

IS SCHOOL RESPONSIBLE?

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

If we ever have the misfortune of being injured to the point that we have to call for help, the first responders who come are usually the paramedics. They diagnose the problem and, if necessary, prepare us to travel to the hospital. The wound or break is bound, the drip is in and we have been successfully triaged.

I have heard many parents say that it is the school's responsibility to educate our children. Well, yes and no. Parents are the first responders and they need to triage their children and have them ready for the experts to commence the next step. So many children come to school with absolutely minimum skills and knowledge because their parents believe that it is the school's responsibility to educate their children.

At five, even six years of age, these children cannot count from one to ten. Ask the children to identify colors and they cannot. Nor can they recite the alphabet. Days of the week or months of the year remain a mystery. Only a few animals can be identified and they cannot recall their address, their parents' phone numbers, or their parents' full names. Shoelaces remain undone because they have not been taught how to tie them. Some are not fully potty-trained, while others cannot do up buttons.

Many of these skills, including tying up shoelaces, can be achieved by the age of three. The problem is that many parents don't know that and their expectations are much too low. Kids can do far more than we imagine. They love to take on responsibilities such as chores at this age and love to please you. We often do too much for them and coddle them causing them to miss out on some great achievement experiences. Kids learn more in those preschool years than they probably learn at any other time.

Since you are reading this column you are probably one of the parents that prepare your children for school. You hopefully work in partnership with teachers to educate your children, It is **not** the school's responsibility to raise your child, to teach them character nor to give them a set of values. That is definitely a parent's role! School can help reinforce the things you have already taught them, but please don't leave it to the school to do.

Our major parental role is to create wonderful adults that have all the skills and education required to have a productive life ahead and be positive contributors to society. If you are a Christian, your role is also to give such an amazing example of Christ's character to your children that they say, "I want that for my life, too", and consequently follow Jesus.

Why do parents abdicate their responsibility to be first responders and to neglect providing their children with life skills, core family values, positive character traits, and basic knowledge before they go to school?

- a) Ignorance. Some parents are just not aware that it is their responsibility to teach their children basic skills, or that their kids are teachable from an early age.
- b) Inadequate role modeling. Parents may lack adequate parenting skills because their parents were not positive role models.
- c) Busyness or self-absorption. Some parents don't have time with, or for their kids. Perhaps they are financially pressed and both need to work. They may not see their children for more than an hour or so each day, so teaching them behavioral expectations is the last thing on their minds. Some are more absorbed with fulfilling their own dreams than training their children.
- d) Suitability. Some adults who are not geared to raise a child. General ignorance and a regret that they ever had a child is reflected in the child's demeanor, character and behavior.

To all parents who adequately prepare their children to meet the challenges of receiving a great education and who are working in partnership and harmony with the school, thank you! You are a blessing to your kids' teachers and are very much appreciated. You express the love you have for your children that way and show the determination you have to see your kids reach their potential. You can look back near the end of your life and see what your children have achieved and say, "We did a good job!"

If you are a parent who needs help in training your children about acceptable behavioral expectations, there is plenty of help for you. You can 'Google' search parenting topics and attend parenting sessions or seminars.

We are also a help agency that is more than willing to assist you. Please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.