

The Online Parenting Newsletter vol.5 no.10 Oct, 2004:

## HOW IS MY KID DOING IN SCHOOL?

The kids have been back in school for a few weeks. They should have settled into their winter, as opposed to summer, routine. But how are they doing in school?

I believe in early warning systems. I want to know in the fall, not the day before school ends, if my child needs extra work or help in an area whether it be academic or social.

Obviously COMMUNICATION is the key. Parents and teachers should communicate in person not just via a report card. Don't miss any parent-teacher conferences or parent nights. If you do have to miss one write the teacher a note and ask to meet.

There is another person you should communicate with: your child. You want to learn the answers to three questions:

- 1) How does the child LIKE SCHOOL?
- 2) How does the child GET ALONG WITH PEERS at school?
- 3) How is the child doing ACADEMICALLY?

Much of this information will be in the teacher's reports as well but savvy parents can learn quite a bit from observing their child and knowing how to ask their child questions. There is a simple rule: NEVER ASK A CHILD A QUESTION THAT CAN BE ANSWERED WITH A "YES" OR A "NO" or any other one word answer.

If you ask children, "How was school today?" 99 % of them will say, "Good." or "Fine." If you ask , "Do you like school?" most kids will say, "Yes" even if they don't.

So work on your information gathering skills. Some good things to ask are: "What colors were your teacher wearing today?" "What did you eat for lunch?" "Tell me two things you learned today." "Tell me the names of your friends at school." "Tell me what you like best about school." "Tell me what you like least about school." "What two subjects do you like the most? The least? Why?" "Tell me a story about school." "Tell me what the book you just finished is about."

Observe your child when he or she answers your questions. Pay attention to body language, eyes, tone of voice, presence or absence of enthusiasm, whether the child smiles or laughs.

You should be able to get a good idea of your child's opinion of school and peer relationships as well as some clues about academics. If anything seems amiss, talk to the teacher.