

# November 2005: Parent Report Card

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## Publisher's Pen: Parent Report Card

"A successful person is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at him".

David Brinkley

Last November, I published a "Parent's Report Card," to help remind us of our own struggles. We survived the 60's, 70's and 80's. What obstacles must our children overcome?

No, our children don't have to face Kent State riots or the Vietnam War. But they are faced with an increasingly changing educational system. One in which the influential seem to be sitting around a conference table trying to pound square pegs into round holes. It's not working for our nation's children.

In my own state of New York, as in many states, what was taught to 8th grade students just three years ago, is now being taught to 5th grade students. Many students are unable to keep up. Through the national effort to raise the standards for our children, they have fallen through the cracks and have been left behind.

How can parents help? What can teachers do? Faced with the pressures of making a living, when parents are able to stop and take a snapshot of what is going on at school, they are faced with the overwhelming odds of being able to help their children because they have not been given the tools.

Teachers are under more pressure than ever. Studies show that the average teacher puts in more hours than a person who works forty hours a week year round. They must teach more subjects, and learn how to integrate them together. They have to modify every lesson to the different learning styles and levels of ability in their classrooms. Who can do that? Superwoman? Superman?

The powerless ones, who must jump through the hoops of our society, our children, are bearing the brunt of the pressure. As the saying goes, mud rolls downhill and piles up at the bottom. May we build retaining walls around our children; thereby keeping them from getting stuck in the muck. May we learn to go easy on them as we keep in mind the obstacles thrown in their paths.

Smiles,

Elaine

## Empowering Parents and Teachers:

Ten reasons to go easy on kids: Monumental changes occurring in, or affecting our educational system have parents puzzled, and teachers pressured, more than at any time in our history.

**Raised Learning Standards in Reading and Math.** As I said earlier, what was taught to 8th grade students just three years ago is now being taught to 5th grade students. New standards in my state has created a situation where what was taught to 9th grade students last year in math, is now being taught to 8th grade students this year.

**Declassification of Special Education Students.** Students are being declassified as needing special remediation in many schools across the nation. I have been in several schools recently where some students who received remediation in the 4th grade (meaning that they were taught 3rd grade math), are now entering a regular 5th grade classroom. How are those students to cope?

**Increased Violence in Media/Schools/Homes.** Studies show that our children are being bombarded with violence at alarming rates, primarily through the media, which penetrates into the home and school environments.

**Increased Peer Pressure.** Students must be a part of one of the various subcultures at school, or they don't fit in and are ultimately labeled as outcasts.

**Decreased Parental Involvement.** Parents are increasingly stressed over the pressures of making a living, which leaves them less time to spend with children. In addition, parents are unable to help students with their homework, especially math.

**Increase of Prescribed Drugs, Such as Ritalin.** There has been a 369% increase in the prescription of Ritalin for ADD and ADHD. As many as 25% of students in every classroom, primarily boys, are under the control of Ritalin. Some states allow schools to force parents to place their children on this drug, once the school psychologist labels a child with ADD or ADHD.

**Increase in Divorce and Stepfamilies.** I saw a cartoon in the New Yorker recently that said it all: A young girl was on the phone with a friend. In casual conversation, she asked, "So, are you still with the same parents?"

**Environmental causes.** We live in a society that values competition over cooperation. We watch the survival of the fittest, as corporations leave their employees bankrupt. In our everyday lives, whether we choose road rage, or cheating on our taxes, we teach some kind of lesson to our children, who are watching when we least expect it.

**Unsettling World Events.** When my son was in the 8th grade, he told me that he wondered if he would be alive by the time he was an adult. For today's children, it's the Iraq war. I saw a bumper sticker on a teenager's car recently. It read: No one died when Clinton lied.

**Disease.** Some children must face all of the above at the same time that they struggle with debilitating diseases, or watch their parents endure disease.

## Empowering K.I.D.S. (Kids In Daily Situations):

Here is a Parent Report Card for you to remind your parents (and yourselves) of what is most important. Category A: Grade A Parent. Give yourself an A if you do the following:

- Do I give my child encouragement every day?
- Do I give my child hugs?
- Do I tell my child that I love him/her (no matter what happens)?
- Do I tell my child that I am proud of him/her?
- Do I give him/her appropriate boundaries?
- Do I set a good example for my child?
- Do I discipline fairly, by making the consequence fit the offense?
- Do I provide learning experiences?
- Do I spend time just listening to my child?
- Do I send my child to bed in a peaceful atmosphere?

Category NI: Needs Improvement Parent. Give yourself an NI if you:

- Do I call my child names (tattletale, lazy, monster)?
- Do I hit my child?
- Do I withhold my love when I am angry?
- Do I show disgust for poor performance?
- Do I let my child do what he/she wants and then get angry?
- Do I talk disrespectfully about others in front of my child?
- Do I discipline by constantly saying "don't!" or "because I said so!" or by extremes-severe sometimes, or sometimes not at all?
- Do I remind my child of past mistakes & say, "you'll never be...".?
- Do I act like my child is in the way of living my own life, spending little time with him/her?
- Have I sent my child to bed with threats, yelling, hitting, or without supper?

Just 15 minutes a day of quality time with a child by a warm and caring person has been proven by studies to increase scores at school. Be honest with yourself as to where you may need improvement. We've all been there with kids.

As your grades improve, so will those of your child's!

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