

Parenting Matters

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For Colorado Parents

It's Not Just the Bell Ringing in the Classroom

by Christopher Land

Cell phones are ringing — in the car, in the mall, in the restaurant, at home — everywhere.

But should they be allowed in schools?

South Carolina lifted the ban on cell phones in schools in 2002, an action that represents a growing national trend. States began banning pagers and cell phones in schools to combat their use in drug dealing and other crimes in the late 1980s, but more and more states are ending those bans and leaving the decisions about the use of cell phones and pagers to local administrators.

The American Association of School Administrators reports that superintendents are reporting a shift toward loosening restrictions on cell phones and pagers since the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

While few people would argue that a student should be allowed to catch up on the latest gossip while the teacher is conducting class, some schools are re-evaluating their policies on cell phones in the wake of terrorist attacks and school shootings. Students with cell phones are credited with alerting authorities to the 1999 Columbine High School shootings in Colorado.

Estimates of how many teens have cell phones often range above 50 percent, with some estimates reaching

70 percent and higher.

Because they are so common, cell phones can present a real problem in schools.

“There are disruption issues,” said Richard Blackburn, a professor of education at Clemson who heads the university’s education leadership and counseling program. “There would have to be some restrictions on using them in the building. Decorum is something schools have to keep.”

Blackburn, a former principal, said administrators have to be able to set policies that help them keep that decorum but there are good arguments for and against cell phones in schools.

Safety is an argument for them.

“The presence of a cell phone in the case of an injury can speed up response,” Blackburn explained.

Being able to quickly and easily phone for a ride home after practice or a club meeting is another.

But, cell phones also make it easier for drug dealers and other criminals to conduct their business.

“That’s a problem,” Blackburn said, and some schools enact blanket policies restricting cell phone use and possession by students to avoid it.

Blackburn said those kinds of decisions have to be made by the people responsible for ensuring a safe environment that is conducive to learning.



by Robin Hewell

1. Establish rules regarding cell phone usage within the home and within school environments.
2. Explain the use of the cell phone during an emergency.
3. Have your teen help pay for the cell phone and its monthly bills, in order to instill an understanding of overuse and responsibility.
4. Contact your child's school to investigate their cell phone policies and standards.

“I would support anything that helps school administrators conduct school,” he said.

That may be allowing cell phones at school for the positive benefits they provide or banning them to help keep the negative aspects at bay.

In the end, it's the school administrators' call.

Source: CLEMSONews

OBSESITY: A Growing Problem Among Children

by Christine Belinda

The number of overweight children has risen drastically over the last several years. Obese children face a growing list of health consequences such as high blood pressure, diabetes, sleep apnea, higher incidence of asthma attacks, and problems related to low self-esteem.

As caregivers to young children, we need to look at our programs and see if we are modeling healthy practices.

Source: Better Kid Care Program,
Pennsylvania State University

Here are some suggestions:

- Offer several choices of physical activities daily.
- Offer healthy choices of food and snacks. Food should not be used as a reward and never as a punishment.
- Encourage participation in preparing food and snacks. Children can learn good choices by helping to prepare healthful snacks and realizing what makes them healthy and strong.
- Be a good role model. Move and play with the children! Eat healthy!
- Encourage water as a choice of beverage.
- Decrease time spent watching TV or playing electronic games.
- Boost children's self-esteem. Have daily reflection time for children to see all their positive achievements of the day as well as hearing your praises!



Understanding Young Children: A Brush up on Basics

by Ronald L. Pitzer

For the caring - and sometimes despairing - parent, child care provider, teacher, or other caregiver, here is a list of traits common to the preschool through third-grade child. This "brush-up on basics" can help you understand children for what they are and what they can become. This understanding is the best tool for preparing children to live a happy and successful life.

The child is very egocentric. Right now, he thinks in terms of "me" and "mine" as he establishes himself as a person. Later he will think in terms of a family and understand the meaning of "love thy neighbor." Parents and teachers should be careful listeners, praise the child when possible, and avoid suppressing the child's individuality.

The child wants to feel big, proud, and important. She wants success because she experiences failure so often. But she needs your patience and support while she continues to try. Small successes deserve large rewards of love and attention. There should be no single, correct answers in the world

of a young child; there should be many choices of activities, challenges, and tasks.

The child is a beginner - an amateur. He makes mistakes. He forgets instructions. He's noisy. But he still has plenty of time to learn. Give him enough time and room to make mistakes; he will learn by them for years to come.

The child is tender. She has very few resources of her own at first. She's still feeling her way through life with limited abilities. She depends heavily on love. Don't offer her a harsh setting. Don't expose her to rejection. Schools and homes should be warm, tender, affectionate, and accepting.

The young child needs stimulation. Allow him to use his natural curiosity as a way to learn. He needs an environment that provides a variety of experiences. Give him sufficient wandering space filled with choices that involve the five senses. Don't let television occupy a very large place in his life.

The child is not a good sitter. She should seldom be made to sit for a long period. Introduce her to blocks, playhouses, climbing bars, manipulative

toys - anything that allows her to explore and learn.

The young child is not good at keeping quiet. At this early age, silence is not golden. Somewhere in the midst of the endless questions and confusion, understanding will occur.

Adults will be better parents and teachers if they realize the child's world is a very special place - mysterious and exciting, confusing yet complete. If parents, child care providers, teachers, and other caregivers will observe the outside world from time to time through a child's eyes, understanding and realistic expectations will ensure success.

Source: Ronald L. Pitzer, University of Minnesota, Extension Family Sociologist

Available in Spanish by request

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SAFETY : YOUR CHILD & FALLS

by Robin Hewell

WHO:

Children ages 10 and under:

- Babies & Infants
- Toddlers
- Older Children

WHERE:

- **Babies & Infants:** changing tables, front carriers, furniture, walkers, steps/stairs and high chairs
- **Toddlers:** window-related falls
- **Older children:** playground equipment, bikes, skates, etc...



HOW TO PREVENT:

Babies & Infants:

- Secure all chairs and sitting/resting devices
- Keep large devices, like televisions, on lower levels of height to prevent them from falling
- Place safety gates along staircase entrances
- Never leave a child who is in a car seat or bouncing chair, placed on a counter, table or elevated base
- Utilize stationary walkers versus walkers on wheels

Toddlers:

- Keep toys on low levels so your child isn't tempted to climb anything
- Check to see if your window screens are safe
- Reposition chairs and furniture away from windows
- Set up window guards on all windows; however, do not apply any to fire exit windows

Older children:

- Enforce the rule of wearing helmets when riding bikes, skating, etc...
- Make sure the playground equipment is appropriate for your child's age
- Beware of older playgrounds. Newer ones have sturdy equipment and fall-cushioning surfaces

Adapted from:

- Parenting Magazine, August 2003, "How to protect you child from falls"
- National SAFE KIDS Campaign, "Falls"

Fastbreak
For Fathers

by Rich Batten

Family and Consumer Science Agent
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NEW: Look for this in upcoming newsletters throughout the year!

: Playing with Children

One of the most frequently mentioned differences between moms and dads is how much more time dads engage in active play with their children. In fact, it is not uncommon for dads to turn a child-care task or household chore into some kind of game with their children. Such activities shouldn't be dismissed as "just goofing off." Playing with dad - when conducted with a positive tone and allowing for kids to take part in directing the course of play - can help children develop social skills necessary for successful peer relationships.

I propose that playing together - laughter, fun and joy - is the canvas upon which a rich, meaningful father-child relationship is created and explored. "Dad was a lot of fun," may sound like a frivolous epitaph, but I'm convinced that, if true, they would be but the opening words to countless stories of depth and meaning.

IDEAS :

Make time to play with your kids

Follow their lead



Be a role model

Ask open-ended questions

- Original article edited to fit publication

Dreading the Doctor: A Child's Fears

by Robin Hewell

Children withhold fears about many things, from monsters under the bed to even doctor visits. A visit to the doctor can bring about worries and apprehension among children. They may experience fears and/or guilt towards regular checkups, illnesses or even special medical problems. They may feel as if their illness is a punishment for something.

What are those fears?

Separation:

A child may become afraid of the thought of being alone during an examination.

Pain:

A child may be fearful of the pain he may incur during a part of an examination, a medical procedure or possible injection.



The Unknown:

Sometimes a child may think her illness is worse than what was portrayed by her parents. For example, a child with a sore throat may think she needs her tonsils taken out.

The Doctor:

The doctor's social interaction with the child may reflect qualities of dislike and rejection, if the doctor has a detached attitude and/or is speeding through the procedures too efficiently.

How to Eliminate those fears?

1. Clarify and give details about the visit
2. Deal with the guilt your child may have
3. Illustrate expectations of the visit
4. Incorporate your child in the procedure by having him brainstorm questions and gathering information for the doctor
5. Find a doctor that works well with children

Adapted from:

- kidshealth.org, "Preparing Your Child for Visits to the Doctor"

Putting Knowledge to Work



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Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division



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