



CREATIVE PARENTING

Supporting Our Children and Their Schools

by Susan E. Murray

As Seventh-day Adventists, most of us make large financial commitments to educate our children. No matter where our children attend, when the home and school are partners, children learn best. Here are some ideas to consider as you continue to invest in your child's education.

Focus on the positive. Your child's teachers and the school administrators are human beings with dreams, goals, concerns, and feelings like all other human beings. Remember that the school is filled with professionals who have dedicated themselves to furthering the development of children. Speak of teachers in a positive way, learn their names, become personally acquainted with them, pray for them by name at family worship.

Get involved. Don't assume that "no news is good news." Take time to find out what's going on at school. Ask for an appointment with your child's teacher, even if there are no major concerns. Many times the only contact parents have with teachers is when they criticize. See if there are ways you can contribute to the classroom—as a room parent, a supervisor for a field trip, by providing some specific supplies, or by using your professional skills.

Read everything that comes from the school. Young children must depend on you to follow through on the school's written requests. Be sure to return information needed immediately. Don't put things off until a "better time."

Mark your calendar. When you receive information about events, mark them in your appointment calendar. See school appointments as serious as any important business meeting. This goes for both dads and moms.

Don't bear false witness. Often statements made about school include gossip and even lies about teachers and staff. By simply agreeing with others, including your child, you may

be fostering a negative attitude. Remember every situation has both facts and feelings. Check out the facts before you come to any conclusions. Help others relate the facts and their feelings to the appropriate people. Help build bridges instead of barriers.

Honor children's efforts. Carefully look at what your child brings home and discuss what your child has learned. Have a bulletin board or space on the refrigerator for displaying children's work. Set aside a large envelope or box to store your child's work for each school year.

Consider your own expectations. Parents need to encourage children to reach their own potential, but not go beyond that encouragement to the point of pressure. Sometimes parents push A's because it looks good for them. Explain to your children why they should work up to their potential and why good grades are important; don't just spend time nagging them. Work with them to plan and reach goals that are meaningful for them.

Take homework seriously. Children deserve support to do their homework. It is your responsibility to provide the physical and emotional environment to accomplish this task, even though it is the child's responsibility to do the homework itself.

Attend parent-teacher conferences. If at all possible, both parents should attend. Be on time, and be aware of those waiting after you. Remember that you and your child's teachers are colleagues in your child's education.

Keep in touch. If your child is away at boarding school, be sure he receives something in the mail (or via e-mail) every week. Let your child know that you pray at a certain time every day for her. Your teenager may not acknowledge that your weekly contacts are important, but keep in touch because of your commitment to your child.

Celebrate. Find ways to celebrate the personhood of your child from time to time. Some families go out to breakfast on the first day of each month, others celebrate by rewarding good grades. If your child is away at boarding school, remind him that you miss him being there for Sabbath and other celebrations. Have a small gift on her bed when she comes home. Send a care package. Plan to celebrate, in even small ways, on a regular basis!

Remember you are your child's most important teacher. Even though teachers and others at school have a tremendous impact, your child is still looking to you. He or she needs your support and consistent love—whether in pre-school, elementary school, home school, academy, or college.

