

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

September 9, 2008

This Week's Message:

Parents, Schools and Kids.

Paths Forward

Tired of boring meetings??

Resources

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Parents, Schools and Kids.

By now we've all survived the back to school ads that hawk tons of stuff that is more about blatant consumerism than helping our children succeed in school. In many communities (mine being one of them) taxes are on the constant rise as school budgets escalate because of union demands, health care costs, under funded state and federal mandates and a competitive drive to build Taj Mahal school buildings at the cost of tens of millions of dollars. One such recent project

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started out at over \$150 million dollars. The reality is that a new wardrobe, the latest model of computer or the costliest school building has less to do with student achievement than the one thing each of us can provide: an involved parent.

Studies coming out of major graduate schools of education (i.e. UMass Amherst, UPenn, Harvard, Stanford) indicate that increasing parental involvement positively affects student achievement, improved student behavior and increased rates of attendance. And this, of course, is bolstered by common sense. A child's education is way too important to be completely handed off to a teacher or a school system no matter how gifted the teacher may be or how well funded the school may be. Children benefit when the parents, the teachers, the school system and the community all join together in a common effort.

As with any demanding process there are obstacles to overcome to effectively increase parental involvement in our schools. Let's take a look at some practical ways to overcome them for the benefit to our children, our families and our communities.

Paths Forward

• For Parents.

- Ask your child's teacher "How can I be involved in my child's education?" Stay in touch with that teacher - by note, email or phone.
- Read to younger children, get them involved in your local library programs.
- Observe and regulate their TV time.
- Provide a quiet, non-distracting place for them to do their homework. Help when you can and check it for completion.
- Make time to volunteer at the school and/ or participate in parent / teacher groups.
- Kids are natural learners; catch them learning about their favorite topics (i.e. dinosaurs, dogs and cats, outer space, the arts, the outdoors) and build on that interest with free materials from the library, the Internet, the school resource center.
- Remember there is no such thing as a perfect parent but the next best thing is an involved parent.

• For Teachers.

- Draw parents, grandparents and other caregivers into the education process with orientation meetings, regular conferences and constant communication. Use technology as your tool.
- Stop using jargon. How you typically speak with your educational colleagues can baffle and confuse those outside of the profession. This isn't the Pentagon!

- Yes, some parents are a pain. But give each a fair chance to join with you in a common goal. You probably don't mean it or even hear it but beware of condescending or talking down to parents.
- You will need to make a special effort to connect with parents who have difficult work schedules, with cultural backgrounds different from your own, or whose first language may not be English.
- Find a veteran teacher who has mastered the teacher / parent partnership and learn from him / her.
- Remember that an involved parent does not threaten your "expert" status. An involved parent is your best ally in the pursuit to which you have dedicated your working life.

• **For Employers.**

- The parents you employ will need occasional time during the workday to meet with a teacher, attend a school conference or event.
- Communicate with your school system to see what ways your company can support it and you will generate improved public / community / investor relations, as well as possible employee recruiting benefits.
- Supporting your employees' involvement in their children's schools will lead to the retention of your very best employees.
- Take the long view. Supporting education strengthens the economy by providing well-educated future employees, contributing taxpayers and productive citizens.

• **For Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and Friends.**

- If there is a child in your life whom you care about there is role for you in his / her school. Coordinate with the parent to find it.
- School involvement is a perfect outlet for retirees of all ages and educational level as well as those still working full time who are looking for some community interaction.
- Balance gift giving. Pair a toy with a book, sports equipment with a dictionary, atlas or thesaurus, or stylish clothes with needed school supplies.
- Ask "your" child about school, express an interest in what they are learning and what they are reading. Consider a visit to the library, museum, aquarium or planetarium in place of another trip to the water park or amusement park.

LifeMap is about helping you balance the conflicting demands of a busy, engaged life. None are more important than those concerning the education of our children.

Tired of boring meetings??

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Resources

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Sincerely,

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