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how these are addressed. Again, even professionals in the system may have little say in these affairs.

But if you want to be more a part of the process, or help teachers and schools be run in a logical, supportive fashion, what can you do? What can students and teachers do to better their situation? Why should administrators have all the power and does their having this power adequately prepare students for the future?

POWER WHO'S GOT IT WHY SHARE IT

What is thing called power and how does it work in a school system? Who has it? Who doesn't? Is there any way we can change or equalize structures in the school system so that everyone has a piece of the pie of power -holding, without stepping on anyone's toes?

Good question. If you look at the power pyramid most schools are built on you'll note that the most "power" in the school system is in the hands of the smallest number of people. The school board actually has the authority to veto the school superintendent's decisions, but the superintendent is perceived to be the head of the school system. Much like the CEO of a big company, he is seen as the top dog, the head cheese, numero uno. Working beneath him are his or her principals, central office staff, supervisors, under these the teachers and under them (actually, under the principals) are the cafeteria workers, janitors, bus drivers and other support personnel. It seems like one neat little organization, one happy little family business, with a man/woman at the top making the major and biggest decisions affecting the students' learning and rest of the school system.

Is it important or necessary for administrators to have all the decision-making power in a school system? Traditional school systems allow little room for decision making by the people at the bottom of the power pyramid. Wouldn't it be

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more logical, if instead of a pyramid of power, we had a bridge of communication and accountability instead:

Parent/Guardian Bridge of Communication Teacher
The Student Passes Between the Two
Reinforced by: Principals and Administrators and the Community

Building that bridge doesn't have to be difficult. Changing a pyramid into a bridge would require more power sharing and accountability between the different parts of the "education equation" than exists in most schools today. But it should to be done to help our teachers and the future.

This isn't about supplanting the principal's role or taking away all administrators' power. At this point in time schools really do need the community and communities need schools. We can all do some bridge building. Let's look at some ways how.

Chapter Two

Parents – A Very Important Part of the Education Equation

“For twenty years, I’ve been waiting for someone to anoint child-raising as a profession requiring skill, talent, and monumental value.”

Erma Bombeck

A father at a cub scout meeting bragged about all the things he could provide his son. The nine year old had his very own television, his own phone, sets and sets of video games he could play on the TV in his room. All the ‘things’ Dad didn’t have as a child.

Yet he couldn’t understand why the boy was failing in school, why his grades were so poor. Maybe the thing junior needed most was a place to do homework. And a father who read to him and spent time with him, in ways that reinforced what he learned in school.

During the height of popularity of TV’s *Cosby Show* comedian/actor Bill Cosby wrote about his humorous encounters with children and parenting. In *Fatherhood*, he relates the story of Adam and Eve, who disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden and ate some forbidden fruit. Cosby figured if God had trouble handling children, “what makes you think it would be a piece of cake for you?”

He also points out the fact that mother and father (or guardians) need to be in agreement when it comes to discipline. (Note that Bill Cosby has since become unpopular be-

cause he went to jail with women. Maybe he was a spouse, though.)

Being a parent is tough, no matter how much free time and more babies before. More students live in homes because their parents are away. And when the parents are away, the brain and click on the TV.

No one can deny that parents have on children. Talking with your child is a funded survey pointed out that young people need emotional well-being based on the needs of their parents. No one wants to study found that if teenagers are in school they are less likely to abuse drugs or commit violence.

A good parent needs to rush to judgment. Using a common point of view when it is a common point of view in good communication, especially in a relationship, especially in a relationship, get a turn to state your point of view.

Educationally speaking, your child’s teacher at school for five years of her or his life. In school, you don’t stop being a guide and family leader in the home.

A few things they can include, says parents.com, to count 10 things, being able to know some shapes and colors in the game.

So, are you hopeful for your child for that future?

cause he went to jail for drugging and sexually abusing women. Maybe he was a good father. He's been a terrible spouse, though.)

Being a parent today can be so rewarding but is also tough, no matter how you slice it. Today's kids have more free time and more bad choices on how to spend it than ever before. More students today also come home to empty homes because their parent or parents work than ever before. And when the parents do arrive, they're tired. (Just click off the brain and click on TV.)

No one can deny the great influence parents and guardians have on children. Even the simple acts of walking and talking with your child can be significant. A recent federally funded survey pointed up the fact that even into adolescence young people need emotional support and have a sense of well-being based on the strong feeling of being cared for by parents. No one wants to be an abandoned kitten. And the study found that if teens feel loved by parents and comfortable in school they are less likely to have early sex, smoke, abuse drugs or commit violent acts, or even commit suicide.

A good parent needs to also be a good listener and not rush to judgment. Using self control to listen to your child's point of view when it is diametrically opposed to your own is important in good communication and maintaining a decent relationship, especially when he's an adolescent. You'll get a turn to state your point of view.

Educationally speaking, you teach your child as much as your child's teacher at school does. Certainly during the first five years of her or his life you do. And once they are in school, you don't stop being their role model, their spiritual guide and family leader in education.

A few things they could know before kindergarten include, says parents.com, knowing their full name, being able to count 10 things, being able to tell a simple story. If they know some shapes and colors then they are a little ahead of the game.

So, are you hopeful for the future? Are you preparing your child for that future? Some parents or guardians never

get involved in their child's future through the school system. Some take the other tack early on to become involved with school, but in a negative way, quickly putting down the teacher and the school system when the child does poorly. Sometimes this may be justified. Even if there ARE problems, parents and teachers should ALWAYS be on the same side and working together.

Teachers need parents and parents need teachers. And they should even discuss if the child makes friends in school or not. School should be set up to support this teacher/parent relationship, though many now do not.

For Parents To Consider

This is the information age, with all its media choices (TV, radio, video games, movies, computers, cell phones) and hype. It tends to monopolize many students' time without being very helpful. Is this a good use of their time? Are they learning any positive values with these electronic distractions? And is TV, the 'teacher creature' as one columnist put it, imparting proper values?

The electronic babysitters are very handy and hard to get away from, depending on your time, interests, and economic situation. In the past I have openly **disagreed** with the TV, letting my sons know what my values are. If some action was particularly stupid, violent or unrealistic, I let them know. Now **they** 'critique' TV shows on their own, recognizing that a lot of it is unrealistic or just plain stupid. (Now I have to work on getting them to watch more educational programs.)

Although we expect educators to encourage good work habits and other good values, these need to first begin at home. The values of independence, cooperation, and persistence are important ones parents or guardians can impart by their example. If you've a problem at home involving money and calmly work to resolve it, for example, this helps show

your child it is possible to deal with the difficulty along the way.

It is also important to 'back off' if they suffer from the in-crowd feelings, while at the same time, control and appropriate out. Don't let them talk to you, spend time with creatures and it's not a good equation? Here is

1. Is your child's behavior a problem?
2. Do you know what your child's values are?
3. Does your child have a mission statement?
4. What is your child's dance curriculum?
5. Are your child's values consistent?
6. Are you satisfied with her?
7. Do you see a future?
8. Does your child have any ideas?
9. Are there any problems in the education?

1. Communication and well fed

your child it is possible to reach a goal, even if there is some difficulty along the way.

It is also important for a child to be resilient, to 'bounce back' if they suffer a disappointment, fail a test, or get left out of the in-crowd. Encourage a child to express his or her feelings, while at the same time showing him or her self control and appropriate ways to vent anger, like talking feelings out. Don't let them become isolated in their room and never talking to you, spending all their time online. We are social creatures and it's not natural to be so all alone.

How else do you know if you are doing the most for your child educationally, or if your nearby school system is adequate? And how do you become a part of the 'education equation'? Here is a checklist that will help.

Education Checklist (Answer Yes or No)

1. Is your child healthy and properly immunized?
 2. Do you know the signs of a learning disability?
 3. Does your school have a philosophy, a set of goals, mission statement to go by? Can you add to it?
 4. What is your school leadership like – principal, guidance counselor, superintendent, school board?
 5. Are your schools safe and properly maintained?
 6. Are you supportive of your child's/grandchild's teacher?
 7. Do you seek support for yourself? Is your PTA effective?
 8. Does your child take responsibility for his or her actions?
 9. Are there innovative ways you can better be a part of the education equation?
-
1. Common sense will tell you that a child who's rested and well fed will do better in school than one who isn't. Very

young children, in the lower grades especially, need as much as 10 hours sleep a night to be properly rested. A good breakfast of cereal and fruit, toast and eggs, pancakes and juice, and the like gives children needed energy to stay alert in class till lunch time. A healthy lunch (not a school bag full of candy and other empty calorie junk food) such as a sandwich, fruit and maybe a small dessert, is also important.

A few years back (1994) federal studies found over half of school children vulnerable to preventable diseases because they weren't vaccinated. In 1994 the President passed legislation whereby funding would be provided to health departments and clinics to help children whose parents were eligible for Medicaid, did not have health insurance, or had insurance that didn't cover immunizations.

Private healthcare providers may be able to be part of this program for free or readily available vaccines, as well. All children should be vaccinated against childhood diseases like polio, measles, mumps, etc., beginning as early as two months of age. Your local health department or family doctor can provide a schedule, and you can catch up if any shots have been missed before school begins. Ask about Covid-19 boosters as well.

2. Something every parent may be faced with is the possibility their child or children have a learning disability. Most children do not have a learning disability, but the U. S. Dept. of Education classified 7.2 million students as in need of IDEA (Individual Disability Education Act) services in 2020-2021. That was 15 percent of school children.

Some warning signs include:

- Difficulty being able to rhyme words ("What rhymes with cat?") "Bat, sat, rat" - not can or sand, which have similar sounds;
- Memory problems with reciting the alphabet, remembering names, learning new tasks;
- Other language problems with learning letters, pronouncing words, understanding questions, following directions or explaining things.

ections or explaining things.
dicate a speech or hearing
- Attention difficulties finishing
finding belongings.

If a child consistently
areas, he or she may need
professional. Once in school
itate to talk to the child's teacher
being important to your child.

3. What is your school's
student handbook and mission
office or other appropriate person
school should state its mission
in school, such as being proud
contributing members of society.

What do **you** feel is important
character building, respect for
cy in geometry? Whatever the
be logical, helpful to the future
ent or guardian you should
mission statement is periodically
cials about having a say some

4. It may surprise you to
school administrators are a
public servants there are. What
management position where
evaluated (except for a cursory
dent)? And you are not as anxious
with, such as teachers and other
matter what your moods are.

Outside of a group of
pitchforks to a school board
and other administrators tend
what. That being the case, what

- actions or explaining things, as some of these could indicate a speech or hearing problem;
- Attention difficulties finishing tasks, concentrating or finding belongings.

If a child consistently has a problem in more than one areas, he or she may need further evaluation by an education professional. Once in school, if you've a concern, don't hesitate to talk to the child's teacher about it, early intervention being important to your child's success in school.

3. What is your school's philosophy of education? Are a student handbook and mission statement posted in the main office or other appropriate place? Your child or grandchild's school should state its mission, its goals for having children in school, such as being proficient in reading or being future contributing members of society.

What do **you** feel is important? Computer knowledge, character building, respect for animals and nature, proficiency in geometry? Whatever the mission statement, it should be logical, helpful to the future and a concise guide. As parent or guardian you should be able to have input when the mission statement is periodically revised. Ask school officials about having a say sometime.

4. It may surprise you to know that, practically speaking, school administrators are among the most unaccountable public servants there are. WHERE ELSE can you be in a management position where you don't have to really be evaluated (except for a cursory once-over by the superintendent)? And you are not as answerable to the people you work with, such as teachers and other staff, who work with you no matter what your moods are.

Outside of a group of citizens carrying shovels and pitchforks to a school board meeting in protest, principals and other administrators tend to keep their jobs no matter what. That being the case, what can you as a parent do?

It was Henry David Thoreau who said, "The broadest and most prevalent error requires the most disinterested virtue to sustain it." In other words, if you ignore or do nothing about poor leadership, it won't improve. And good leadership should be praised and encouraged. But how do you know if your schools are being run well?

One of the most logical things you can do is ask your child's teacher and school support staff about working conditions. Do they have all the training and materials they need? Are teachers allowed planning time and substitutes when needed? Are staff happy or unhappy with the administration?

Is your principal approachable, easy to talk to? Does he care about your suggestions and ideas? Does he try to avoid you or make you feel unwelcome? Does he allow you to volunteer, and does he make sure academic progress reports are sent out on a regular basis? Does he help you resolve discipline problems with your child in a constructive, helpful manner, or play favorites when it comes to discipline?

Your school board members are also school leaders. Are they open to constructive ideas to help the system?

(Note that constructive things mean different things to different people. A recent parent in my area complained that because there were "rainbows" in school and a teacher wore a rainbow, that she and another person were potential pedophiles, a very wild accusation. Take note that you have to have real evidence to make such a statement in public, and reputations are at stake. Any such concerns would have been better addressed in a private manner. As the spouse of a former teacher I find the accusation not credible at all.)

Do they always take one person's side over another, particularly the administration's? And how are school systems around you and in nearby states run? (What do they have that you do not?)

Good leadership is important in schools. It affects your child's teacher's working conditions, evaluation and training and how well your child will do. It can affect your child's possibilities for growth, improvement, and inspiration. Whatever your school leaders do to help the education equa-

tion along is important. If they are aware of their actions, that should be wor

5. To learn if your school is safe, maintained, with appropriate roofing, need to speak to school staff and see if window panes cracked and falling out of building, and if so, what can be done. Other questions should be asked of the community school yourself.

Safety may be more difficult to do some investigative work, ask school staff about conditions, such as the presence of drugs, etc. If you are allowed, let school officials and the board know what is the policy concerning guns? Are there "shooter drills"? (Do you get some intelligent laws banning guns now easily get)?

6. Being supportive of your child should be a goal in any given school. Together shows the child just how much you care, and there are many ways to achieve this.

Can you talk freely with your child about it's about the student handbook, a problem or idea you have for a special project? Calmly discuss an issue will give you are intelligent and caring. Share your ideas in a quiet meeting where they can be discussed in ways.

Knowing what affects a teacher's means of providing him or her support

- (1) whether the teacher has ADE (adequate) paper, books, dittos, computers, etc.
- (2) the physical environment - a quiet place, good lighting, enough heat;