years of his life languishing in the home of a foster family that didn't talk to him, sing to him or even turn him over in his crib.

Then Virginia and Lewis Williams swooped him up and he found love. He also found brothers and sisters, strict Catholic schools, a host of after-school activities and a frame bungalow to grow up in that remains in the family to this day. These people and circumstances helped fill the holes in his heart and enabled him to eventually ask the residents of the nation's capital to make him their leader.

Williams has never hidden the fact that he was adopted out of less than happy circumstances. But he has not discussed any specifics, perhaps because he hasn't allowed himself to think about his past. "I'm thinking of these things very consciously now, for the first time," he said in an interview in his office yesterday, the day before he was to co-host a benefit for Prevent Child Abuse of Metropolitan Washington, an agency for children and families at risk.

Neither he nor his adoptive mother ever felt the need to research his birth or foster care records. But they say he was turned over to Los Angeles social services while still in the hospital in July 1951. Social workers contacted a white family, who took him in, assuming their light-skinned baby was white. During that first year it became clear that he wasn't, and social workers started looking for a new family that would adopt him.



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Parental Involvement Is as Easy as PIE!

A special program in Phoenix, Arizona, makes parents true partners in their children's education. "Parent involvement will probably make more difference than anything else we could ever do to help our children learn," says Bonnie McReynolds, the teacher behind the program.

Most schools live by a few simple tenets. Those basic principles usually include references to a strong curriculum, a caring atmosphere, and parental involvement.... While most teachers work hard to develop and maintain solid programs in which kids come first, they're at a loss when it comes to figuring out where to begin when it comes to getting parents involved.

Not Bonnie McReynolds.

McReynolds has earned her Masters degree in parental involvement, figuratively speaking.

McReynolds' "PIE program" is an acronym for "Partners in Education," though it could stand for Parental Involvement in Education too. For that's what it is. Parents as partners.

"I've always felt that parental involvement was the answer to many of the problems facing teachers and students," says McReynolds, a fifth-grade teacher at Westwind Elementary School in Phoenix, Arizona. "I'm talking about problems of academics *and* social problems, such as discipline or tardiness."

And McReynolds' program is a success. The statistics (academic and social) are just part of the proof. Parents are pleased with the results too. They feel more involved with their children's education and more connected with the school.

"The program has carried over to our home too," said one parent. "We worked together as a team. I've never had such a great relationship with my son."

THE RESEARCH IS THERE!

In 1994, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley announced the formation of a nationwide partnership to "promote partnerships that will

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formation of a nationwide partnership to "promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation." Riley based his statement on 30 years of research.

"Although I haven't been teaching that long," McReynolds says, "I always have known that the family was a critical link. Parental involvement must be a focus in the classroom if we are to be able to achieve high academic standards and create productive citizens."

And the research supports McReynolds' point of view:

A 1992 study (Barton and Corey) showed that controllable factors -- such as absenteeism and tardiness, the amount of TV watched, and the kinds of learning activities that are offered at home -- make a huge difference in the average student's achievements.

Reading achievement is more dependent on learning activities in the home than is math or science achievement (The College Board, 1994) and the single most important activity for building knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children (Anderson et al., 1985).

Dozens of studies point to one important conclusion: What the family does is more important than family background (income, parental education, marital status, family size, etc.). Parents need to *know* that they can influence learning. And, in most cases, they need to be shown how they can do it.

Studies show that schools must take the lead in actively pursuing parental involvement. Encouraging parents to participate in their children's education is more important than family background in determining whether or not parents get involved.

McReynolds' based her PIE program on the research (see Resources below) and on her years of experience in the classroom. "Eight basic and essential facts" comprise the core of the program:

- Family involvement is a critical part of high quality education, a safe and disciplined learning environment, and student achievement.
- What the family does is more important than what the family income or education level is.
- All parents want the best education for their children.
- Most parents want to be more involved in their child's education, but many don't know how to become involved.
- Most teachers feel that parent involvement is a vital part of student achievement, but many of them do not know how to get the parents involved.
- Schools need to encourage and promote parent involvement.
- School practices that encourage parents to participate are the most important factor in whether or not parents will participate.
- Schools need to encourage parents to become partners and thus be able to make decisions about their children's education.

FIVE PIECES OF PIE

McReynolds' PIE program actively pursues and involves parents as true and equal partners. She offers them five ways in which they can become involved.

Decision making. McReynolds encourages parents to set goals for their children *and* for the teacher -- goals that reach beyond those goals she has already set. The goals are stated at the start of the school year in a contract between parents, teachers, and students. That contract lists everyone's responsibilities and is signed by each of the participants. A parent is free to add to the contract specific goals for their child. "The goal of the contract is a very simple one: Helping children to learn," says McReynolds. "The contract is a tool to meet that end. It can change from year to year -- and even sometimes from child to child. If parents feel a need, we do whatever we have to do to meet that need as long as it helps the child learn."

Supporting. "Parents support their children in many ways," McReynolds says. "They provide shelter, food, clothing, protection, and love. They also need to support the work that goes on in the classroom." McReynolds shares with parents the research that supports the need for their involvement in their children's education at home and at school. Showing children that school is important can be done in many ways, and McReynolds offers parents many options and tools for doing that. Her next goal is to establish a "parent library," a place in the school where parents can find and check out materials that will help them to help their children learn.

Teaching. "Parents are teachers too," says McReynolds, adding, "Let's face it, children learned a huge amount from their parents before they even entered school. And a parent's role as 'teacher' doesn't end when the child enters school." McReynolds points to a number of ways in which "teaching" continues to be a parent's responsibility and part of a parent's daily routine. Providing time and a place for doing homework, reading with a child, making sure homework is understood and finished, talking about what is being done at school, and continuing to learn how to help are just a few of the ways in which parents "teach." In addition, parents can get actively involved in the classroom as volunteer tutors, as lecturers sharing their own expertise, and in many other ways. Last year, McReynolds says, a small group of parents got kids interested in participating in the Valentines for Veterans program. "That was just one example of a wonderful learning experience that came directly from parental involvement and it was proof that 'If it's important, parents will help to get it done,'" says McReynolds. "Kids got to see their parents in action and, more importantly, they got to see themselves as contributors to the larger community."

Learning. "The more parents learn, the more they are able to help a child learn," McReynolds says. "That means getting actively involved in finding out what is being taught, how it is taught, and how children learn and develop." Parents can take classes (offered through adult education programs, community colleges, etc.) on their own to demonstrate to their children how important learning is. Or they can take classes *with* their children; computer classes or hobby classes are two possibilities. McReynolds offers additional help and suggestions. She provides ideas for field trips that parents and children can take together to support classroom learning. And she holds a monthly in-service session for parents. In one recent session she focused on the children's math curriculum. The session's goal was to familiarize parents with the curriculum and to relieve the

parents' anxiety about it. Other sessions have included a science fair preparation night (where McReynolds familiarizes parents with the "scientific method" through a fun airplane-making family activity); a session that explains the school grading system; and a field trip to a dinosaur exhibit at a nearby museum.

Communicating. An open-door policy allows parents to come into the classroom at any time. In addition, McReynolds offers regular communication through two newsletters. Those newsletters include information about the concepts that are being taught, how those concepts can be reinforced and practiced at home, a schedule of after-school help sessions, and news about a special citizenship program in which kids earn points for positive behaviors. The newsletters also include news of upcoming in-service sessions and special projects parents might want to get involved in.

"Parental involvement programs, if they are to be effective, must include parents in all aspects of a child's education," McReynolds concludes. "Parents must be involved as teachers, learners, supporters, and advocates for their children."

IS THE PROGRAM WORKING?

Is McReynolds' PIE program working? Yes, it is, in most ways that count. Kids who know that their parents are involved and interested tend to take more responsibility for their own learning and behavior. Schoolwork and grades improve. Work habits improve. Less work is handed in late. Fewer referrals for behavior problems are made. Attendance increases. Fewer kids show up late for class. Those results have all been documented.

And parents seem satisfied with the results. A survey of parents involved in the PIE program indicates that, when compared to previous years, PIE parents

- Spent more time at home involved with their child's educational needs;
- Spent more time involved with their child at school;
- Spent more time in school-sponsored activities;
- Had a better understanding of how they might help their child;
- Were more knowledgeable about their child's abilities and activities;
- Felt they were contributing more to their child's education; and
- Communicated better with the teacher and their child.

This year, the program is being extended to include three additional classes -- a second-grade class, and third-grade class, and another fifth-grade class. And McReynolds will continue to present in-service sessions about the PIE program to other schools within and outside the district. In addition, this fall McReynolds and others involved in the program (including two parents, the school board president, and the school superintendent) will travel to San Francisco to present a session about the program and the importance of parental involvement. The presentation will be made at the "Public Education: Meeting the Challenge" conference of the California Foundation for the Improvement of Employer-Employee Relations (CFIER). The conference "showcases current and promising new approaches to...building partnerships...that will carry public education successfully into the 21st century."

EASY AS PIE?

Getting support for the PIE program hasn't been a piece of cake!

"This program created a lot of questions, doubts, and fear," McReynolds says. "The concerns came from some parents and some fellow teachers. We [she and her students' parents] had a lot of support from the administration and from some teachers, but more than once we were told that it wouldn't work. Our motto became 'We know you believe it can't be done, but all we ask is that you move aside while we do it!'"

"The main concern," she explains, "was giving the parents equal control as active partners in the process."

"We proved that parents have and can continue to have a huge impact in our school and our district," adds McReynolds. "We have to be able work with our parents and to help them help their children. And we have to learn to reduce the fear on both sides and work together. Schools have to be willing to unlock the doors and encourage parents to become involved, to set goals, to become active partners."

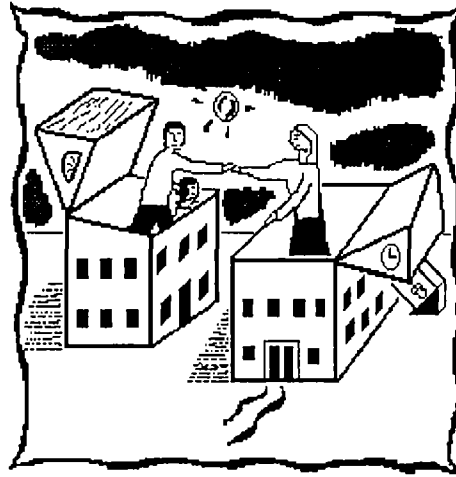
"We've just begun to tap the most important resource we have," McReynolds concludes. "Our parents will be able to help us accomplish the highest standards possible for our children."

Article by Gary Hopkings
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Related Resources

RESOURCES FROM McREYNOLDS

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TEAM UP FOR KIDS!!

How Schools Can Support Family Involvement in Education

Family Involvement Partnership for Learning

Partners In Learning: How Schools Can Support Family Involvement In Education

Learn to communicate better

At times, parents feel that educators talk down to them or speak in educational jargon they do not understand. School signs often seem unwelcoming. Schools should make every effort to reach out and communicate with parents in a clear way and listen to what they have to say. To ensure that all parents have access to information, written material should be concise and easily readable. Schools should be parent-friendly. Some school newsletters for parents include a glossary of terms to help parents understand school improvement efforts. Other schools use regularly scheduled telephone calls to stay in contact with families.

Encourage parental participation in school improvement efforts

When schools develop improvement plans, families ought to be included at every stage of the process to get their input and to give them a sense of shared responsibility. Many schools, supported by the new Goals 2000: Educate America Act, are now developing such plans. They are working to raise academic standards, improve teaching, make schools safer, introduce computers and other learning technologies into the classroom, and to make many other vitally needed changes. The full involvement of parents and other members of the community is instrumental to the success of these efforts.

Involve parents in decision-making

Schools can give parents a more effective voice by opening up the school governance process so that more parents can participate. Many schools hold evening and weekend meetings and conferences to accommodate families' work schedules.

Give teachers the tools to reach out to families

Staff development can help teachers to understand the benefits of family involvement and show them how to remove barriers to involvement. It can also explain techniques for improving two-way communication between home and schools, and suggest ways to help meet families' overall educational needs.

Make parents feel welcome

Often the first time a parent comes to school is when a child is in trouble. Schools can help reduce tensions by making initial contacts with parents friendly and respectful. Schools can also reduce distrust by arranging contacts in neutral settings off school grounds. Home visits by family liaison personnel can be particularly helpful. Some programs have used home-school coordinators to run weekly clubs for parents, helping to build parenting skills and trust between families and schools. Schools might also encourage parents, teachers, and students to meet at the beginning of the school year to agree on goals and develop a common understanding.

Overcome language barriers

Reaching families whose first language is not English requires schools to make special accommodations. Translating materials into a parent's first language helps, but written communication alone is not enough. Ideally, a resource person, perhaps another parent, should be available to communicate with parent communicate with parents in their first language. Interactive telephone voice-mail systems that have bilingual recordings for families are also useful. In addition, English-as-a-second-language classes for parents and grandparents may be helpful.

Use technology to link parents to the classroom

Educators can creatively use new technology for voice-mail to homework hotlines to educational CD-ROM programs- to get parents more involved in the learning process. For example, voice mail systems have been installed in several hundred schools across the country. Parents and students can call for taped messages that describe classroom activities and daily homework assignments. Audiotapes and videotapes can also be used to enhance communication with parents. These are especially helpful in reaching family members who do not read. Even with all the new technology, teachers and other school staff can still use the old telephone to connect with parents. Schools can help by providing teachers with classroom phones.

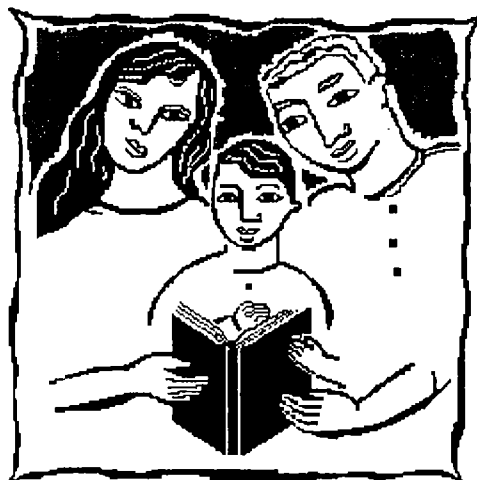
Encourage communities to join school-family partnerships

This can be especially effective in reducing schools safety problems that are connected to problems in surrounding neighborhoods. Parents, community residents, and law enforcement officials can help by joining together in voluntary organizations, friendship networks, and neighborhood watches to solve common problems. Schools and community and religious organizations can help by offering after-school cultural and recreational activities. Community-supported students services have also succeeded when families, schools, and community representatives have made the effort to get involved.

The Family Involvement National Education Goal

"We believe that strengthening the connection between families and schools is so important that we have made it one of America's National Education Goals. The Goal declares that by the year 2000, 'Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.'"

-- Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education



GET INVOLVED!

How Parents and Families Can Help Their Children Do Better in School

Family Involvement Partnership for Learning

Steps You Can Take To Improve Your Children's Education

Read together

Children who read at home with their parents perform better in school. Show your kids how much you value reading by keeping good books, magazine, and newspapers in the house. Let them see you read. Take them on trips to the library and encourage them to get library cards. Let children read to you, and talk about the books. What was the book about? Why did a character act that way? What will he or she do next?

Look for other ways to teach children the magic of language, words, and stories. Tell stories to your children about their families and their culture. Point out words to children wherever you go -- to the grocery, to the pharmacy, to the gas station. Encourage your children to write notes to grandparents and other relatives.

Use TV wisely

Academic achievement drops sharply for children who watch more than 10 hours of television a week, or an average of more than two hours a day. Parents can limit the amount of viewing and help children select educational programs. Parents can also watch and discuss shows with their kids. This will help children understand how stories are structured.

Establish a daily family routine with scheduled homework time

Studies show that successful students have parents who create and maintain family routines. Make sure your child goes to school every day. Establish a regular time for homework each afternoon or evening, set aside a quiet, well lit place, and encourage children to study. Routines generally include time performing chores, eating meals together, and going to bed at an established time.

"The American family is the rock on which a solid education can be built. I have seen examples all over this nation where two-parent families, single parents, stepparents,

grandparents, aunts, and uncles are providing strong families support for their children to learn. If families teach the love of learning, it can make all the difference in the world to their children."

Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

Talk to your children and teenagers -- and listen to them, too

Talk directly to your children, especially your teenagers, about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the values you want them to have. Set a good example. And listen to what your children have to say. Such personal talks, however uncomfortable they may make you feel, can save their lives.

Express high expectations for children by enrolling them in challenging courses

You can communicate to your children the importance of setting and meeting challenges in school. Tell your children that working hard and stretching their minds is the only way for them to realize their full potential. Expect and encourage your children to take tough academic courses like geometry, chemistry, computer technology, a second language, art, and advanced occupational courses. Make sure they never settle for doing less than their best.

Find out whether your school has high standards

Your school should have clear, challenging standards for what students should know. For example, what reading, writing and math skills is your child expected to have by fourth grade? By eighth and twelfth grades? What about history, science, the arts, geography, and other languages? Are responsibility and hard work recognized? If your school doesn't have high standards, join with teachers, principals, and other parents to set these standards.

Keep in touch with the school

Parents cannot afford to wait for schools to tell them how children are doing. Families who stay informed about their children's progress at school have higher-achieving children. To keep informed, parents can visit the school or talk with teachers on the telephone. Get to know the names of your children's teachers, principals, and counselors.

Parents can also work with schools to develop new ways to get more involved. Families can establish a homework hotline, volunteer on school planning and decision-making committees, help create family resource centers, serve as mentors, and even help patrol school grounds.

Use community resource

Activities sponsored by community and religious organizations provide opportunities for children and other family members to engage in positive social and learning experiences. Family-oriented community resources may include health care services, housing assistance, adult education, family literacy, and employment counseling. Families can reinforce their children's learning by going to libraries, museums, free concerts, and cultural fairs together.

When parents and families get personally involved in education, their children do better in school and grow up to be more successful in life.

Sounds like common sense, doesn't it?

Yet parental involvement is one of the most overlooked aspects of American education today. The fact is, many parents don't realize how important it is to get involved in their children's learning. As one dad said when he began to read to his daughter every day and discovered that it improved her learning, "I never realized how much it would mean to her to hear me read." Other parents would like to be involved, but have trouble finding the time.

All parents and family members should try to find the time and make the effort because research shows that when families get involved, their children:

- Get better grades and test scores.
- Graduate from high school at higher rates.
- Are more likely to go on to higher education.
- Are better behaved and have more positive attitudes.

Family involvement is also *one of the best investments* a family can make. Students who graduate from high school earn, on average, \$200,000 more in their lifetimes than students who drop out. College graduate makes almost \$1 million more!

Most important of all, *ALL* parents and families can enjoy these benefits. It doesn't matter how much money you have. It doesn't matter how much formal education you've had yourself or how well you did in school. And family involvement works for children at all grade levels.

What is "Family Involvement in Education"?

It's a lot of different types of activities. Some parents and families may have the time to get involved in many ways. Other may only have the time for one or two activities. But whatever your level of involvement, remember: *If you get involved and stay involved, you can make a world of difference.*

Family involvement in education can mean: *Reading a bedtime story to your preschool child...checking homework every night...getting involved in PTA...discussing your children's progress with teachers...voting in school board elections...helping your school to set challenging academic standards...limiting TV viewing to no more than two hours on school nights...getting personally involved in governing your school...becoming an advocate for better education in your community and state...and insisting on high standards of behavior for children.*

Or, family involvement can be as simple as asking your children, "How was school today?" But ask every day. That will send your children the clear message that *their schoolwork is important to you and you expect them to learn.*

Many children and parents are yearning for this kind of togetherness these days. Among student aged 10 to 13, for example, 72 percent say they would like to talk to their parents more about their homework. Forty percent of parents across the country believe that they are not devoting enough time to their children's education. And teachers say that increasing parental involvement in education should be the number one priority for public education in the next few years.

**"Parents who know their children's
teachers and help with the homework
and teach their kids right from wrong --
these parents can make all the difference."**

*-- President Bill Clinton
State of the Union Address*



JOIN TOGETHER FOR KIDS!

How Communities Can Support Family Involvement in Education

Family Involvement Partnership for Learning

What Your Community Can Do To Support Schools And Family Involvement In Education

Combat alcohol, drugs, and violence

These problems threaten children's chances for success in far too many of our communities. Prevention programs work best when parents, students, schools, law enforcement officials, and communities join together to fight back. For example, schools and community members can provide mentoring and after-school programs to give children safe havens from violence and alternatives to drugs. Communities can also put students on the right path by providing a quality education and school-to-work programs that lead to college, technical training, or good jobs after high school. *A future filled with hope and promise is the best answer to the hopelessness of drugs.* Solving drug and safety problems is a difficult task, and each community will have to find its own answers. But when communities unite, real progress can be made.

Teach parenting skills

Programs for parents can include academic classes, literacy training, career preparation, early childhood education, children's health, and assistance in finding helpful services in the community. When adults become involved in parenting education, parent-child communication improves and children with developmental delays in speech, social skills, and other areas overcome these challenges more readily. High-quality parenting programs engage parents early, sometimes even before their child's birth, and focus on the critical early years of a child's development.

A recent study of family literacy found that economically at-risk preschool children whose parents received significant amounts of parenting education performed better on vocabulary test -- an important measure of literacy -- than children whose parents received little parenting instruction.

Provide mentor programs

Changes in families and communities have limited the amount of contact many youths have with adults

who can offer advice and act as role models. To help fill in the gap, interested citizens -- from employers to college students to senior citizens -- can participate in mentor programs which can provide emotional support and guidance to young people. Mentors can help with schoolwork, job skill development, career planning, parenting, and the many other challenges that face young people today.

Enlist community volunteers

Many different kinds of community organizations, such as civic groups, men's and women's associations, service clubs, and religious groups can organize support for youngsters. In many communities, senior citizens are putting their experience and expertise to work on behalf of children. Nearly 40 percent of Americans over 60 years of age are now involved in some type of volunteer activity. Volunteers can serve as tutors or teacher aides, work in the library, or help with after-school activities, such as music and story telling. In one school, grandparents served on patrol and as school guards to help keep kids safe.

Offer summer learning programs

Communities can make summer activities available to young people through schools, cultural institutions, park districts, and other public and private agencies. Activities might include programs at recreation centers, science and art museums, libraries, and camping sites. These programs are particularly important for low-income children. With limited access to such learning resources at home as books and computers, low-income children can suffer serious academic losses over the summer. Those months need not become a time for losing ground academically or getting into trouble. With the help of community resources, it can be a time of productive learning.

Support preschool programs

Two examples of community programs that support family involvement are Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY). Missouri's Parents as Teachers program operates in every district of the state and works with parents of children up to 3 years of age. HIPPY is for mothers of children aged 4 and 5, and it offers a curriculum and materials to help moms get their children ready for kindergarten. Local parent aides visit families to explain the program and review lessons. PAT and HIPPY have been found to improve children's achievement and adjustment to school.

Supporting Family Involvement In Education Makes Good Sense

Encouraging family involvement is a good way to enhance your community's financial investment in education. If all parents of children ages 1 through 9 spent just one hour a day, five days a week, reading with their children or helping with schoolwork, the total number of learning hours would be in the thousands, maybe even millions. The total dollar value of all that teaching is enormous -- and the value of our children is incalculable.

Communities That Support Schools And Families Are Better Places To Live, Work, And Learn

All across America, communities are pulling together to strengthen education because they know it's the key to a strong local economy, a good quality of life, and a brighter future for everyone.

For communities, making education better means supporting families and schools. Families are responsible for raising children, of course, and schools are responsible for teaching children. But in these difficult times, schools and parents often can't do the job alone, try as they might. They need to reach out for the help of neighbors and others in their community.

That's where service organizations and agencies, religious groups, volunteer groups, clubs, community leaders, and caring citizens can help build a true "*community partnership for learning*" -- and make their community a better place to live, work, and learn.

How to build your community partnership for learning

Here's what your community can do:

- *Support greater family involvement in education.* Parents and families can't sit on the sidelines when it comes to their children's education. They need to be personally involved, every day. Parents need to read with children, help with homework, stay in touch with teachers, and participate in school activities.

Research shows that when parents do get more involved, their children get better grades and test scores, graduate from high school at higher rates, have greater enrollment in higher education, and are better behaved. *In all these ways, family involvement in education helps children to grow up to be productive, responsible members of the community.*

- *Support schools.* Community members can serve as mentors and volunteers in school. In addition, communities can offer after-school, summer learning, and recreation programs; locate library and cultural services near to schools; make neighborhoods safer and drug-free; encourage the development of business-school partnerships to create school-to-work programs; support schools' efforts to develop challenging academic standards; and work to improve education in many other ways.

These efforts will be rewarded. Communities that have good schools and better educated residents are almost always safer, more stable communities where businesses and families thrive. And these communities can be magnets for new businesses and jobs.

Children: 20% of our population, 100% of our future

Support the effort to help children learn. Find out what resources are available in your community for young people and help expand them. Get personally involved as a volunteer. For more information about these and other ways you and your neighbors can help support and connect schools and families, just turn the page.

**"Communities that work to make
education better are communities
with bright futures."**

*-- Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education*

PLEASE JOIN US!

Greater family involvement in education is supported by the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning, which includes over 100 community, business, family, education, and religious organizations nationwide.

Your group or community is cordially invited to join the Family Involvement Partnership. For



LAURA STEPPS' TEN WAYS TO GIVE ADOLESCENTS OUR LAST BEST SHOT

(from her book, *Our Last Best Shot: Guiding Our Children Through Early Adolescence*)

- *Treat kids as resources, not problems. Involve them in tasks and family decisions that demand increasing levels of skill and responsibility.**
- *Do things with them that they like to do. Listen to their music occasionally; watch their favorite TV shows. Swap information and stories with other adults who know them.**
- *Decide together on guidelines for acceptable behavior. Question, don't accuse, when they break the rules. Enforce consequences consistently.**
- *Hug them regularly and privately.**
- *Encourage them in extracurricular activities that attract good kids.**
- *Keep our home open to their friends all the time.**
- *Stay involved in school activities that put us into the school building regularly.**
- *Take up a new hobby or interest with them; learn together.**
- *Make sure they enjoy close relationships with at least one adult outside the immediate family.**
- *Be optimistic. Hold out hope for sun—in our lives and theirs—even as we prepare for rain.**