

Helping your child achieve in school

A handbook for Southeast Asian parents

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INTRODUCTION

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Parental involvement as a means to improve education has recently attracted much attention from researchers. Study after study confirms the importance of what the parent does for the child in early childhood and through the school years. Parents who read with their children, give them books, ask them stimulating questions, etc... give their children a big boost toward success. Parent involvement has become one of the basic components in many blueprints for educational reform and educational legislations such as *America 2000: An Education Strategy* (U.S. Department of Education, 1991), *The Parent Involvement Initiative* (California Department of Education, 1988), and the Improvement of America's Schools Act, 1994.

Language minority parents often wonder how they can effectively help their children if they do not have English proficiency, a high level of education, and experience in the American educational system. On the other hand, school personnel often complain that language minority parents are “not concerned” with their children's education because the parents rarely attend school meetings.

The purpose of this book is to suggest ways in which Southeast Asian parents -even those who are not highly proficient in English or highly educated- can get involved in their children's education, both in the home and in school. Parental involvement links the school, the home, and the community. The report of trust and collaboration between the school and the home will greatly benefit language minority students in their school work and their adjustment to American society.

This sourcebook is prepared in English with versions in Vietnamese, Cambodian, Lao, and Hmong languages (printed separately). Parents are encouraged to read the English text first and try to understand it with the help of the glossary at the end of the chapter. The text in the primary language will provide them with content comprehension and the glossary that follows it will help

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parents build up their English vocabulary necessary to express in English what they know about the chapter. It should be noted that the text in the primary language is not a literal translation of the English text but, rather, a clarification, explanation, and expansion of the English text for better comprehension. The review questions will help the readers to assess whether they have correctly understood the chapter.

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ROLE OF HOME AND SCHOOL IN EDUCATION

Many parents still assume that the education of their children is the sole responsibility of the school. They often believe that parents' role is to provide children with shelter, food, clothing, and love, and that of the school is to provide for their educational needs. They seldom realize that *parents play a very important role in the achievement of children in school..* Children will be in a better position to succeed in school if they come to school well-prepared for school work. This preparation comes from parents. Parents may help or hinder the teachers in accomplishing their educational task.

There are *good reasons* for parents to be involved in school. First, it is of benefit to the parents themselves. They will get a realistic view of classroom situations, of the child's behavior in school, a better understanding of the school system, and the child's educational programs. The teachers and school can also benefit from parental involvement. They will better understand parents and their concerns about their children's education. In this way, a strong rapport of trust and collaboration between the home and the school can be established. The child will also benefit from parental involvement for, with their first-hand experience in school, parents can better help their child at home and help plan further educational and career objectives. On the other hand, the school will have the opportunity to consult parents about decisions affecting their child and be able to provide a curriculum which is more responsive to the child's needs.

The importance of parental involvement in the child's education and school activities has been recognized by teachers, administrators, and policy-makers. Marilyn Russell Bittle, President of California Teachers Association, believes that *"parents are teachers, too... They should become a partner with their schools in the teaching of their child. They can work along with the teacher to spark the curiosity, energy, and enthusiasm for learning"* (Fifty Ways to Help Your Children Lean, 1988).

The belief in the importance of parental involvement is supported by research evidence. Ann Henderson (1987), for instance, stated that *"involving parents in their children's formal education improves student achievement. It has been found that children whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school score*

higher (higher grades, higher test scores, more positive attitude and behavior) than children of similar aptitudes and family background whose parents are not involved. The school and the home must interconnect with each other, with the community, and the world at large for the improvement of education."

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Children are learning *all the time*, even outside school. They spend 91 percent of their lives from birth through the age 18 in places other than the school (Coleman, 1991). For a substantial part of that time, parents are their teachers. What they learn at school needs reinforcing and rewarding at home. A joint effort by parents and teachers is essential to deal more successfully with problems of discipline, motivation, and the development of good work habits at home and in school. According to Coleman (1991), parent involvement provides the "human and social capital" needed for the success of children in school. By *human capital* Coleman means the knowledge and skills that a person has, and by *social capital*, the relation between persons in the family and community. This relationship is a resource upon which the child can draw when there are difficulties and for parents to aid them in the shaping of the habits of their children.

Many parents have not been actively involved in school. They believe that real learning is done in school only. Others, because of the demands of the workplace, do not have time to address the concerns and problems of their children's education. Today, *"single-parent families abound, mothers working outside the home are the norm rather than the exception, and parents everywhere confront perplexing choices about how to use their time and energy"* (Coleman, 1991).

School districts often complain about language minority parents' "lack of concern" about their children's education and apathy toward school involvement. This attitude is due to misunderstanding of cultural and educational differences. The causes for language minority parents' lack of involvement in school may originate on the parents' side or on the school's side.

Many language minority parents come from unitary societies with *very centralized systems of education* in which parents have almost no role to play in the schooling of their children. The Ministry of Education controls every aspect of education, including curriculum, text books, graduation requirements and examination, teacher preparation, licensing, recruitment, and assignment.

Parents' non-involvement in school matters also derives from the belief that they should leave education to school personnel, who are experts. As lay people, they should not tell the experts what they should do in the field of their expertise. They also perceive academic education as the job of the school, not the parents', who are more concerned with *moral education and character training*. Hispanic and Asian parents, in particular, are reluctant to voice their concerns to school personnel. They believe that they are more helpful to the school if they refrain from interfering with school personnel's work.

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New immigrant parents frequently *lack the knowledge* about American customs and the operation of the school system, about instructional activities and programs of the local school, and about expectation for parent involvement. In order to encourage and facilitate immigrant

parents' involvement in school, school districts should help them understand how the U.S. educational system functions. They could, for instance, hold workshops for immigrant parents on the mechanics of the local school system and on school curriculum, programs, and regulations. In these workshops, parents who are knowledgeable are encouraged to instruct other parents.

Most language minority parents are not fluent in English. The *lack of English proficiency* prevents them from understanding what is being discussed and from expressing their views in conferences and meetings. The fear of embarrassment is one of the reasons that cause them not to attend those meetings. If the school can provide interpreters, hire native speaking staff to work with new immigrant parents, or have bilingual aides available when the parents visit the school or attend meetings, limited English proficient parents would be encouraged to become more involved in school.

Most language minority parents are new immigrants who are preoccupied with *economic survival*. It is not unusual for them to hold two jobs, occupying all their waking hours. Many of them also lack transportation and child care. As one Hispanic parent put it "My husband works two jobs and I have two babies. We got no time to go to school" (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990). To help overcome these obstacles, the school could hold activities in the evenings or weekends, provide childcare for parents who want to attend meetings, and provide transportation to and from activities. The school could also help arrange carpools or link parents to various groups and agencies in the community.

p. 6 Many new immigrant parents feel insecure about their ability to be involved in school because of *their limited education* and low proficiency in English. The school should convey a positive attitude to the parents who attend activities and meetings and let them know that their presence is *appreciated* and they are *important partners* in the education of their children. Although most language minority parents are reluctant or unable to be involved in school, they uniformly express *strong concerns and interest* in their children's education. Even though they doubt their ability to become involved in their child's schooling, most indicate that they would like to *learn more* about how to help (Davies, 1987).

In the past, the attitudes of some teachers and administrators may *have discouraged* language minority parents' involvement. Most school officials say that they want parent participation, but in practice they offer parents only limited opportunities for involvement (Admunson, 1988). According to Lontos (1992), many teachers tend to ignore poor and minority parents, believing that less-educated parents do not want to become involved in their children's education. Recent research findings show that these parents care deeply about their children's education and may not know how to help (Reeves, 1988). They want the school and *teachers to advise them* about how to help their children at home. Other teachers do not know how to involve less-educated parents and attribute the cause to parents' lack of ability and willingness to help (Epstein, 1983). Bob Chase, Vice-President of the National Education Association, says that for too long, some schools have made parents feel like intruders (McCormick, 1990). However, in the last few years praiseworthy efforts have been made by teachers and school personnel to

reach out and involve minority parents in the education of their children, both at home and in school (Liontos, 1992).

In the following pages, we shall consider the ways in which *Southeast Asian parents can help their children* at home and prepare them for better work at school. Although certain sections focus on ways to help children from kindergarten to grade six, the content of the whole book can be applied to students from kindergarten to senior high school.

Resource materials.

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Admunson, Kristen J. *First Teachers: Parent Involvement in Public Schools*. Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association, 1998.

Coleman, James S. *Policy Perspectives: Parent Involvement in Education*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1991.

Davies, Don. Parent Involvement in Public Schools: Opportunities for Administrators. *Education and Urban Society*, 19. 2., 1987.

Epstein, Joyce, *Effects on Parents of Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement*. Baltimore: Center for Social Organization of Schools, John Hopkins University, 1983

Fifty Ways to Help Your Children Learn. San Jose: Santa Clara Office of Education, 1988.

Liontos, Lynn Balster. *At Risk: Families and Schools Becoming Partners*. Eugene, Oregon: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 1992.

Mc Cormick, John. "Where Are the Parents?", *Newsweek*. Fall/Winter 1990.

Reeves, M. Sandra. "Self-Interest and the Common Weal: Focusing on the Bottom Half", *Education Week III*, 31, 1988.

PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AT HOME

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A. THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

1. An Environment Conducive to Learning

In order for the children to study well at school, at home parents must meet their *physical needs* and provide them with an *environment which is conducive to study*. Parents who do not fulfill these basic requirements tend to produce disorganized or unmotivated students.

In order to have a healthy mind which is indispensable for learning, children must have a *healthy body*. Parents should make sure that their children have regular physical exams which include proper immunization, regular dental exams, and regular eyesight and hearing

checkups. If your child has a medical problems, such as allergies or diabetes, that requires medication, you must inform school personnel for proper treatment procedures at school.

Proper nutrition gives your child the energy needed to perform well physically and academically. Avoid giving your child foods that are high in fat and sugar. Too much sugar makes it harder for your child to focus on school work. Fruits, nuts, raw vegetables are good food for him/her. Doctors now advise eating choices based on the “Food Guide Pyramid” disseminated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Another way to supply your child with energy is through *exercise* which helps activate brain chemicals for better attention and memory in class. Help your child choose physical activities that they enjoy doing and they can do on their own on a regular basis.

Sleep is very important to your child's health, When children do not get enough sleep, they become tired and irritable and their performance will suffer. Most experts recommend between eight and ten hours of sleep a night for children.

Children need *a place which is quiet, warm, well-lighted*, and well-furnished with instructional equipment and materials, such as paper, pencils, rulers, dictionaries and books. It is obvious that noise and movement distract children's attention and prevent them

p. 9 from concentrating. Therefore, the study area for children *should be free of music, conversation, TV and video viewing by other members of the family*. No real learning can take place in front of a television set. This environment can be provided by parents of any social status, any racial and ethnic background, and any level of education.

Also important for the child's learning climate is a positive *psychological and moral environment* in which the child is free from anxiety, worries, and frustration. A positive atmosphere in the home is recognized by parents' attitudes and aspirations for their children. If the parents have a strong belief in hard work and discipline, if they give encouragement and motivation, the children will do well in school. *A negative home atmosphere will hamper the work of even the most brilliant and hard-working child.*

A child's success in school is due less to superior talent than to *hard work and encouragement* from families and teachers. High achievers tend to be involved in a number of enrichment activities at home. In contrast, the family activities of underachievers focus on passivity and leisure.

THE FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID

p. 10 **2. Motivation and Self-Esteem**

In discussing the process of acquisition of knowledge and skills, authors often focus almost exclusively on cognitive and psychomotor domains. *Affective factors*, however, are also very important for the affect your child's sustained attention and interest in learning.

Motivation is very important to the learning process. If children are not motivated, they will not learn, despite the best efforts of the teachers. Children must *see and feel the need for learning*. Unless they see a need for and have an interest in learning, there is little incentive for them to learn. You can help motivate your children. You must indicate that you believe education is important and that you want your children to do the best they possibly can at school.

There are two kinds of motivation: 1. *Intrinsic motivation*. This is the need, desire, interest, and love for doing things that are rewarding. Think of the intrinsic motivation that children have when they first learn to walk, to talk, to explore things in their immediate environment. You should look for things that capture your children's interest and fan the inner fire in them.

2. *Extrinsic motivation*. This is the need or desire to do something for external reasons, such as stars, points, candies, or prospects for a better future. Attention and feedback from you also provides extrinsic motivation. Parental behavior may prompt motivation or dampen it.

Following is what parents can do to *motivate* their children:

- 1 Demonstrate your *value for learning*. Plan family activities that are both educational and fun, such as trips to a museum or nature walks. Let your child know how much you value education and the importance of education
- 2 *Show interest* in your child's education. Set aside a few minutes a day to discuss with your child alone things of interest. Know what interests your child.
- 3 *Sincere expectancy*. Make your child know that you want his best efforts in school. However, refrain from applying undue pressure to achieve
- 4 *Acknowledge efforts*. V Recognize your child for a job well done, or for the effort displayed even when the attempt is not successful. Help your child see the results of his efforts.

On the other hand, certain parental behavior may stifle motivation. These are some behaviors that may exert negative effects on children's motivation:

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- 5 *Not valuing* what your children pursue. Such statements as, "You waste your time on that novel!" have a negative effect on motivation to read.
- 6 *Interrupting your children's interest*. Avoid asking them to do something else when they are pursuing a learning activity: "Put that book down and water the garden," and so on.
- 7 *Focusing on mistakes*. Children certainly need to be corrected when they make mistakes or misbehave. This will help them know the right things to do. But do not focus on mistakes only. They also need to hear praises from you about what they do right to strengthen their courage and self-esteem.
- 8 *Personal attack*. Instead of calling the children "lazy", "careless", or "stupid", tell them what is wrong in what they did (for example: You haven't done your chores).

Children will learn better if they have good self-esteem. The family is the incubator of self-esteem and the most crucial social unit in a child's life and development. The early months and years of a child's life are the most decisive in establishing a solid base for self-esteem and personal character. The parent's high self-esteem is vital to his/her ability to provide a healthy environment for the child. Success in school is strongly related to self-esteem. A student with a

high IQ (talent or ability to learn) but low self-esteem may do poorly; but a student with average intelligence and high self-esteem may excel. People who esteem themselves are less likely to engage in destructive behavior. Critical decisions such as whether to use drugs, to drop out of school, to use violence and other personal and career decisions are affected by children's sense of self-worth. Children with low self-esteem are usually afraid to risk failure or to accept challenges, and often become underachievers. The lack of self-esteem is central to most personal and social ills. Helping your children develop high self-esteem is one of the most important things you can do for them.

High expectations are a must. They help build children's self-esteem. Esquith, the winner of the Walt Disney Teacher of the Year award, said: "There are no shortcuts. Because to develop a strong work ethics in kids we have to shatter that belief that

p. 12 "learning is always fun and easy", a belief promoted by most children's TV programs with their "keep them watching tempo" and computer programs with dazzling interactive graphics and sound effects. Consequently kids come to expect everything to be spoonfed fun and games. Sometimes learning is a snap, but *usually it is not*" (Reader Digest, September, 1995). Although learning activities should not be boring, we should not equate *education with entertainment*. Learning is a serious undertaking which requires *efforts and perseverance*.

You can help your children build self-esteem when you:

- 9 *Show love and respect.* Talk to your child about activities and interests and devote time to parent activities at school, such as going to their games, concerts, parents' day at school and award ceremonies. Children who feel that they are loved, respected and taken seriously, and who feel that they are responsible for and able to influence their own lives generally have high self-esteem.
- 10 *Listen to your child.* Children will learn that listening is important, and they will learn to listen to other people, including you. Hearing what other people have to say helps a child to cooperate, to negotiate, and to compromise, all of which are important to developing self-esteem.
- 11 *Attend to the good things* your child does, not just the bad.
- 12 Reward a job well done with recognition, praise, and privileges.
- 13 Work on building your child's feeling of self-worth along with *self-discipline*.
- 14 Take your child's feelings, ideas, and emotions seriously.
- 15 *Give responsibility* so that children feel useful and valued. This shows that you have confidence in them.
- 16 Stimulate your children's independence which help them grow into mature, responsible adults.
- 17 *Use language that builds self-esteem* such as, "What an excellent idea!" "It's very thoughtful of you," and so on.
- 18 *Set a good example.* You are role models for your children. Show to your child that you feel good about yourself.

Parents' attitudes and behavior can also destroy children's self-esteem. Negative attitude and statements, hurtful comments and sarcasm such as, "Why are you so stupid?" "You are absolutely worthless!" undermine children's confidence in themselves.

3. Scheduling

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You should work with your children on a work schedule and a set of rules to enforce it. The schedule should be consistent and include *time for study, relaxation, recreation, and sleep*. It should be noted that a child can learn a great deal from play as well as from study. It is important for you to help your child achieve the proper balance between study, homework, and television. Sandy Dornbusch (1987) believes that more television viewing is associated with lower grades. Expect your child to do homework each night. Ask him/her about homework and assignments. Let him/her know that you think doing homework is an important responsibility.

The rules should include the hours when the TV must be turned off, when the homework must be done, and what will happen if the homework is not completed. In many homes, homework must be finished before TV can be watched. In other homes, there is a regular study time, when everyone in the house reads or writes. The rules help your children develop good habits.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, three factors-absenteeism, the lack of varied reading materials in the home, and excessive TV watching - are reasons for nearly 90% of lower eight grade achievements in test scores. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley recommends:

- 19 - Expect your child to attend all classes and to be on time.
- 20 - Read to your child or help him in his homework one hour every day and have your child read to you. Provide him with plenty of reading materials at home.
- 21 - Limit your child's TV viewing. Studies show that academic achievements drop sharply for children who watch more than 10 hours of TV during the week (Reader's Digest, September 1995). Television has the marvelous ability to entertain and educate but it can also have negative effects on the child's behavior if it shows scenes of violence. Children sometimes can't figure out what is real and what is not on T.V. Therefore, parents should monitor their viewing and *discuss with them* on what is real and what is imaginary on TV programs. TV is useful in small doses. It should not be more than one hour a day for small children.

For older children, house rules also include what to do and not to do regarding partying, staying out late, drinking, and drugs. These are serious matters that affect the whole life of your child.

4. Monitoring and Discipline

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Monitoring is necessary for it will help you to know whether the schedule is observed. You could do the following things to help your child:

- 22 *Ask your child* about homework assignments and show them that doing homework is an important responsibility. Review with your child the bad consequences of not completing homework.

- 23 Be sure to check on homework each night. Ask children to make a note of any problems that will require assistance. If your child is in elementary grades, check, sign, and date his homework each night.
- 24 Be sure that all homework is *finished in proper form* and in *your child's backpack* before bedtime.
- 25 Ask to see work that teachers have returned. Pay close attention to teachers' comments and look for recurrent problems. Contact your child's teachers if you don't understand their assignment or if your child has special problems. Also contact them if they never assign homework.
- 26 See if your school has a homework policy.
- 27 Monitor your child's test scores and academic performance carefully, especially in subjects in which he or she has had trouble. Be prepared to ask teachers for help.
- 28 If your child complains about problems at school, ask for more information from your child and make appointments to meet with the teacher or counselor for help.
- 29 Review your *child's school records* each year. It is your right to examine your child's records.

Children should know the limits on their behavior and the positive or negative consequences of their actions. Not setting limits leads to confusion, unwillingness to accept responsibility, and a lack of self-control. This kind of behavior is often carried over into the classroom. Many authors believe that lack of parents' monitoring is a major cause of child behavior problems. By setting limits for your children, you teach them to become *self-disciplined*.

Parents should focus on the consequences of behavior and actions that do not conform to the rules of the home and the rules in school and society. These things are not stressed enough at school.

- p. 15 Make sure that your child understand all the rules and the penalties for breaking them. Treat your child with courtesy and love. Don't show anger. *Let him/her know that penalties are for their own benefits, not to assuage your anger.*

Children should be given the freedom of choice appropriate to their ability to choose, but they should be guided in their choice. Along with freedom of choice, your children must fully understand the consequences of their choice. Let your child know exactly what is expected of them and what the consequences will be if expectations are not met. Avoid the extremes of being too permissive or overly authoritarian. Parents who are strong but open to discussion and negotiation respond to good behavior with praise, bad behavior with restrictions, and offer help and encouragement to their children.

Be *consistent with your rules*. A few rules that are always enforced are more effective than many rules that are enforced only sporadically. Children get confused if the parents are not consistent with their rules. *Act quickly* when your child breaks a rule. Do not let a problem fester.

Parents should make it their responsibility to teach their children the basic rules of behavior rather than leave this task to teachers. Lack of discipline is one of the most important problems facing schools. Terry Lowe, 1994 NFL Teacher of the Year, said: "Too many parents are quick to back off when kids object or complain. They bail them out of stop spots and make excuses, or give in when the going gets tough" (Reader's Digest, Sept. 1995).

As the child grows older, be careful to eliminate certain rules that are no longer necessary. This will encourage independence. Parents should also support school rules and goals and avoid doing things that undermine them. When the family reinforces what is stressed at school, students are more likely to see the school and the home as related.

Parenting styles may affect the child's performance at school. Sandy Dornbusch (1987) believes that children with very permissive parents don't do well at school. Students with extremely authoritarian parents do even worse. Inconsistent parenting is even more strongly associated with lower grades than is either authoritarian or permissive parenting. *Authoritative* parenting, on the other hand, is linked with good grades. Authoritative parents are clear in their expectations and limits, are strong and consistent in applying

consequences, and alter the rules to fit the maturity of the child. The relation of the three parenting styles to grades is the same for both male and female students and more or less applies to all ethnic groups, family structures, and levels of parents' education.

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In Asia, behavior is closely monitored not only by families and schools but also by *neighborhoods*. There are always some adults in the home to supervise the children. In the U.S., the traditional Asian family structure has changed. Single parent families are not uncommon and in two-parent families, both parents may work outside the home. Often there is no adult available to supervise the children. Asian schools and laws usually tolerate, accept, and in some cases, even encourage corporal punishment for children's misbehavior. In the U.S., *corporal punishment has been abolished* in twenty-one states (including California) and the District of Columbia, and many school districts in all parts of the country have outlawed the use of corporal punishment in local public schools.

The Child Abuse Law provides that if parents use corporal punishment and this causes injury, they will be punished by law and the child may be taken away from the parents. Punishment that does not injure the child is acceptable. The child abuse law has serious implications for Asian parents who practice folk medicine to treat common cold and flu symptoms. This practice is commonly known as "metal scratching" or "coin rubbing". When a child catches a cold, Asian parents use a coin to rub vigorously on the child's back and forehead with medicated oil, "to get rid of the bad fluid and bad wind." This practice leaves marks on the child's body which look like bruises from physical abuse. Many Asian parents have run into trouble with the law because of this practice, in that school authorities think that the children have been abused and report the incidents to police. School staff are required by law to report any suspected or alleged child abuse or neglect. Failure to do so may result in a staff person being punished by law and losing the credential to teach. To avoid any trouble with the law, you

should *refrain from practicing this kind of folk medicine*, or should tell children to inform the teacher that the marks are the result of medical treatment and not physical abuse.

In the U.S. school environment, there are certain important issues that Southeast Asian parents should pay special attention to. Since these are not common in Southeast Asia, the parents may overlook them. Parents should know about the laws concerning

- p. 17 *tabacco, alcohol and other drugs*. Knowledge of the consequences of drug use, both physical and legal, will enable parents to talk about the serious consequences of this matter with their child and help him/her *avoid contracting drug habits*.

The Education Code states that “no school shall permit the smoking or use of tabacco, or any product containing tobacco by pupils while in school or while attending school-sponsored activities.” (E.C. 48901, a) The Business and Professional Code states that “Every person who sells, furnishes, or gives away any alcoholic beverage to a person under the age of 21 is guilty of a misdemeanor” and “Any person under the age of 21 years who has any alcoholic beverage in his possession on any street or highway or in any public place is guilty of a misdemeanor.” Driving under the influence of alcohol (that is having blood alcohol concentration of 0.01 percent or greater) is unlawful. Many accidents and deaths have been caused by drunk-driving. Possession of marijuana and other controlled substance is illegal and shall be punished by imprisonment (Health & Safety Code 11351). *Parents are held responsible* for permitting their children to engage in illegal practices.

Let your child know that *you do not tolerate the use of alcohol and drugs*, which are illegal. You should not allow your child to attend parties where alcohol and drugs *will be served*. Set a good example related to alcohol and drugs. Children usually imitate what you do more than following what you say.

Sex and venereal diseases, especially AIDS, are other concerns of parents in this country. In Southeast Asian cultures, parents avoid talking about sex and venereal diseases with their children altogether, for fear of arousing their curiosity and their bad instincts. Even in this country, Southeast Asian parents feel uncomfortable talking about those subjects with their children. However, your children need to know the facts about these subjects in order to gain protection against unwanted pregnancy and venereal diseases, especially AIDS, which is contagious and deadly. Classes in these subjects are taught at school and your permission is needed for your child to be enrolled in those classes. If you object to sex education, you may request in writing that your child not be instructed in sex education and venereal diseases. (Education Code 51240).

- p. 18 Certain community agencies disseminate publications about those subjects. It's a good idea to have your children read this information and enrolled in courses on venereal diseases for *ignorance is not a good protection against social diseases and unwanted pregnancy*.

5. Establishing Good Study Habits

Help your child establish good organizational habits. Disorganized persons waste a lot of time finding their things. The better organized the students, the less work they have to do to achieve excellence. Make sure that your child has in his school pack the necessary tools, such as a notebook, a pencil case with pens that write and pencils that are sharpened. Labeled folders will help keep assignments organized. A daily assignment calendar helps keep track of assignments.

Help your child acquire *good study skills and strategies* which can be applied to the study of any subject matter. Your child should know how to gather information and ideas, and how to record, analyze, and synthesize information. They should know to review, summarize, and use mnemonic devices to help remember facts and figures. When studying written materials, they should know how to underline the key words, and then outline the main ideas and the main parts of a passage. The section headings help organize the ideas in a chapter. The important words are usually darker or printed in italic type. Ask your children questions about assignments and encourage them to ask their teachers for clarification.

Encourage your children to *visit the school or local library* frequently and establish good library habits, such as returning books on time. Suggest that they look up a topic in the library catalog, periodical guides, and reference books. The librarian will help them get started. Encourage your children to ask the librarian for help in locating needed materials. Most libraries have information and referral services, so even if they can't give you the help you need, they will point you in the right direction.

6. Communication With Your Child.

Set aside *a time each day* to communicate with your child about what happened that day at school. Be available to listen to

your child's concerns and opinions about teachers, courses, and policies. Take time to listen to your child when there is a problem or a rule he/she wants to discuss with you. Show enthusiasm for your child's interests, listen and be responsive to his/her concerns. Be ready to extend help. Share your feelings without lecturing; use "I" statements more often than "you" statements. Communicate with your child about each problem that develops, then contact the appropriate school staff person to help you resolve it. p. 19

Research (*PTA Talks to Parents*) has shown that the average American 12-year old child communicates with his/her parents for only 14 and a half minutes per day. Another recent survey cited that American parents "talk seriously" to their children less than 3 minutes per week. Open communication should be maintained between parents and children. It shows your love, care, and concern. It encourages self-expression, develops good speech habits and patterns, exposes your child to different ideas and opinions, and helps your child avoid behavior problems.

In Asia, meal time and after meal time are the times for the whole family to *gather together*. In the United States, even Southeast Asian parents have little time or opportunity to be in contact with their children because of job schedule. As a language minority parent, it is natural that you are more comfortable in talking to your child in your native language. Contrary to some beliefs among English monolingual teachers, this does not interfere with your child's acquisition of English. In school and in the larger community, your child has plenty of opportunity to learn English in the natural way.

You should avoid constant criticism and nagging. It is important to remember that negative comments, such as sarcasm, "put-down" remarks, or empty threats can bring about a breakdown of communication. Praises and positive suggestions will foster your child's self-esteem.

If your children cannot communicate with you, they will look for somebody else with whom to share their feelings, probably a peer who might have a negative influence on your child. Antisocial behavior is often linked to a communication breakdown between parents and children.

Communicating and demonstrating your values is *the key to developing them in your child*. One of the strongest ways to communicate values is by setting examples.

- p. 20
- 30 *Act the way you want your child to act.* Consider what values you want to teach and show that you live by them daily.
 - 31 *Practice what you preach.* By your example you can help your child develop good manners, appropriate language, awareness of dress and appearance, self-respect, and self-esteem.

Communication skills are influenced by the examples children see and hear. Parents who listen to their children with interest, attention, and patience set a good example. Listen to nonverbal messages communicated by the tone of voice or the facial expressions and avoid cutting children off before they have finished speaking.

Maintenance of the primary language in the home is the most essential factor for parent-children communication, especially when the parents do not speak English. It's easier for your children to learn your primary language since a baby than for you to become proficient in English in the same amount of time (5- 6 years).

Resources

- 32 Baron, Bruce. et al. *What Did You Learn in School Today?* New York: Warner Books, 1983.
- 33 Cutright, Melitta J. *The National PTA Talks to Parents: How to Get the Best Education for Your Child.* Doubleday, 1989.
- 34 Dornbusch, Sanford et al. "The Relationship of Parenting Style to Adolescent School Performance" *Child Development* 58 (5), 1987.
- 35 Ely, D.F. and Associates (1988) *California Laws Relating to Minors*. Harcourt, Brace, Janovich.

- 36 *Information for Parents* Complete set of 12 brochures. Washington DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- 37 Perrone, Vitto. *101 Educational Conversations with Your Kindergartner/1st Grader*. Chelsea House, 1993.
- 38 *Reader's Digest*, September 1995.
- 39 Rich, Dorothy. *MegaSkills: How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1988.
- 40 State of California Department of Justice(1984). *Law in the School*. Sacramento. California Department of Justice

B. HELPING YOUR CHILD AT HOME,

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1. Preparing for School

The American school system assumes that *parents will take responsibility* for preparing their children for school and later reinforcing what is taught in the classroom. Southeast Asian parents should provide their children with necessary developmental experiences (cognitive, social, emotional) that help ensure success in school. If the children enter school without readiness skills, they will be "at risk" for school failure.

In order to prepare their children for the American public school, parents must do certain things in the preschool years to help their children acquire the skills that are expected from kindergarteners. You should talk to and read to your children and encourage the development of their curiosity which lays the foundation for academic skills. Talking about interesting topics develops a strong vocabulary, which is important to school success.

You should also develop *good social skills* in your children. With these skills, your children will deal more successfully with their peers, teachers, school personnel, and other people later in life. Your children should acquire the skills to:

- 41 - Get along with others, to work in a group, and to enjoy socially with other children.
- 42 - Accept differences in other people.
- 43 - Stand up for themselves in conflict, stand by their ideas and conviction and to disagree tactfully.
- 44 - Show courtesy and respect to other people.
- 45 - Know when and how to seek for help from adults.

Southeast Asian parents should realize that out-of-school educational activities, such as trips to parks, zoos, museums, and libraries, provide a base of experience for understanding and reinforcing what the children learn in class. School-aged children should spend up to twenty hours a week engaged in constructive *learning activities outside the classroom*, such as reading for fun, writing, pursuing hobbies, watching educational programs, talking to adults about the day's events, or participating in sports.

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2. Helping with Homework

Homework supplements and reinforces the work done in class. It develops students' initiative and responsibility. According to Rumbaut, Southeast Asian children excel in school because they devote more time to homework than other ethnic groups, and because they have the support of their families in their education. (Ruben Rumbaut and Kenji Ima, 1988)

Parents and teachers *have different roles and activities*. The teacher, with professional training, is primarily responsible for planning, teaching, selecting materials, identifying specific skills and objectives to be worked on. The parent needs not have the professional and technical knowledge of the teacher and is responsible for *motivating, encouraging, monitoring, and providing opportunities for the child to practice what he learns at school*. The home provides an atmosphere of love, encouragement, in which the fear for other children's competition and the fear for loss of face is absent. In this way, the child can learn better in a more relaxed way, not pressured by time.

You should develop *homework habits* in your child by starting when he/she is still young. You should create a time and a place for your child to do his homework. Set aside an hour each day for your child to read a book, draw, or write. The amount of time spent on homework varies according to the child's age, abilities, and the teacher's requirements. According to the National Parent Teachers Association, students from kindergarten to the third grade generally have little homework, no more than twenty minutes per day, while students from the fourth to sixth grade usually have from twenty to forty minutes per day, and high school students usually spend about two hours each night for homework (Cutright, 1989).

Visit your child's school and get yourself oriented. Get to know your child's teacher. Seek out *the teacher's advice* if you don't know how to get started on your work at home with your child. You should ask your child's teachers about their homework policies and specific assignments. You should provide resources at home for reading and learning academics. Books and magazines should be available.

You should show your child that you believe reading is both enjoyable and useful. You should set a good example by reading yourself and reading with or to your child. Many parents can check to see if the child understands homework assignments. If your child

p. 23 has trouble, work out examples with him , give clarification, show the procedure, then encourage him to complete the work himself. *Do not do your child's homework for him*. If you do, you will deprive him of the opportunity to learn, not only in academic skills, but also responsibility and the natural consequences of behavior. These habits are far more important than completing the assignment. Moreover, if the assignment is well done (by the parent), the teacher may not see the child's academic difficulty and will not give the help *that the child needs*

Encourage students, especially those who live in the same neighborhood or apartment complex, to form study groups of two or three, working together on home work. According to

Dornbusch (1987), studying with friends is associated with higher grades, while hanging out, partying, and talking on the phone are associated with lower grades.

If you cannot give direct help because of your language and educational backgrounds, *consider getting a tutor*, who may be an older sibling, older relative, or a college student. It is common in Southeast Asia to hire a private tutor, usually a retired teacher or a college student, to help children's work at home and reinforce what they learn at school. The following activities are examples of how you may help your child at home. Remember your role is not to substitute the teacher but to reinforce what the child is taught at school and make him ready for school work. These activities are more related to children from K to 8. If children of this age group are helped, they will form a good learning habit and they will do better when they reach the high school age.

a. Language Arts

*** *Listening and speaking***

From the moment your child was born, learning began. Talk to your child from infancy. Make sounds, call attention to sounds and connect them with objects and events to associate speech with meaning. Hearing you talk will encourage your child to experiment with sounds. This will develop the oral language necessary for other language skills. Take time to listen and to speak with your child every day. When your child grows older, answer questions patiently and as promptly as possible. Play games with your child that require careful listening. Listen to your child carefully. *Stress the importance of proper speech and pronunciation.*

Be sure to talk and listen to your child about the school activities *every day*. Ask specific questions about what song he learns or what book he reads at school. It takes only a few minutes but it is a language activity that will become a worthwhile habit, facilitating open communication between parent and child. Encourage your child to listen and talk so that he/she can understand what is being said and he can ask questions and exchange ideas clearly. In this way he will apply language in following instructions, participate in discussion and debates at school. It is important to learn English but it is equally important not to neglect your primary language. Be confident that your child will naturally acquire English fluency at school. At home, pay attention to develop fluency and literacy in your home language. It is more helpful for your child if you communicate fluently in *your primary language than in broken and limited English*.

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*** *Reading***

This is a critical area of learning. It is required in all classwork. According to Richard and Mary Behm (Behm, 1995) you are your child's first and best teacher. They believe that learning to read and write starts at home and not in school. During your child's years of childhood, you serve as a model which forms an attitude in your child regarding the use of language in learning. A supportive home environment in which language is valued will build a positive attitude toward learning through reading and writing.

Read to your child if he or she cannot read yet. Bedtime story is a good way to introduce reading to your child. It's fun for both of you when you choose a favorite book from your childhood and read a few pages a night. If your child can read, then encourage him to read to you. Make a pleasant experience of the event. Let your child choose a favorite story then explain pictures and answer questions about it. Encourage your child to read by praising and rewarding his/her reading efforts. Discuss what the class is reading in school. He/she gains enjoyment and inspiration from reading.

My first experience with reading was when my parents received a letter from my grandmother. At that time, the mail was the only means of communication in our country. The telephone did not exist in private homes yet. After reading the letter, my parents told me about grandma's health and added : "Grandma sent her hello to

p. 25 you". I was amazed and asked myself how they could understand what my grandmother wanted to say *without talking to my grandma*.

They read the letter to me and pointed to the line containing my name. I really was impressed. Then my father sat down in front of me and began writing the answer to my grandmother's letter. He read it to me and asked whether I wanted to convey something special to my grandma in addition to what he wrote. Even I was not at school age yet, he inspired in me a burning desire to go to school and learn how to read and write to correspond with my grandmother. Unfortunately, nowadays people use the phone instead of writing letters as in the old days and the children lack one type of *strong motivation* for reading and writing .

Reading proficiency requires skills in decoding and comprehension. Getting the meaning of a written passage is the purpose of reading. But unless he can decode the written message correctly, he will not be able to comprehend it. You can help your child master the decoding process by asking him to keep a "personal reading dictionary" in which he will record on a page words having the same letter representing the same sounds that he encounters in his reading (for instance words like pat, mat, sad...). Then on another page he will record words having the same letter but representing another sound (for instance say, day, pay...). If he keeps recording new words *from his reading* for a whole school year, he will master the pronunciation patterns of English letters and greatly improve his decoding skills, without having to memorize pronunciation rules or word lists which are not really helpful. Comprehension requires the skills of identifying the main idea as well as the details of the story, making inferences, summarizing, and drawing conclusions. The competent reader can also recognize the difference between fact and opinion and understand different types of writing such as biography, poetry, fiction, non-fiction.

Encourage your child to use dictionaries, encyclopedias, and atlases. Set a good example by *reading yourself*. Your enjoyment of reading shows that it is a rewarding and worthwhile activity. Also introduce your child to the public library at an early age. Encourage your child to bring his/her reading book home. She would be delighted to read to you, showing how capable she is. Be sure to praise her for her efforts. Encourage her to talk about the story she reads and discuss favorite characters and interesting events

* **Writing**

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Writing is important for communication in society and work. Let your child see that you write. Encourage your children to write letters to relatives and friends instead of using only the telephone, to keep a diary of important events, and to read completed writing assignments aloud to the family. Your child should be supplied with writing materials, stationery, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. Writing is the most advanced language skill, particularly for second language learners. Reading often helps the brain recognize the correct patterns and results in better writing.

For young children you can ask their help with writing a grocery list. You may try having your child copy down the brand name of one item you need. At the store your child can look for that item, match the word on the list to the name of the item. Give him a pencil so that he can cross out items as you put them into a cart.

For older children, you can ask them to keep a diary. Each night you can talk to them about what happened during the day and ask them to write down important things that happened. A competent writer is recognized by the organization of ideas and correct language; sentence structure, word form, appropriate vocabulary, good writing mechanics, use of research skills, good handwriting and typing skills.

Writing skills have been declining among US pupils, especially in the area of spelling. The written words suffer from the competition from telephone and greeting cards with ready made wishes. In order to help your child build a good groundwork for the study of spelling, ask him/her to keep a "personal spelling dictionary" in which he will record on a page words from his own reading that have the same sound represented by the same letter/s (such as the sound /i:/ (ë) represented by "ea" in sea, pea, bean, cream...). Then on another page he will record words having the same sound /i:/ but represented by other letter/s (such as "ee" in meet, heed, keep...). This will help him master the spelling patterns of English sounds, without memorizing any rules, which is most cases, suffer too many exceptions.

If the school does not teach your home language literacy, find a way to provide literacy instruction outside of school. Many communities use churches, schools, or community centers for class, and volunteer teachers are found within the community. Once basic literacy is learned, provide reading materials (newspapers,

magazines, dictionaries, novels, and so on) in your home language. *Maintenance of the primary language in the home is of the most important factors that contribute to the strength and coherence of the family.* p. 27

b. Mathematics

Mathematics and science are important not only for school success but also for success in our society. Your child's feelings and interest in math and science are *formed in elementary school*. You can help your child develop good feelings, interest, and excitement in learning math and

science. Take every opportunity to expose your children to people and situations that can reinforce the importance of math and science. You can use everyday life activities and concrete objects such as pencils, books, apples, marbles, block, cubes, rods, to teach the basic concepts of math to your child in a manner interesting and appropriate for the age group. For example you can drop 3 marbles in a jar and have the child count as you drop additional marbles: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 etc... They can learn addition and subtraction by counting and looking at actual objects. Use familiar situations to reinforce counting.

You can use grocery trips to teach math to your child. Point out costs and weights of items. Let your child pay the cashier and count the change. You can connect games and puzzles played at home with the math taught in school. Play games requiring math skills, such as sorting, comparing, sequencing, and estimating.

Estimating is one of the essential skills in math. It can enrich counting, measurement, and problem-solving. Help your child practice measuring things in the house. Have the child take measurements of his bedroom with a tape measure while you write down the dimensions and ask the child to read the measurements. Time is among the things to be measured. You can ask your child how long it will take to walk from your house to school and compare with the time it will take if you drive him to school. Age is another measurement. You can help your child with measurement by making comparison of his age and the age of his classmates.

It should be noted that the United States still uses the English measurement system (inches, feet, miles, pounds, gallons, and so on), while Southeast Asians are more familiar with the metric system. Parents should pay special attention to this new measurement system when they help their child with mathematics.

p. 28 Math is more than just adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. It also involves problem solving. The child can apply math skills in practical situations. For solving a math problem, it is essential that your child acquire the following skills:

- 46 - *Reasoning*. The child must understand the steps involved in working and solving a math problem. This ability will help carry over the process from one problem to another. It will also help him to apply mathematics to analyze and understand situations he encounters in real life.
- 47 - *Patterns*. Children need to see patterns and regularity in math and ways of organizing mathematical facts. This ability will help them apply what they have learned to what they have not yet learned.
- 48 - *Practice*. Children need to practice the basic computation skills so that they can remember them and use them correctly. Mathematics skills disappear very quickly without practice.

c. Science

Students learn science best through hands-on experience, by handling physical objects, doing experiments, exploring things in the field, and asking questions about what they see in those

situations. Help your child learn about animals and plants by visiting zoos, parks, botanical gardens, and aquariums. Discuss nutrition and health, life cycle, and the human body and its various functions. Allow your child to operate equipment such as calculators, cameras, stereos, computers, and science kits. Outdoor experience such as camping and hiking is helpful for your child to understand science. Encouraging children to wonder “why” things happen is good motivation for using science to find out the answers.

Showing your interest in your child's work at school. Ask him/her what he/she did in mathematics and science. Allow time for the child to explain and continue to show interest and support. Learning that takes place at school should be reinforced by activities or projects that takes place in the home or the community. You should encourage your child to join science clubs and participate in science fairs at school. You may have more information on this subject by writing to :

American Association for the Advancement of Science

Office of Opportunities in Science

1333 H Street NW

Washington D.C. 20005

d. Social Studies

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Discuss with your children current events in the media, and consider the impact that these may have on your community and family. Take your child to visit historical sites and museums. Attend fairs, exhibits, or celebrations to gain awareness of cultural differences. Play games to develop skills in geography. Have a current world and state map in the house, and let children help find the way to destinations on street maps.

Encourage your children to get to know other children and to get along with them peacefully. This is important in America, where people from so many countries and cultures live and work side by side.

There are many publications by school districts, county offices of education or state departments of education showing parents how to help their children. Some of these publications have been translated into other languages to help language minority parents.

Resources

- 49 *Becoming A Nation Of Readers: What Parents Can Do*. Consumer Information Center, Department 116, Pueblo CO 91009.
- 50 *Books for Children*. Consumer Information Center, Department 116, Pueblo CO 81009.
- 51 *Family Math*. Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley CA 94702.

- 52 *The Family Math Film*. 16mm film or video showing the kinds of activities that parents and children can do together. Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley CA 94702.
- 53 *Fifty Ways to Help Your Children Learn at Home*. California Teachers Association and National Education Association. Translation into Spanish, Chinese, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, and Korean. Santa Clara County Office of Education, 100 Skyport Drive, San Jose CA 95115.
- 54 *How to Help Your Child Succeed in School*. Columbus Gas Educational Services. P.O. Box 117, Columbus OH 43216-0117 (video and brochure).
- 55 *Parenting Curriculum for Language Minority Parents.*, 1995. Cross-Cultural Resource Center. California State University, Sacramento. 580 University Ave., Ste. A, Sacramento, CA 95825. Translation into Vietnamese, Chinese, Lao, Hmong, Spanish, and Korean.

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C. PREPARING FOR COLLEGE AND THE WORLD OF WORK

1. Preparing for College

If you want your child to attend college, start preparing well before the senior year of high school. Beginning in ninth grade, classes and grades become part of the transcript which is used by colleges in consideration of students. With the advice of the counselor in your child's school, help your child choose the right high school coursework for college preparation.

There are two different stages of preparation.:

1) In *elementary grades*, your child must acquire proficiency in the subjects needed for preparatory courses in high schools: English, Mathematics, and Science. Most important is English. Your child must reach a level of proficiency comparable to that of peers who are native speakers of English. Tutors who are older siblings, relatives, or college students may be needed for helping your child at home. English proficiency does not mean simply speaking fluently in English, but more importantly, *competency in reading and writing English* which is indispensable for successful college work.

2) With a solid knowledge in English, Math and Science in elementary grades, your child is ready for the second stage of preparation *at the high school level*. Decisions about courses taken in high school will influence a child's future in college and in a career. Talk with your child about the courses he chooses. He might be deciding only on the basis of a friend's preference or who is the most popular teacher. Have him discuss with the school counselor for guidance. Your child should take algebra in the ninth grade or in the tenth, at the latest. Scientific and engineering careers involve using a lot of mathematics every day. At the high school level your child should be enrolled in mathematics courses every year. Students who do not take mathematics in their last year of high school often have trouble in college. In order to do well in college, your child must take more high school mathematics and science courses than a college's minimum admission requirements.

In order to be admitted to four-year colleges, your child must have a high school diploma. The requirements for this diploma consist of *required course works* which are determined by school districts and *proficiency tests* required by the State. Your child must complete 4 years of high school with a total of 220 credits.

As an example, the required courses of Huntington Beach Union High School District include (1995):

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- 56 - English: 4 years
- 57 - World Geography: 1/2 year
- 58 - World History: 1 year
- 59 - U.S. History: 1 year
- 60 - U.S. Government: 1/2 year
- 61 - Economics: 1/2 year
- 62 - Mathematics: 3 years, one year must be in the senior year
- 63 - Visual/Performing Arts, Foreign Language or Applied Curriculum (one year must be in either Visual/ Performing Arts or Foreign Language)
- 64 - Physical Education (P.E.): 2 years
- 65 - Science: 2 1/2 years, (minimum of one year each in Physics and Biology, 1/2 year in Heath)

Your child must pass Proficiency tests in State required areas:

- 66 - Reading
- 67 - Language Arts
- 68 - Mathematics
- 69 - Writing
- 70 - Computer Education

Good scores on College entrance tests also help your child to get into colleges. If your child does well on tests, colleges may be willing to overlook some mediocre grades. If he/she does not do well, then colleges must give the other parts of his application more weight. The tests supposedly measure how well your child can think in different areas. The main tests are PSAT, SAT, ACT and Achievements. Teachers or guidance counselors usually get the registration packets for college entrance tests in the fall. Registration deadlines are five to six weeks before the tests are to be taken.

The *PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test)* can be taken during October in any grade, except for senior year. Students who do well on the test in the junior year may be eligible for scholarships to college. The *SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)* is a three-hour test. These two tests have exactly the same kind of questions on math (with focus on algebra, geometry, and number sense) and on reading (with focus on vocabulary). When your child registers for the test, make sure to have him/her sign up to participate in the *Student*

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Search Service. This service provides students' names to colleges that want to tell interested high school students about programs and financial aid opportunities. In the 9th grade, your child should take the test for the experience. In the 10th grade, he should take it for practice. Then after good preparation, he should take it again in the 11th grade for a good score.

The *ACT (American College Testing)* gives four major results: math, English, science reasoning, and reading. The math part focuses on algebra and geometry. The English part stresses grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure. The science reasoning tests logic and common sense in science rather than science knowledge. The reading test asks questions about given passages for reading.

The *Achievement tests* are designed to test knowledge, not aptitude. They are one hour, multiple choice tests in different subjects: 2 in math, 2 in English, 2 in history, 3 in science, and 5 in languages. Only top colleges require achievement tests.

You and your child should consult the High School counselor for more details about these tests and how to prepare for them.

In addition to the grades and test scores, colleges will usually ask your child to *write good* essays, submitted with his/her college application, dealing with his personal experiences, ideas, or feelings. This is a measure to predict how well your child will handle tests and papers in college. Teacher recommendations are also necessary for your child's application. Generally, colleges like an 11th or 12th grade teacher to write this recommendation.

There are certain things you can do to *help your children with test taking*:

- 71 - Make sure that your child has enough sleep and a good breakfast before the test.
- 72 - Encourage your child to study regularly rather than just the night(s) before the test.
- 73 - Encourage your child to listen carefully to all test-taking directions given before the test.
- 74 - Keep track of your child's test scores and find out what they mean. You may ask help from the teacher, counselor, or a knowledgeable friend.

To be considered for admission to the University as a freshman, a student must meet the admission requirements of that University. Following are the admission requirements of the University of California, Irvine for the academic year 1994-95.

- p. 33
- 75 - *Subject requirement.* The student must have successfully completed a specific sequence of high school courses, which must be certified as "Courses to Meet Requirements for Admission to the University of California" by the school principal.
 - 76 * US History/ Social Science: 2 years required. One year of U.S. history or one half-year of US history and one half-year of civics or American government and one year of world history, cultures, and geography.
 - 77 * English : Four years of college preparatory English required. (Not more than two semesters of ninth grade English will be accepted for this requirement.)
 - 78 * Mathematics: 3 years required (4 recommended) which should include elementary algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra)

- 79 * Laboratory science: 2 years required (3 recommended). This should include at least two of the fundamental disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics.
- 80 * Foreign language : 2 years of the same language (3 years recommended).
- 81 * College preparatory electives : 2 years. These will be chosen from at least two of the following areas : History, English, advanced math, social science, and visual and performing arts.
- 82 It will take 15 units of high school work to complete the subject requirements. Also at least 7 of the 15 units must have been earned in courses taken during the last two years of high school. It is highly recommended that students complete more than the required 15 units of academic work
- 83 - *Scholarship Requirement*. This requirement defines the grade point average (GPA) that the student must attain in the required subjects to be eligible for admission to the University. If the GPA is 3.3 or higher, the student has met the minimum requirement for admission to the University. Honor courses will be assigned extra points. Your child's courses and grades in the junior year and the fall semester of the senior year are the most important. He should put forth *extra effort in those last three semesters*.
- 84 - *Test Requirement*. All Freshman applicants must submit test scores:
- 85 - One aptitude test.
- 86 - Three Scholastic Assessment tests.

Most competitive colleges have application deadlines, between November 30th and February 15th. Your child should check those deadlines carefully and get the application sent off as soon as they are properly filled out.

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2. The Choice of a College

There are several ways to get a college education. Some of the post-secondary school choices are described below.

Community colleges admit students with a high school diploma or equivalent, or students over the age of eighteen. The study usually lasts for two years and results in achievement of the Associate in Arts degree (AA). After graduation, students may transfer to a four-year college, or may enter the work-force with technical skills. The students should consult with their college advisor for course work *required for transfer* if they decide to go on to the four-year college after graduation.

Four-year colleges and universities. Different colleges and universities have different requirements, but they all require a moderate to high grade point average (GPA) and many require that applicants take a college aptitude test. The university's *undergraduate application packet*, available from any campus, will give detailed information on admission requirements. The high school counselor can help your child choose the right courses and select a college where he will be most successful.

The first four years of college are called undergraduate studies. The graduation leads to the Bachelor's degree (B.A.) After the B.A., the student pursues his graduate education for one or

two years leading to the Master's degree (M.A.). After the Master's, two or more years lead to the Doctor's degree (Ph.D.). Some fields of study requires more years than others

It should be noted that the value of public and private universities in the U.S, *differs greatly* from that of public and private universities in Asia or Europe. In Asia and Europe, *public universities are more prestigious* than private universities. They are also tuition free. Contrarywise, the most *prestigious universities in the U.S. are private universities* (Harvard, Yale, MIT, Columbia, Stanford, for instance) and tuition fees are much higher than in public universities.

U.S. public universities are the state universities. Usually they are rather large and receive state support. As a result, they are

p. 35 inexpensive for in-state residents. Classes tend to be quite large. Most state universities offer a broad range of majors. Several state universities have an exceptional reputation, among them the University of California system, the New York system and the University of Michigan system.

Private colleges tend to be smaller, more academically thorough, more prestigious, and in, many cases, very wealthy. Although the tuition and expenses are quite high, there is usually plenty of financial aid. Students tend to know their professors better and find it easy to approach them when they have problems. For a list of well-known public and private colleges and universities in California, see page 37.

3. Financial Aid

There are several sources for financial aid for students whose family cannot afford to pay all the expenses. Financial aid is awarded in most cases on the *basis of need*. The financial status of the student's family is what determines the financial aid. If a family can afford to pay, then they are expected to pay their shares. If the family cannot pay, then the student is eligible for financial aid. The Financial Aid Form (FAF) is put out and processed by the College Scholarship Service (CSS). This form is available on January 1st. The CSS uses the IRS tax return for much of the information on which they base their evaluation but income, assets, property, size of family, dependent or independent student status, will be considered as well. There are several types of aid:

- 87 - *Scholarships* are awarded on the basis of academic ability, achievement, and promise. They do not require repayment. Although a few honorary scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic ability alone, many require that an applicant demonstrate financial need.
- 88 - *Grants* are awarded on the basis of financial need and do not require repayment. Sources of funds are the federal government, state government, and the University of California. Grants are awarded to students who demonstrate the greatest financial need. To apply for federal or state assistance, request the form "Student Aid Application for California" from the university or from the California Student Aid Commission, 1401 Fifth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814..

- 89 - *Loans* provide the students with an opportunity to borrow to pay the cost of educational expenses now and pay later. Interests must be paid on the amount borrowed. They are relatively low. The student must repay loans, generally after graduation or withdrawal from school. p. 36
- 90 - *Work-study* allows the students to gain work experience and to pay for educational expenses from what they earn. Funds for this program are from the federal government and from the university. Because of limited funding for this program, not many work-study awards are available.

Information on different kinds of financial aid (federal, state, private) will be obtained from your child's high school counselor or the financial aid office of the university your child is applying for. They can help you explore financial aid for your child's study.

4. Preparing for the World of Work

Many students make decisions about career in junior high or middle school. Your child should be prepared to make *informed decisions*. The teacher and school counselor can help him with information on career and studies after high school graduation. If you and your child decide that after high school he/she enters the world of work instead of going on to college, there is the Regional Occupational Program (ROP) which allows students to become acquainted with specific jobs thus assisting in career exploration and related decisions. Some ROP courses also fulfill subject requirements for high school graduation. The ROP counselor can give you detailed information on ROP course offerings which cover many fields.

Post-high school training is offered by Trade/Technical school or apprentice programs. Community Colleges also offer technical/trade training in a variety of fields. The best source of information and advice is the Guidance Counselor or the Career Center of your child's high school. There are many careers your child can learn in two years or less. Hundreds of private vocational schools in California are accredited, with tuition ranging from \$500 to \$3,000. Financial aid is often available.

Apprentice programs offer paid employment while in training for a career, classroom instruction in subjects related to the occupation, and opportunities to become qualified with state-issued

credentials. For information about apprenticeship application and other opportunities for on the job training, contact: p. 37

California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Apprenticeship Standards 28 Civic Center Plaza, Room 525 Santa Ana, CA 92701

Public Universities in California:

The University of California System consists of a number of campuses in various locations. Following are their mailing addresses:

Berkely : 120 Sprout Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720. (510) 642-3175

Davis: 175 Mark Hall, Davis, CA 95616. (916) 752-2971

Irvine: 245 Administration, Irvine, CA 92717. (714) 854-6703

Los Angeles: 1147 Murphy Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90024. (310) 825-3101

Riverside: 1100 Administration Building, Riverside, CA 92521. (909) 787-4531

San Diego: 9500 Gilman Dr., La Jolla, CA 92093. (619) 534-4831

San Francisco: 3rd Ave. & Parnassus, San Francisco, CA 94143 (415) 476-9000

Santa Barbara; 1210 Cheadle Hall, Santa Barbara, CA. 93106. (805) 893-2485

Santa Cruz: Cook House Administration, Santa Cruz, CA 95064. (408) 459-4008

The California State University System has a greater number of campuses. Following are their mailing addresses:

California State College, Bakersfield: 9001 Stockdale Highway, Bakersfield, CA 93309. (805) 664-3036

CSU, Chico: 1st and Normal Streets, Chico, CA 95929. (916) 898-6321

CSU Dominguez Hills: 1000 E. Victoria Street, Carson, CA 90747. (310) 516-3600

CSU Fresno: 5241 N. Maple, Fresno, CA 93740. (209) 278-6283

p. 38 CSU Fullerton: Fullerton, CA 92634. (714) 773-2370

CSU Hayward : Hayward, CA 94542. (510) 881-3817

Humboldt State University: Arcata, CA 95521. (707) 826-4402

CSU, Long Beach: 1250 Bellflower Blvd, Long Beach, CA 90840. (310) 985-4141

CSU Los Angeles : 5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 10032. (213) 343-3901

CSU, Northridge: 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330. (818) 885-3700

CS Polytechnic University : 3801 W. Temple Avenue, Pomona, CA 91768. (909) 869-2000

CSU, Sacramento: 6000 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95819. (800) 722-4748

CSU, San Bernadino: 5500 University Parkway, San Bernadino, CA 92407. (909) 880-5200

San Diego State University : 5300 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182. (619) 594-6871

San Francisco State University : 1600 Holloway Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94132. (415) 338-2017

San Jose State University: One Washington Square, San Jose, CA 95192-0009. (408) 924-2000

California Polytechnic State University : San Luis Obispo CA 93407 (805) 756-2311

Sonoma State University: 1801 E. Cotati Avenue, Rohnert Park, CA 94928. (707) 664-2778

CSU, Stanislaus : 801 Monte Vista Avenue, Turlock, CA 95380. (209) 667-3081

CSU San Marcos : San Marcos, CA 92069. (619) 752-4800

Independent Colleges and Universities:

Azusa Pacific University : 901 E. Alost, Azusa, CA 91702-7000. (800) TALK-APU

Biola University : 13800 Biola Ave., La Mirada, CA 90639. (310) 903-4752

California Institute of Technology: 1201 E. California Blvd. Pasadena, CA 91125. (818) 564-8136

Chapman University : 333 N. Glassell St., Orange, CA 92666. (714) 997-6711

Claremont McKenna College : 890 Columbia Ave., Claremont, CA 91711. (909) 621-8088

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Fresno Pacific College: 1717 S. Chestnut Ave., Fresno, CA 93702. (209) 453-2039

Golden Gate University: 536 Mission St., San Francisco, CA 94105. (415) 442-7200

Loma Linda University: Loma Linda, CA 92350. (909) 824-4300

Loyola Marymount University : Loyola Blvd. & West 80th St., Los Angeles, CA 90045-2699. (310) 338-2750

Marymount College: 30800 Palos Verdes Dr. East, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90270. (310) 377-5501

Mills College: 5000 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland, CA 94613. (800) 87-MILLS

Monterey Institute of International Studies: 425 Van Buren Street, Monterey, CA 93940. (408) 647-4123

Mount St. Mary's College: 12001 Chalon Rd., Los Angeles, CA 90049 (800) 999-9893

National University: 4025 Camino del Rio South, San Diego, CA 92108-4194. (619) 563-7100

Occidental College : 1600 Campus Rd., Los Angeles, CA 90041 (213) 259-2700

Pepperdine University : Malibu, CA 90265. (310) 456-4392

Pomona College: 333 N. College Way, Claremont, CA 91711. (909) 621-8134

San Francisco Conservatory of Music: 1201 Ortega St., San Francisco, CA 94122. (415) 759-3431

Southern California College: 55 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa, CA 92626. (714) 556-3610 X217

Stanford University: Stanford, CA 94305. (415) 723-2091

United States International University: 10455 Pomerado Rd., San Diego, CA 92131. (619) 693-4772

University of LaVerne : 1950 3rd Street, LaVerne, CA 91750 (909) 593-3511 X4026

University of San Diego: Alcala Park, San Diego, CA 92110. (619) 260-4506

University of San Francisco: 2130 Fulton St., San Francisco, CA 94117-1080. (415) 666-6563

University of Southern California : University Park, Los Angeles, CA 90089. (213) 740-1111

Whittier College: Whittier, CA 90608. (310) 907-4238

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GETTING INVOLVED IN SCHOOL

A. NEW SCHOOL, NEW SYSTEM, NEW ROLE FOR PARENTS

The American system of education differs in many respects from that of your country of origin. In most countries in the world, especially in Asia, education is very *centralized*. The Ministry of Education of the central government controls the education of the whole country. Everything derives from the Ministry of Education; the local school simply carries out the policy, curriculum, and regulations established by the Ministry. This ministry is in charge of the budget, teacher preparation, licensing, recruitment, assignment, and dismissal of school personnel for all the schools in the nation. There is one uniform curriculum and one set of textbooks for all schools.

The American educational system is quite different. It is more *decentralized*. Parents should understand the structure of public schools to help their children make appropriate decisions concerning their educational goals. The U.S. constitution does not vest the power of controlling education in the central (federal) government. The states have reserved powers to regulate civil matters, police, and education. Therefore, the U.S. Department of Education *does not have direct control* of the local school or school district. The school which your children attend, like the other schools in the school district, is directly controlled by the School Board, elected by

the local citizens, including parents. This board is also called Board of Trustees or Board of Education. The power of education belongs to the state, but the state delegates the administration of the schools to the school board for day-to-day operations and policy-making. The state is more concerned with *general educational policies for the whole state*. The local school board is responsible for designing curriculum, selecting instructional materials, hiring administrators, teachers and other staff. Unlike teachers in Asian countries, teachers in the U.S. are not hired and assigned by the U.S. Department of the State Departments of Education. They cannot be transferred from one school district to another. The state retains the power to determine the conditions of teacher preparation and licensing. Because the control of the local schools is in the hands of the school board, elected by the local people, education is, in fact,

controlled by local people, including parents. Therefore, in the United States, parents must be more involved in local education matters than in other countries. p. 41

In this country, you have the right and obligation to be involved in your child's education and contribute to the betterment of the local school for the benefits of all children. If language minority parents are not involved in school matters, the administrators and teachers may think that *they are "not concerned" with their children's education*. Within this new context, language minority parents should assume more responsibility. In the following pages we shall suggest a few practical things that you could do to get more involved in school.

B. GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

Except for year-round schools, the usual school year in the U.S. is from September to June. Children are enrolled on the first days of September. After a child reaches the age of six, he or she must be *enrolled in the first grade*. (In most states, kindergarten and preschool are optional, but very important to school success.) Immigrant children of school age should be enrolled in school as soon as they arrive in the United States. Grade level is determined primarily on the basis of age and previous school experience. Public schools are free and students can borrow books at no charge. You are expected to pay for your child's lunch but you may apply for free or reduced priced meals for your children.

1. School Structure

The American school structure may be different from the school structure of your country of origin. *Elementary education* may consist of five, six, or eight years of schooling, but the total school years required for elementary and secondary education is twelve, from the first grade to the twelfth grade. If elementary education consists of eight years, then *high school education* consists of four years, from grade 9 to grade 12. If elementary school consists of six years, then there is the *middle school*, consisting of grades 7 and 8. There are some variations in the middle school and high school structure, depending on the local school district. Kindergarten is part of elementary school, but preschool generally is not.

The basic subjects taught in elementary grades are language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and physical education. Other subjects include music and arts. Some schools also p. 42

have bilingual education programs. Classes offered in middle school and high school include English, math, history, biology, foreign language, physical education, art, home economics, and vocational education. You should check with your local school for details on courses offered. Usually this information is contained in a guidebook (called *Planning Guide for Students and Parents*, or *Information Book for Parents*, for example), prepared by the School District and distributed to you when you enroll your child.

After your child is enrolled, you should get to know your child's school well. Collect and carefully read information materials on school *policies, rules and regulations, programs available, graduation requirements*. Many schools have a handbook that contains this kind of information. Ask the school secretary if she does not give you one. State law requires that students in California public schools be *tested* at least once in grades four through six and once in grades ten and eleven in reading comprehension, writing, and computation. To obtain a high school diploma, your child has to complete the required courses of study and successfully pass the district's proficiency tests. Each school district establishes standards of proficiency for its high school graduates. These standards should cover at least the areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Each district also develops a test to assess a student's attainment of those standards. Therefore, you should check with your school district for details.

2.Enrollment

To register a child, it is necessary for parents to present documents to verify: a) birth date; b) address, and c) completed immunizations for polio, DPT, measles, mumps, rubella, and TB (tuberculosis) test. Immunizations must be up-to-date. You have to fill a registration form, an emergency card, and a home language survey. Students are assigned to schools according to the home address of the parent or legal guardian. These assignments are made according to the capacity of the school and federal regulations which require all public schools to be racially integrated. If you wish to have your child attend a school other than that based on the

p. 43 home address, you must submit an Optional Enrollment Request (OER). These requests are granted when there is space in the requested school and no adverse impact on the racial balance of the school.

3. Information on Programs

In American schools, all children are expected to attend and master basic skills. Because some students face obstacles to learning, there are different kinds of special services. Your child may need special assistance and qualify for those programs. You have to ask details on those programs from the school district. A few of these programs are:

- 91 *Bilingual Education*. This program is designed for students of limited English proficiency (LEP), to help them learn English and the subject matter through their primary language. There are several types of bilingual programs available, both for elementary and high school students. It should be noted that *not all* school districts provide these programs,

and districts may offer bilingual education in only one or two languages. The best source of information is your school and school district.

- 92 *Special Education*. Children with disabilities are provided with special services while they attend school. They qualify for special education if they have hearing, vision, speech, physical or health impairment, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, mental retardation, or other disabilities.
- 93 *Compensatory Education*. Not all schools offer this program, which is called *Chapter 1* if federally funded or *SCE* (State Compensatory Education) if state funded. This program is designed for students who score below the average in reading or mathematics, and who attend schools in certain low-income neighborhoods. Under current law, LEP students are eligible for extra help if they have an "educational disadvantage" in their own language. This means that children who did not attend school in the country of origin can qualify for services to compensate for their disadvantage.

Other services such as social work, rehabilitative counseling, school health services, and so on, are made available at no cost to the parents. The handbook of your child's school contains

information on those programs. Consult also with *A Handbook of California Education for Language Minority Parents* (Sacramento: California Department of Education). Translations into Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Lao, Hmong, and some other languages are also available.

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4. Meeting School Personnel

The first person that you meet at your child's school is no doubt the *school secretary*. She is a good source of information about the school. Ask permission to see the *principal* and introduce yourself. The *principal* is the person to answer your questions about the school and its programs. You may get permission to visit your child's *teacher(s)* and *classes*.

You should know your child's teacher *early in the school year*, before conferences are scheduled or problems develop. If your child has several teachers, get to know all of them, if possible. Let the teachers know that you are interested in your child's school progress and you expect your child to do well in school. Make the first meeting a friendly, positive one.

Most schools have "*Back to school*" nights or "*Open house*" *early in the school year*. Keep this date on your calendar and attend this important event. Listen attentively to what the teacher tells you. She will share what information she considers important. The teacher cannot, of course, talk about your child in the middle of a group meeting. If you have questions, make an appointment at the teacher's convenience for more discussion. This is important to help your child succeed in school.

Also stay in touch with the *counselors* (in junior high and senior high schools) and make sure your child stays in touch with the counselors as well. Counselors keep track of a student's academic progress in school and help the child decide what classes to take during high school and how to prepare for college or a career. They also provide information on scholarships.

Counselors are, in addition, a link between the parent and the teachers. If you do not speak fluent English, ask help from people who do. There may be teachers or paraprofessionals in the school who are bilingual.

p. 45 Here are a few samples of forms you have to fill out when you enroll your child at school.

EMERGENCY CARD

p. 46 **REGISTRATION FORM**

p. 47 **HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY**

p. 48 **C. COMMUNICATING WITH SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

1. Messages Home

You should pay close attention to any information sent from the school. *Read and respond* to notes and other communications such as announcement of special events, permission slips, newsletters and so on. Be sure to ask your child every couple of days whether there are any messages from school. These messages are often misplaced or lost.

*Report cards. One important means of those communications is the student's report card, which is sent to parents at least twice a year. The frequency varies according to the grade level of the student and according to local school district policy.

Elementary report cards usually include the student's performance in the following subjects: language arts, mathematics, social science, health education, music, art. They may also contain the attendance record of the student, a citizenship grade, and comments by the teacher. The grade is based on a system of letters such as A, B, C, D and F; the report card usually explains the meaning of those letters. Usually the meaning of those letters is as follows: A= excellent, B= good, C= satisfactory (or S), D= needs improvement (or N), F= failure, U= unsatisfactory, O = outstanding, and I= incomplete.

Recently, some school districts have banished the traditional letter grades, because they believe the letter grade system is too subjective, labels children, and discourages learning. Some school districts use a checklist format that shows specific skills within a subject, using terms such as "emergent" for low ability or "developing" for average ability. Grades are an indication of how well the teacher thinks students are doing in each subject area. Different methods are used by teachers to determine a student's grade.

Middle school and high school student's report cards include the title of the courses, the name of the student and teacher, grades for courses taken, a grade for citizenship, attendance record, and comments by teachers. When you receive the report card, you should *review the teacher's comments* and the grades with your child. You should *sign it* and, if you wish, include your own comments on the report card then ask your child to return it to the school.

- 94 ★ Test report. Most schools use tests as a measure of students' abilities and skills. There are different kinds of tests: p. 49
- 95 *Standardized tests*. These tests are given to large groups of students. They compare your child's progress to the average student's for a grade or age group. These include:
- 96 - *Aptitude tests* which attempt to measure a child's basic intelligence, interest, or learning skill. It is believed that the results help predict life-long success.
- 97 - *Achievement tests* which help find out how much the student has learned in specific subjects.
- 98 There are other ways to assess children's abilities and performance:
- 99 - *teacher-made tests* which reflect the important skills and knowledge taught in the course
- 100 - *individual assessment* in which the teacher meets with each child to determine what he/she has learned in specific subjects.
- 101 - *performance based assessment*. The child keeps a portfolio of work throughout the year and is usually asked to prepare some sort of project or write an essay that reflects his understanding of the material.

If you do not understand what the results mean, ask questions from school personnel until the information is properly explained. *That's your right*. Do not allow an important decision about your child to be made on the basis of tests or one person's opinion alone. If the child needs special testing to assess learning abilities, disabilities, or placement in a special program, you should request a complete psycho-educational evaluation by a trained professional. If you suspect a learning disability, make an appointment with the teacher or counselor to describe your concern and request for specialized testing from school specialists.

2. Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are a good opportunity for you to learn about your child's efforts and achievements or weaknesses and problems in school. Therefore, try to attend all those conferences. Parents need to alert the school before the start of the year to any special needs of their children such as :

- 102 - poor vision or hearing
- 103 - other physical problems such as allergies
- 104 - need for special medication
- 105 - learning disabilities
- 106 - stress or grief over family problems or fear about intimidation by other students. p. 50

If you are not proficient in English, bring along an *adult interpreter* or request the school to provide interpreters from their bilingual staff.

Before the conference. Look over your child's completed assignments and past report cards to review your child's strengths and weaknesses in academic performance as well as in behavior. Write down any questions you may want to ask the teacher. You may ask the teacher about the amount of time that your child should spend on homework, about what kind of help you can provide to your child at home, about his or her performance and behavior at school.

Ask your child about feelings and concerns related to school and schoolmates. Use the conference to help the teacher better understand your child. Write down the points you think will help the teacher know your child a little better. Telling the teacher about your child's interests and strengths is helpful.

During the conference. One factor contributing to a successful parent-teacher conference is making sure you arrive a *few minutes early*. The teacher has a tight schedule and many parents to meet; your late arrival will shorten the time for conference with the teacher. *Prioritize* your concerns and questions and get right to the first one without small talk. Let the teacher know that you are *concerned with your child's education* and want your child to get a high-quality education at school. If possible, use this opportunity to compliment the teacher on things that are going well for your child. You can mention problems later, and end with other positive observations.

Come prepared to listen. You will gain important information on your child's behavior and performance at school. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Some questions that you might ask are:

107 - *Regarding academic*

108 * What is the curriculum this year ? This will help you know what subjects your child will be studying. Some teachers provide a list of books the students will read. You might want to read some of these yourself (if you are fluent in English) in order to talk about these with your child.

109 *What is the teacher's homework policy.? How much time are students expected to spend on homework each night? What strengths and weaknesses does my child have in each of the subject areas?

110 *May I see some of the works that shows how my child is performing and progressing in those subjects? How is my child progressing in oral English, reading and writing, and the primary language?

111 *How has my child done on the state or national tests?

112 **What kinds of things will you do* to improve my child's skills? How can I help my child at home in those areas

113 - *Regarding behavior*

114 * Does my child pay attention and do his work in school?

115 * Does my child misbehave?

116 * What is his attendance record?

117 * How can I be informed about school and classroom policies such as attendance, discipline, health, and safety?

Tell the teacher how to reach you and ask how to reach him/her if necessary.

If a problem exists, work with the teacher to *formulate a plan* to help your child. If the conference ends and you still have questions, make an appointment for another day when the teacher can have more time with you. Even if you are upset by or in disagreement with what the

teacher says, make every effort not to argue, use discourteous language, or criticize the teacher personally.

After the conference

118 * *Make a note* for yourself as to what you and the teacher actually said and planned together. Think of how you are going to put the plan into action at home.

119 * *Discuss the proceedings with your child.* Always start with something positive like praising your child's efforts. Then explain tactfully any needs the teacher has emphasized. Let your child know that you are working closely with the teacher and he can expect help from the teacher and you.

Do not hesitate to *contact your child's teacher*:

120 If you want to know more about your child's work and behavior at school.

121 If you want to find out how to help your child at home and obtain academic materials to help your child.

122 If your child seems unhappy or anxious at school or changes habits or behavior.

123 If your child has problems at school such as not being able to meet course requirements or in relationships with peers.

124 If you want to know how you can become more involved at school.

125 If your child's academic work suddenly worsens.

126 If a serious personal or family problem has arisen that may affect your child's behavior or concentration in school.

127 If your child has been absent for several days and you want to know if there is any school work that can be done at home.

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Make sure that you write down your concerns before you meet the teacher. Ask the teacher how she sees the problem and listen to the teacher as she gives her point of view. Avoid getting defensive or aggressive. Discuss the problem and try to look for a common solution to your concerns. Once you reach a solution, work on a plan of action and on how you and the teacher will follow up.

Keep in touch with the teacher by telephone or with written notes to continue to receive information on your child's progress between reporting periods.

3. Open House and Other School Events

Only elementary schools have regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences. It is practically impossible for middle schools and high schools to provide such conferences. While an elementary teacher may have the same thirty or so children all day, a high school teacher may have more than 150 students each day. One way to stay in contact with the school is to attend the school's open house and back-to-school night. It can give you a feel for the school. The teacher will give you an overview of what will be taught during the year and explain instructional programs, grading policy, and homework requirements. You can see each teacher, hear the

teacher's ideas and approaches, and find out what kind of requirements students must meet. This is an opportunity for you to establish a relationship with teachers, meet staff and other parents, ask questions of school personnel, and look at the textbooks, materials, and classrooms.

Advisory committees. The purpose of advisory committees is to provide opportunities for parents to give advice and help the district make decisions concerning programs for limited English proficient

p. 53 (LEP) students and other students who receive extra help. The parents of children who are enrolled in these programs should be part of the decisions affecting their children, and have a chance to provide advice on their children's special needs.

LEP parents have the opportunity to serve on the District Bilingual Advisory Committee (DBAC), for the whole school district and the School Bilingual Advisory Committee, for the school site. Members of the School Bilingual Advisory Committee are elected by parents of LEP students at the school and members of the DBAC are selected by the school committees. The district has the responsibility of notifying school and district parents of the initial election of committees and committee meetings in English and the primary language of parents. When the committees have been elected and are functioning, they can assume this notification responsibility. Meeting agendas should also be mailed to all committee members in English and their primary language.

4. Parents as Volunteers

Parents are valuable as volunteers. It is not necessary to have specific skills to serve as volunteers, just an interest in children and willingness to help. When the parents volunteer to assist in a classroom, they are trained to teach and will transfer to the home environment some of their knowledge about stimulating the growth of the child. As parents become more familiar with school and program requirements, they will be in a better position to help their children at home. Parents can also give advice and assistance as resource people to introduce young children to their own cultures through the use of stories, holidays, art exhibits, fairs, and various other activities. Parents who are professionals can discuss their own job situations or to act as a volunteer counselors.

Parents should become acquainted with other parents and form parent self-help groups to work on problems or issues of mutual concern. You may want to inform local school officials but you don't need permission of the school officials in order to form a parents' group. Parent self-help groups differ from Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), which are associations for parents and teachers and typically are run by the principal of the school.

These groups can work closely with the PTA for the common good of the children. Parent self-help groups can join the National

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Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) Parent's Network which can help you learn about issues and strategies for effective action. The address of this committee is National Committee for Citizens in Education, 900 Second Street NE, Suite 8, Washington DC 20002-3557; the telephone number is 800-638-9675. The NCCE has published many information books on parent involvement and has a Parent involvement Kit available for purchase

The following organizations also provide helpful information on parent involvement in children's education:

- 128 *The Home and School Institute*, 1201 16th Street, NW, Washington DC 20036; telephone (202) 466-3633.
- 129 *National Congress of Parents and Teachers*, 700 North Russ Street, Chicago IL 60611; telephone (312) 787-0977.
- 130 *Teachers Involve Parents in School (TIPS)*, John Hopkins University, 3401 North Charles Street, Baltimore MD 21218; telephone (301) 338-7570.
- 131 *California Colalition of Parent/Community Involvement in Education (CCPIE)*, 810 Miranda Green, Palo Alto CA 94306.
- 132 *Institute for Responsive Education*, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston MA 02215.

KINDERGARTEN REPORT CARD p. 55

D. PARENT'S RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS p. 56

Beside moral obligations for their children, parents also have many legal obligations. p. 57

Elementary and secondary education is *compulsory* in this country. You have an obligation to send your children to school and have them attend school. All children in California must attend school until graduation from senior high or until the age of 18. They must attend full-time until the age of 16. Law enforcement officers will intervene if you keep your school age children at home. p. 58

Truancy. You also have to watch *your child's school attendance*. Each time your child is absent, you must notify the school with a phone call. When the child returns to school, you must send a note which includes your child's name, reason for absence, date of absence, your signature, and a phone number where you can be reached. There are three types of absence:

- 133 - *excused* if the school is notified and if the child is ill, attends a funeral, or has a medical or legal appointment;
- 134 - *unexcused* when the school is notified and the child is absent for any other reason; and
- 135 - *truancy* when the child is absent without permission or knowledge of the parents. Parents are held *responsible for their children's truancy*.

If a student is truant more than 3 times in a year, he/she is considered a "habitual truant". If a student is tardy more than 30 minutes more than three days in a school year, he or she is also considered a truant. The parent will be notified by writing by mail when the student is classified as a habitual truant. The notice will tell the parents:

- 136 - the student is a truant
- 137 - the parents is required by law to compel the student to go to school.
- 138 - that a parent who does not compel his/her child to attend school can be prosecuted
- 139 - that there are alternative programs for truants
- 140 - that parents have the right to meet with school officials to discuss solution to truancy.

p. 59 *Vandalism.* is also the parents' responsibility. Parents are legally and financially responsible for their children's destruction or damage of school property. This includes books and materials which are loaned to the students, as well as the school facility. Parents are legally and financially held responsible for injuries inflicted on students or staff by their children.

Suspension & Expulsion. Your child may be *suspended or expelled* for certain serious acts committed while on school grounds, while going to and from school or during the lunch period whether on or off the campus, and while going to or coming from a school-sponsored activity. Each Board of Education has adopted rules for appropriate student behavior and discipline. You can ask your child's school for a copy of the rules and discipline procedures adopted by the school district. The consequences for inappropriate behavior usually include detention, parent conferences, suspension, expulsion, and other alternatives. In general, the following inappropriate acts are causes for suspension or expulsion:

- 141 -Fighting. Hurt someone else, tried to hurt someone, threatened to hurt someone.
- 142 -Weapons. Possessed, sold, or furnished a gun, knife, explosive or other dangerous objects.
- 143 -Drugs/alcohol. Possessed, used, sold or furnished any drug. Was under the influence of any drug, alcohol, or other intoxicating substance.
- 144 -Robbery. Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion
- 145 -Vandalism. Committed or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property.
- 146 -Theft. Stole, attempted to steal school property or private property, or received stolen property.
- 147 -Tobacco. Possessed or used tobacco.
- 148 -Profanity. Committed an obscene act, used profanity and vulgarity
- 149 -Defiance. Disrupted school activities, defied school personnel
- 150 -Gangs. Any behavior or dress that indicates membership in a group that threatens a safe school environment.

The process of suspension, expulsion, and other disciplinary measures are established by the School Board and contained in the material describing discipline rules obtainable from your child's school.

p. 60 As a parent, you also have rights. You have the right to:

* Request information about:

- 151 -*Your child's education*, to look at the records kept by the school about your child, to be consulted about educational decisions, to participate in school policy making, and to appeal decisions you think are not fair.
- 152 -*School policies, rules, and regulations*. concerning:
- 153 -Health, medical examination, inoculations, and so on.
- 154 -Attendance: excused and unexcused absences, and truancy. The school has a responsibility to inform parents if the child is absent, and it is the parents' responsibility to inform the school if the child cannot attend school.
- 155 -Discipline procedures and behavior standards.
- 156 -Schedule for the school year: dates of parent-teacher conferences, holidays, report cards, and so on
- 157 -Curriculum: subjects taught, organization of the curriculum, methods used, materials which can be borrowed, special programs, extracurricular activities and how to enroll your child in them. The law requires that for limited English proficient (LEP) students, the teaching should be done in a language comprehensible to the children. There is no specific approach or program required by law but the program adopted by the school/school district should assure success for the LEP students and enable them to have *equal access to educational opportunities*.
- 158 -Academic requirements: criteria for student evaluation and promotion, homework policies, graduation requirements, and so on.

* Access

- 159 -Records kept by the school about your child. The student cumulative ("cum") record is an individual folder about the student's academic performance, ability, and social profiles from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. This record may be seen by parents, in the presence of school personnel, but by no other person, unless subpoenaed by the court. You may challenge inaccurate, misleading, or discriminatory information.
- 160 -The principal or other personnel who work with your child.
- 161 -The teacher, at a time convenient for both parent and teacher, and with a translator, if needed.

* *Be Consulted*

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- 162 -Before a change in the placement of your child is made.
- 163 -When your child must repeat a grade.
- 164 -When your child is enrolled in a special program.
- 165 -When your child is tested by personnel other than the teacher's regular classroom testing.

*** Attend school board meetings**

*** Participate in parent organizations**

*** Appeal school decisions**

If you disagree with a decision affecting your child, or if you believe that the school did not treat your child fairly, you have the right to an appeal. You should find out who can resolve your problem. Complaints and concerns about your child's academic progress could begin with the classroom teacher. Make arrangements to meet with your child's teacher so that you can discuss your concerns. Request that someone translates for you if you do not understand English well. If the school cannot provide a translator, arrange to take your own translator. Proceed to the next level of authority if you are not satisfied. The usual levels of authority are: teacher, counselor (in middle or high school), assistant principal, principal, associate superintendent, superintendent, and Board of Education. You have to *follow the procedures established by the Board* if you want to file a complaint against any employee.

* As the parent of a LEP student, you have additional rights. You have the right to insist that the school provide *language assistance services* to your child as required by law. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires school districts to provide equal educational opportunity to all students, regardless of their national origin. The Equal Educational Opportunity Act passed in 1974 provides that all school districts are required to have special instructional programs for students with limited English proficiency that are designed to help them overcome language barriers. Many states have law, regulations, and guidelines addressing the educational rights of LEP students. If the school plans to place your child in a bilingual program (one that teaches in a language other than English), you must be informed of the reasons why you child

p. 62 needs the program, the nature and educational objectives of the program, and the other options available to your child. The school must also inform you of the results of the English language testing that is done shortly after your child enrolls in school. The school should provide important information to you in a language you can understand. You may request a translator for parent-teacher conferences or for disciplinary or placement meetings with school personnel.

Resources

166 Arnold, Sarah et al. *Resource Guide on Parent and Citizen Participation in Education*. Boston MA: Institute for Responsible Education, 1988.

167 Schimmel, David and Louis Fischer. *Parents, Schools, and the Law*. Washington DC.: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1987.

168 *Your School: How Well Is It Working?* Washington DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1982.

p. 63 CONCLUSION

Helping your child achieve in school is a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, you help your child at home so that he or she will be well-prepared for school. On the other hand, you become involved with teachers and school personnel so you understand the kind of program your child receives at school, and know how well your child is doing. Following is a list of questions that help you decide what you need to do to help you child achieve in school.

1. Helping My Child at Home

- 169 Do I provide a quiet time and a place with necessary supplies for my child to study?
- 170 Do I respect my child's feelings as I do those of other family members?
- 171 Do I talk to my child about the importance of education in life?
- 172 Do I encourage my child to do the best work possible without applying undue pressure?
- 173 Do I show pleasure and pride in my child's accomplishment? Do I praise my child for a job well done or for effort made?
- 174 Do I set up with my child home rules, such as a regular time for homework, limitations for watching television, and what will happen if homework is not completed?
- 175 Do I check on my child's homework each night, sign and date it, if required, and insist that the completed assignment is in my child's backpack before bedtime?
- 176 Do I review homework that the teacher has returned and pay close attention to comments?
- 177 Do I read to my child every day or encourage my child to read to me? Do I read to my child in our home language?
- 178 Do I encourage my child to use the library for reading for assignments and for pleasure?

2. Involvement in School

- 179 Have I established and maintained a good working relationship with my child's teacher(s) and school principal and informed them that I am concerned with my child's education?
- 180 Do I understand school rules, policies, programs and make my views known?
- 181 Have I visited my child's classroom, observed the teacher's style, and looked over the instructional materials?
- 182 Have I attended all the parent-teacher conferences and other school events?
- 183 Am I prepare for the parent-teacher conferences? Do I ask the teacher about my child's strengths and weaknesses and request information on how I can help my child at home?
- 184 Am I prepared to ask for extra help from the school to solve my child's learning and behavior problems?
- 185 Have I considered joining the PTA or a parent's self-help group?
- 186 Have I considered becoming a volunteer at the school?

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