

Malden Public Schools Title I Parent Connection



The Important Role of Parents



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I can't think of any other role as important as the role of a parent. The tremendous responsibilities of child bearing and child rearing seem to increase exponentially as children get older. As parents our job is never done. The responsibilities are daunting and sometimes overwhelming.

Most research and all of the anecdotal evidence we collect in school suggests that most students are not interested in their parent or guardian being their friend; it's actually quite the opposite. Most young people we work with at school crave structure, discipline and guidance, although they sometimes say or do things that do not support this theory. I never claimed it was easy. Go back to paragraph one. *The responsibilities are daunting and sometimes overwhelming.*

As adults we should be there for our children as limit setters; we should hold our young people accountable for their actions and we should give them plenty of opportunities to think about the consequences before they act.

Let me put into perspective some recent situations that cause me some concern as both a parent and an educator. In a recent statewide election the majority of people voting supported a referendum decriminalizing marijuana possession. While I was not one of the supporters I defend the democratic process and we move on.

The vote, however, has caused some challenges in local schools as some students have interpreted the simple majority opinion as an open invitation to have pot in their possession, regardless of where they are. I'm quite sure this was not the intent of the electorate but we're dealing with young people. In more recent times, in more than one town, parents provided alcohol to people under the age of 21.

The arguments that some people use to minimize pot smoking or to prop up the idea of hosting alcohol fueled parties are nonsense; "everyone smokes or drinks, so we might as well keep an eye on the kids," "kids will be kids," or "it's just a phase they are going through."

These are cop out arguments and quite frankly not true. Most of the research shows that if a kid is saying, "Everyone is doing it," then it's more than likely that's the result of the circle of friends the child has chosen; in my experience I have noticed that there are many other circles of young people out there, studying, working, volunteering, helping out at home; the list is endless. The recent national data suggests that the majority of our young people are not smoking or drinking.

The idea of giving up our authority as adults is both surprising and disturbing, and the recent trend of becoming our children's friends is an alarming one. Structuring the lives of young people is hard work. They can wear us down. They can be brutal in the number of ways they defy us or push us away. To give up would be easy. We must be relentless in our response. In education there is a "nag and nurture" theory promoted by many. The idea is that we balance the support we give our young people with the limits we set for them. We hold them up. We don't give up.

As graduation season, prom season, and the summer arrive please be the adult in the parent/child relationship. Understand and know the liability before you agree to rent a cottage for your high school graduate or run a keg party on their behalf at your home. Let your kids be the kids and you stay strong as the adult. Someday our children will be parents. How we want them to act as parents is being

Written by Dana Brown, Principal of Malden High School

