



Engaging Parents in Today's Business of Schooling

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Research that clearly indicates:

- 1. When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' education level.**
- 2. The more extensive the parent involvement, the higher the student achievement.**
- 3. When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.**
- 4. Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution.**
- 5. Secondary students whose parents remain involved make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, and develop realistic plans for their future. Students whose parents are not involved are more likely to drop out.**
- 6. The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to:**
 - a) create a home environment that encourages learning.**
 - b) communicate high, yet reasonable expectations for their children's achievement and future careers**
 - c) become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.**

How We Hurt Our Kids

From Dr. Madeline Levine (2012)

1. When we do for our kids what they can already do for themselves;
2. When we do for our kids what they can almost do for themselves, and
3. When our parenting behavior is motivated by our own ego.

“Why did parenting change from preparing our kids for life to protecting them from life, which means they’re not prepared to live life on their own?”

--Julie Lythcott-Haim, 2015, p. 7.

Many parents today have the ultimate goal of making our kids successful in an increasingly competitive world by bringing a “no mistakes” mentality to the kid’s childhood. We accompany them and control as many outcomes as we can.

Undermining Thinking At Home from **How to Raise An Adult (2015)** by **Judith Lythcott-Haims**

- 1. We Overprotect.**
We are risk adverse for them. We praise them at every turn. We take their side over law enforcement officers, teachers, judges, and others who find them subpar.
- 2. We Overdirect.**
We tell them when, how, and with whom to play (play dates). We choose their extra-curricular activities, their courses, their colleges, their majors, and their careers.
- 3. We Hand-hold.**
We go to bat with them. We act as their personal concierges. We correct their homework, hire tutors, and write their applications

What to Expect from Children

Lindsay Hutton, “I Did It All by Myself! An Age-by-Age Guide to Teaching Your Child Life Skills,” (n.d.)

AGES 2 TO 3: SMALL CHORES AND BASIC GROOMING. This is the age when your child will start to learn basic life skills.

By the age of three, your child should be able to:

- help put their toys away
- dress themselves (with some help from you)
- put their clothes in the hamper when they undress

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- clear their plate after meals
- assist in setting the table
- brush their teeth and wash their face with assistance

AGES 4 TO 5: IMPORTANT NAMES AND NUMBERS. When your child reaches this age, safety skills are high on the list.

They should:

- know their full name, address, and phone number
- know how to make an emergency call

They should also be able to:

- perform simple cleaning chores such as dusting in easy-to-reach places and feed pets
- identify monetary denominations, and understand the very basic concept of how money is used
- brush their teeth, comb their hair, and wash their face without assistance
- help with basic laundry chores, such as putting their clothes away and bringing their dirty clothes to the laundry area
- choose their own clothes to wear

AGES 6 TO 7: BASIC COOKING TECHNIQUES. Kids at this age can start to help with cooking meals, and can learn to:

- mix, stir, and cut with a dull knife
- make a basic meal, such as a sandwich
- help put the groceries away
- wash the dishes
- use basic household cleaners safely
- straighten up the bathroom after using it
- make their bed without assistance
- bathe unsupervised

AGES 8 TO 9: PRIDE IN PERSONAL BELONGINGS. By this time, your child should take pride in their personal belongings and take care of them properly. This includes being able to:

- fold their clothes
- learn simple sewing
- care for outdoor toys such as their bike or roller skates
- take care of personal hygiene without being told to do so
- use a broom and dustpan properly
- read a recipe and prepare a simple meal
- help create a grocery list
- count and make change
- take written phone messages
- help with simple lawn duties such as watering and weeding flower beds
- take out the trash

AGES 10 TO 13: GAINING INDEPENDENCE: Ten is about the age when your child can begin to perform many skills independently. They should know how to:

- stay home alone
- go to the store and make purchases by themselves
- change their own bed sheets
- use the washing machine and dryer
- plan and prepare a meal with several ingredients
- use the oven to broil or bake foods
- read labels
- iron their clothes
- learn to use basic hand tools
- mow the lawn
- look after younger siblings or neighbors

AGES 14 TO 18: MORE ADVANCED SKILLS ARE LEARNED. By the age of fourteen, your child should have a very good mastering of all the previous skills. On top of that, they should also be able to:

- perform more sophisticated cleaning and maintenance chores, such as changing the vacuum cleaner bag, cleaning the stove, and unclogging drains
- fill a car with gas, add air to and change a tire
- read and understand labels and dosages
- prepare and cook meals

YOUNG ADULTS: PREPARING TO LIVE ON THEIR OWN. Your child will need to know how to support themselves when they go away to college or move out. There are still a few skills they should know before venturing out on their own, including:

- make regular doctor and dentist appointments and other important health-related appointments
- have a basic understanding of finances, and be able to manage their bank account, balance a checkbook, pay a bill, and use a credit card
- schedule oil changes and basic car maintenance



Problems Faced by Parents

1. They may have grown up in families devoid of good parenting skills. They have experienced no models of effective parenting themselves. They may not be sure how to do it even if they want to.
2. They may have had a very negative school experience themselves. They may be hostile and bitter about how they believe they were treated, and they are ready to project those perceived injustices onto you.
3. They may doubt their own literacy or academic skills. They are unwilling to put themselves in a position to look foolish or ignorant.
4. They may be totally overwhelmed by situations outside of school. Lack of money and resources, problems with other children, dysfunctional relationships, job stresses, difficulties with the law, illness, and other pressures can leave a parent feeling disoriented and disenfranchised.
5. They may speak little or no English.
6. They may come from a different culture and are intimidated by the unfamiliar customs and protocols at your school.
7. They may feel hopeless and/or powerless. Some parents have become so disillusioned with their realities that they feel that nothing they do makes any difference.
8. They may be unable to attend school functions because of job responsibilities, the demands of younger children, obligations to elderly relatives, or lack of transportation.



Beginning Communication With Parents

- Start early. Before school starts or on the first day of school make a contact with the parents. Introduce yourself with a letter and let them know that you want to work *with* them to help their child have the best year possible. Be friendly, be professional, be inviting, and be sure you use correct grammar and punctuation on all written communications! You may want to use a fun font or clip art to make your letter seem less officious. Give them your contact information and invite them to use it.
- Give the parents enough of an overview of your plans and expectations that they can see you know what you are doing.
- Provide a translation for parents who have limited use of English.
- Let them know how important they are in the ultimate success of their children's lives. Always demonstrate respect for the family and the family's primary role in helping students become responsible adults.
- Make the first move. Do not wait for parent to contact you. If you care about what happens to your students, you have to involve yourself with their parents.

Top 10 Ways to Keep in Touch With Parents

- Phone
- E-mail
- Voice mail
- Text
- Web site (school or class)
- Personal contacts
- Newsletters
- Academic calendar
- News bulletins/community bulletin boards
- Notes and cards (if all else fails, send them a registered letter.)
- Make your first contact a positive one!

Positive Parental Involvement

Form Proactive Partnerships With Parents:

- Have family inventory sheets filled out
- Send home copies of class policies, standards, procedures, etc.
- Send home newsletters (with pictures!)
- Call or send letters with good news as often as possible

During a Parent Conference:

- Be warm, be friendly, and be assertive
- Utilize good listening and interpersonal communication skills
- Refuse to be defense
- Stick to the subject
- Admit your mistakes
- Establish a common ground

NEVER gossip with or about parents!

Involve Parents as much as possible!

How to Handle an Upset Parent

- Keep your voice calm; lower your tone and slow your speech.
- If meeting in person, treat parents as guests. Offer them a cold drink or a cup of coffee. Try to make the parent(s) feel as comfortable as possible.
- Remain in control. Be sympathetic and empathetic, but NOT defensive.
- Really listen to the other person. Practice active listening skills. Let them “get it all out” without interrupting or commenting. Take notes if you need to. Acknowledge the other person’s frustration, anger, and/or pain.
- Address each point that is brought up that is relevant to the subject of the conference. Stick to the issues.
- Be open, but be specific and firm about your educational philosophy and your reasons for your actions.
- Give positive suggestions. Compliment the parent(s) for caring.
- Provide closure and a plan of action.



20 Ways Parents Can Help at School

1. Help build resources and equipment (bird houses, collecting nets, shelves, learning centers).
2. Act as monitor for cafeteria, hall, or playground.
3. Prepare and bring food items.
4. Assist with special tutoring.
5. Make a presentation or performance.
6. Read to students.
7. Job sharing.
8. Help make classroom decorations and design learning walls, etc.
9. File, sort, hole punch, copy etc. Help with secretarial chores.
10. Make learning games.
11. Contact and/or organize other parents.
12. Chaperone a field trip (even if it is just to the grove of trees at the end of the campus).
13. Help prepare materials for labs and projects.
14. Donate materials.
15. Help with special classroom or *school events and projects.
16. Assist with pet or plant care.
17. Contact businesses about possible donations or sponsorships.
18. Help with class newsletter.
19. Help with web site.
20. Help students with computers and other technological aids.



Dealing With the Over-Involved Parent

1. Be proactive. Invite them when it is convenient for you.
2. Ask the parent to volunteer in classes or areas other than those her/his child attends.
3. Dilute their power by asking underrepresented groups to serve on committees, chair events, and volunteer with them.
4. Steer them towards working for the benefit of *all* students and sincerely praise their efforts. (Often these folks are just starved for attention or the chance to contribute something meaningful.)
5. Clearly identify their limits. You are the professional. Let them know who is in charge and has ultimate veto power.
6. Be cautious about sharing information regarding other students, faculty, or administrators. Non-school personnel should not be privy to any confidential information. Gossip is a huge no-no!
7. Keep your sense of self; do not let yourself be caught up in their agendas. Do not be defensive.
8. Invite them to help you get other parents involved.
9. Remind them that it is natural to want a child to *do* their, but it is unfair and unrealistic to ask them to *be* the best.
10. Keep your sense of humor. (Sooner or later their child will move on and so will they.)

Helpful Hints For Communicating With Your Child



- ✚ Listen with your FULL attention. A good way to ensure *her/his* full attention is put them in the front seat of your car and drive them around as you talk with them. (Unless they want to hurl themselves from a moving vehicle, they've got no place to run.)
- ✚ Be aware of body language, both yours and theirs.
- ✚ Use silence to understand your child's meanings and feelings.
- ✚ Use open responses to keep the child talking. "I see." "Tell me more about that part."
- ✚ Accept and respect your child's feelings. Feelings don't have to be justified, they just ARE.
- ✚ Don't interrupt.
- ✚ Check out your child's feelings by reflecting what s/he says.
 - "I think I heard you say that you were really angry with Susan."
 - "So you were feeling helpless? Like you wanted to hide?"
- ✚ Be calm. Speak in a quiet voice. Use economy of words (don't talk too much).
- ✚ Stick to the subject.
- ✚ Don't assume that you are making yourself clear. Check for understanding periodically. "Can you tell me in your own words what you think I'm telling you?"
- ✚ Problem solve by discussing a variety of solutions. Emphasize your child's choice in selecting a plan of action.

- ✚ Give your point of view as just that. It's not the law or the only good solution.
- ✚ Don't be a dictator. Remember that children also learn by failing. Allow the child to learn successful problem solving from failing once in a while
- ✚ Avoid nagging, threatening, criticizing, lecturing, or probing.
- ✚ NO Name Calling!!! Attack the problem, not the person.
- ✚ Whenever possible, use humor.

My Mother Was Mean Enough

Someday when my children are old enough to understand the logic that motivates a parent, I will tell them:

I loved you enough...to ask where you were going,with whom, and what time you would be home..

I loved you enough...to insist that you save your money and buy a bike for yourself even though we could afford to buy one for you.

I loved you enough...to be silent and let you discover that your new best friend was a creep.

I loved you enough...to make you go pay for the bubble gum you had taken and tell the clerk, "I stole this yesterday, and I want to pay for it."

I loved you enough...to stand over you for two hours while you cleaned your room, a job that should have taken 15 minutes.

I loved you enough...to let you see anger, disappointment, and tears in my eyes. Children must learn that their parents aren't perfect.

I loved you enough...to let you assume the responsibility for your actions even when the penalties were so harsh they almost broke my heart.

But most of all, I loved you enough...to say NO when I knew you would hate me for it. Those were the most difficult battles of all. I'm glad I won them, because in the end you won, too.

And someday when your children are old enough to understand the logic that motivates parents, you will tell *them*...



For the Parent to Take:

How Much Do You Know About Your Child?

1. If your child had a choice, what would s/he prefer to be called?
2. Who is your child's closest friend?
3. Who does your child most admire?
4. Of what is your child most afraid?
5. What is your child's favorite thing to do with his/her friends?
6. What is your child's favorite kind of music?
7. What was the best movie your child ever watched?
8. At what age does your child plan to leave home?
9. What is your child's favorite color?
10. If your child had to wear one outfit for a month, which outfit would it be?
11. What most embarrasses your child?
12. If your child could change one thing about herself/himself, what would it be?
13. If your child could change one thing about your family, what would it be?
14. What trait do you have that your child most values?
15. What trait do you have that your child would most like to change?
16. If there were suddenly no electricity in the world, what appliance would your child miss the most?
17. What is your child's weight (within 2 pounds)?
18. What was your child's proudest moment?
19. What was your child's saddest moment?
20. If your child could make one wish come true, what would it be?

Compare your answers with those of your child. Score one point for each answer that is the same or reasonably close. If you score 16 or better, congratulate yourself for really knowing your child. If your score is 11 –15, you may want to think about spending more time catching up with what is new with your child. If your score is 10 or less, you definitely need to spend more time finding out about what is going on with your child.

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*For the Child to Take While the Parent Takes
Their Test:*

About You

1. If you had a choice, what would you prefer to be called?
2. Who is your closest friend?
3. Who do you most admire?
4. Of what are you most afraid?
5. What is your favorite thing to do with your friends?
6. What is your favorite kind of music?
7. What was the best movie you ever watched?
8. At what age do you plan to leave home?
9. What is your favorite color?
10. If you had to wear one outfit for a month, which outfit would it be?
11. What most embarrasses you?
12. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
13. If you could change one thing about your family, what would it be?
14. What trait do you have that you most value?
15. What trait does your parent have that you would most like to change?
16. If there were suddenly no electricity in the world, what appliance would you miss the most?
17. What is your weight (within 2 pounds)?
18. What was your proudest moment?
19. What was your saddest moment?
20. If you could make one wish come true, what would it be?

Now compare your answers to those of your parent. Give them one point for every answer that is the same or reasonably close (you be the judge). Your parent has the scoring code.

Helping Kids Grow Their Mindsets

- Strive to deliver the message, “You’re a developing person, and I’m interested in your development.” NOT “You have permanent traits, and I’m judging them.”
- Remember that praising children’s intelligence or talent sends a fixed-mindset message. Focus on the processes they used -- their strategies, effort, or choices.
- Remember that constructive criticism is feedback that helps the child understand how to fix something. It’s not feed-back that labels or simply excuses the child.
- Help children set goals. Remember that having innate talent is not a goal. Expanding skills and knowledge is.
- Lowering standards does NOT raise a child’s self-esteem. Neither does raising standards without giving kids ways of reaching them.
- Great parents believe in the growth of talent and intellect and are fascinated by the process of learning.



LIST OF RELATED CITATIONS
Engaging Parents in Today's Business of Education
PRESENTED BY DR. DEBBIE SILVER

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