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Reaction mixed to schools' parent report card

November 3, 2000

BY ROSALIND ROSSI EDUCATION REPORTER

This week's debut of a parental report card was sporadic in Chicago's elementary schools, with fewer than half of the schools agreeing to hand out the cards.

Even at schools that gave out cards at the end of the quarter Wednesday, not all teachers used them.

Parental reactions ranged from appreciation to puzzlement at the effort to make parents of young children accountable, principals and parents said. One principal said some of her parents initially were insulted by the idea.

Schools Chief Paul Vallas said 210 of the city's nearly 500 public elementary schools agreed to use the parental report cards.

The cards provide a 23-point checklist, covering everything from student attendance and immunization to whether a parent "praises the child often." Only checkmarks, not grades, were issued in the checklists.

In addition to the end-of-term checklist, some Chicago schools handed out a daily checklist.

The checklists are optional this year, Vallas said, and schools were urged to let parents evaluate themselves. Some principals said they let teachers decide whether to hand out the checklists and whether to fill them out themselves.

"We haven't gotten any negative feedback," Vallas said. "I'm delighted. I think by second semester we'll have 300-plus schools participating."

Pernecie Pugh, principal at Sojourner Truth Elementary in Cabrini-Green, said she spent at least three weeks filling out the report cards with teachers.

"I had a few [parents] come to my office to talk about it," Pugh said. "I think their first reaction is that they were insulted but if you explain it to them, and give it to them in a different light, they seem to be OK with it. . . . I said, 'I have a checklist, the teachers have a checklist, you have one, and we're all being held accountable.' "

Boone Elementary parent Bob Sloan said his child's teacher asked parents to fill out the checklist at home. But Sloan couldn't imagine how teachers could answer some questions, such as whether a parent "praises the child often" or "spends quality time."

"Certainly teachers have no idea how parents do things in their home," Sloan said. However, he added, "I think it's a good step in the right direction. Some parents will take it seriously. Other people are going to throw it in the garbage can because they don't know

what to do with it."

One teacher said her principal told teachers to give parents the checklists but didn't say if it was "mandatory," so she didn't hand them out. Some teachers, she said, "just didn't know what to do with them" and "I think the parent report card could possibly set up an antagonistic situation unnecessarily," said the teacher, who asked to remain anonymous.

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Parent Involvement Campaign

Parent Report Card

Because research indicates that student performance and parent involvement are interrelated, the Stafford County School Board has launched a rigorous campaign to increase the involvement of parents in the education of their children. In an unprecedented maneuver to help students reach their highest potential, the school division will distribute, and make available on-line, a parent report card. This report card is an optional self-assessment tool designed to help parents analyze their present involvement in the educational process and provide suggestions for further involvement.

The Citizens' Advisory Committee for Parental and Community Involvement conceived the parent report card concept during the 1997-98 school year. Questions are divided into four categories: Parent Involvement with their child's school; Parent familiarity with school information; Parent support of their child's learning; Parent familiarity with Stafford's Community Citizenship Education Program. The parent report cards will be distributed to parents of elementary school students during the first-semester parent-teacher conferences. Parents of middle and high school students will receive their report cards with the November school newsletter. Andrea Bengier, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, stated that, "When parents are actively involved in their child's education, students achieve greater school success." Stafford school officials indicate that to their knowledge no other school division has used this voluntary type of parent assessment tool to improve involvement in

education.

Parent's Report Card

Dear Parents:

We are pleased and proud to present to you a valuable self-assessment tool that you can use to rate your contributions to your child's educational success. It is important to understand that this Parent Report Card was developed by a proactive committee focusing on parental involvement in our schools. We encourage you to take a few minutes to review and complete the Parent Report Card. It is not intended to be returned to school, but to help you assess your own involvement in your child's education. As you see the Parent Report Card around the county, take note on how important your continued involvement is to your child and to the school system.

Citizen's Committee for Parental and Community Involvement

Parent Report Card

(A Self-Assessment Tool For Parents)

The following questions were written by members of the Citizen's Advisory Committee for Parental and Community Involvement and are intended to help parents rate their contributions to their child's success at school. Research indicates that students are more successful when parents are involved in their child's education. Please use these 31 questions as a guide to

some of the ways that you can help your child at school.

Directions: Simply click on your answer to the following questions and then total your 'yes' responses.

- SCORING:**
- 21-31** Congratulations! You are a strong partner in your child's education!
 - 10-20** You are making worthwhile contributions to your child's education but there are even more ways that you can help.
 - 0-9** We need your help! Your child's success at school might be increased if you were able to help more.
-

How Involved Are You With Your Child's School?

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Does the school have your current phone number and address? | Yes | No |
| 2. Did you attend Open House or Back To School Night at your child's school? | Yes | No |
| 3. Have you attended at least one PTA, PTO, or other support group meeting this year? | Yes | No |

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 4. Do you make yourself available for conferences requested by your child's teacher or visit the school even if not requested? | Yes | No |
| 5. Have you had at least one parent-teacher conference with the teacher(s) of your child? | Yes | No |
| 6. Have you volunteered by chaperoning a field trip, helping in the classroom, working on a school committee, helping with a school project, preparing refreshments for a school event, or other similar activities? | Yes | No |
| 7. Have you attended at least one school program? (examples are an awards assembly, a play, an athletic event, or a school party.) | Yes | No |

How Familiar Are You With School Information?

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 8. Have you read the <i>Stafford County Code of Student Conduct</i> ? | Yes | No |
| 9. Do you regularly read the school newsletter? | Yes | No |
| 10. Are you familiar with the extra services provided at your child's school? (examples are speech therapy, resource help for gifted students, and counseling.) | Yes | No |

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 11. Are you aware of current trends in education which are being given county-wide attention in Stafford? (Examples are Standards of Learning [SOLs], multicultural education, and expanded use of technology.) | Yes | No |
| 12. Are you familiar with the grading scale used on your child's report card? | Yes | No |

How Well Do You Support Your Child's Learning?

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 13. Have you identified a regular time and place in your home for your child to do homework? | Yes | No |
| 14. Do you monitor your child's homework? | Yes | No |
| 15. Do you read to your young child? If your child is older, do you encourage reading by paying attention to what your child reads as well as how often he/she reads? | Yes | No |
| 16. Do you insist that your child display good work habits; i.e. do you hold your child responsible for completing all assignments on time and to the best of his/her ability? | Yes | No |
| 17. Are you knowledgeable about what information and skills your child should master at his/her grade level or in his/her major subject areas? | Yes | No |

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 18. Do you ensure that your child has excellent attendance at school? Is he/she absent only when necessary? | Yes | No |
| 19. Have you discussed with your child the importance of a good education? | Yes | No |
| 20. Do you work with the counseling department to ensure that your child enroll in courses to prepare him/her for a chosen career path? | Yes | No |
| 21. Are you aware of your child's academic strengths and weaknesses? | Yes | No |
| 22. Do you support and reinforce the school's discipline plan so that all students can benefit from a good learning environment? | Yes | No |
| 23. Do you initiate contact with your child's teacher or school administrator just to show your support, or do you wait until your child is experiencing problems? | Yes | No |
| 24. Do you support your child's learning by providing nutritious meals and adequate time for sleep? | Yes | No |

Are You Familiar With Stafford's Community Citizenship Education?

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 25. Do you demonstrate and promote the Community Citizenship Education Program which includes the "words of the month"? | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 26. Have you made opportunities to discuss the "words of the month" with your child? | Yes | No |
| 27. Are you a model of "good sportsmanship" when attending school and community events? | Yes | No |
| 28. Do you insist that your child exhibit good sportsmanship at all times? | Yes | No |
| 29. Do you encourage your child to participate in volunteer projects which serve the community? | Yes | No |
| 30. Have you taken time to work with your child in volunteer projects? | Yes | No |
| 31. Do you stress to your child the importance of honoring a commitment? | Yes | No |

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Parents to face their own report cards this fall in Chicago schools

May 30, 2000

Web posted at: 10:02 p.m. EDT (0202 GMT)

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From Correspondent [Patty Davis](#)

CHICAGO (CNN) -- Parents of children enrolled in public schools across Chicago will get a little something extra this fall -- their own report cards.

At the city's Harold Washington Elementary School, parents have been graded for more than six years as an experiment in education reform. "The parent grades are working very well," said Sandra Lewis, the principal at the school.

"When they're not on the 'A' honor roll, they come to the school and they want to know why," Lewis said.

Many more parents may find themselves asking that question this fall, when schools city-wide begin issuing a report card-type checklist to parents, starting at the pre-school and elementary levels.

Involvement, accountability sought

"Our intent is to send checklists home to parents every five weeks that identify things that they are doing -- and that they may not be doing -- that are important to their children's education," said Paul Vallas, the CEO of Chicago Public Schools.

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The checklists would detail whether the child is bringing his or her homework to school, whether the child is attending school on a regular basis, and whether the student has been dressing appropriately for school.

Parents who do poorly would get follow-up help.

The idea is to get parents, especially first-time and single parents, more involved and to teach them to be accountable for their child's performance and behavior in school.

But critics say the teachers, not parents, should be held accountable.

"We feel that it's an insulting idea," said Julie Woestehoff of Parents for Responsible Education. "It's something that doesn't help parent-school communications. And we don't think that it's something that's going to make our students learn."

That's how Ellen Harris -- a parent who has gotten Bs and Cs on her report card -- felt at first. But she has since changed her mind.

"If I keep up my grades, they will keep theirs up," Harris said.

'The parents are always here'

During the seven-year experiment at Harold Washington Elementary, officials at the school have not looked at whether parent report cards have raised student grades or attendance. But they have noticed other improvements.

"We are virtually graffiti-free, our parents are very supportive of us ... the parents are always here," said Lewis.

And, according to the principal, the credit for those improvements goes to parents who are making the grade.

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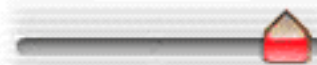
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with Kids**Issues in Education**Education Q&A**Investing**Network**Survey Results**Misc.***Engaging the Public**

Even though everyone has attended school, when it comes time to sending one's own child to kindergarten, parents frequently feel like outsiders looking in. The late summer visit to meet the teacher and take a short ride on the school bus is a beginning, but not nearly enough to engage parents meaningfully as teaching/learning partners.

Parents feel like strangers because so many decisions that affect their children are made without their participation or input. The School Board, superintendent and principals seek public support for school funding but rarely engage the public when making decisions that matter most to parents, such as new curriculum programs, homework expectations, hiring of teachers, disciplinary practices and personal safety.

Children bring home a report card at the end of each term. Teachers fill out this report card, which rates the child's academic achievement and behavior, highlighting strengths and weaknesses. Parents, children and the teacher often use this information to guide their efforts toward improvement of the student's weaker skills or abilities.

I propose that the superintendent request a performance review from parents each term, too, to find out how each school is doing in carrying out its charge to successfully educate each child. The parent report card could then be used as a guide for administrative efforts to improve teaching and learning. Parents would appreciate regular opportunities to voice their opinions and concerns, especially those parents whose voices would otherwise go unheard. Only a small percentage of parents typically attend PTA or School Board meetings and of those, only a small percentage speak publicly about their ideas or concerns. A School Report Card would invite opinions from every parent in the district.

A School Report Card would ask parents to rate teaching performance, school facilities, curriculum and administrative effectiveness, using the same numerical or grading scale used on student report cards. Parents would be encouraged to provide qualitative comments, too, emphasizing strengths as well as weaknesses. School leaders and staff need praise as well as criticism, just like students and parents do! Such outreach could bring problems out into the open to be solved, problems that might otherwise lie dormant to either fade away or get worse.

Development of the school report card could be the beginning of this process of engagement, if school leaders and parent representatives devised the report card form

together. School report cards could save administrators a lot of wasted energy expended on initiatives of low priority to parents.

Examples of some questions to consider including on the form follow:

- All things considered, what grade would you give (name of school) - A, B, C, D or Fail?
- What do you particularly dislike about (name of school)?
- What do you think is especially good about (name of school)?
- If you could change one thing about (name of school) what would it be?

Similar questions could be asked about teaching strengths and weaknesses. For planning purposes, include a place on the form for child-find, to ask about ages and needs of younger children in the family, not yet of school age.

School administrators need to tune in to what their constituency is thinking, and that includes parents. Telling people something is not nearly as effective as listening to what's on their minds. Listening to parents and engaging them in the teaching/learning process with their children will build strong loyalty and meaningful parent involvement in local schools.

Do school administrators and teachers routinely ask you, as parents, how they're doing? Do you think they should? What questions do you think belong on such a report card or survey?

Please send questions or comments to bbruno@snet.net.

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May 31, 2000

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Chicago To Size Up Parents With 'Checklists'

By Michelle Galley

Starting next fall, Chicago parents are scheduled to receive reports every five weeks from their children's public schools. But unlike most correspondence between teachers and parents, these reports will focus less on student performance than on the parents' own role in their children's education.

In what observers have called the first districtwide attempt at such communication between teachers and parents, Chicago school officials announced earlier this month that they are developing checklists that will register how well students are prepared for school.

Some items are to be directly tied to academics—such as whether students complete homework assignments and bring their textbooks to school. Others are to focus on students' health and well-being, including whether they are eating breakfast, are receiving health care, and are bringing needed medications and eyeglasses to school.

"Basically we feel that parent involvement is key," said Paul G. Vallas, the chief executive officer of the 430,000-student district. "We see this as a mechanism to reach out to parents."

But not everyone feels that using parent checklists, which Mr. Vallas also called **parent report cards**, is an effective way of increasing communication.

"The concept of this policy is not one we think would be very effective," said Julie Woestehoff, the executive director of Parents United for Responsible Education, a local group that is often at odds with the Vallas administration.

Lists Won't Be Mandatory



Paul G.
Vallas

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["Putting Parents in Their Place,"](#) Commentary, Sept. 22, 1999.

["Parents Express Scant Interest in Helping Govern Schools,"](#) March 24, 1999.

For background, previous stories, and Web links, see our [Issues Page on Parental Involvement](#).

And at least one Chicago group wonders if the plan will actually come to fruition.

Mr. Vallas "has ideas that develop a mile a minute," said Jackie Gallagher, a spokeswoman for the Chicago Teachers Union, the 33,500-member local affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers. She said union officials are going to wait and see how the idea plays out in practice before taking a stance on it.

While some Chicago schools already use similar forms of parent-teacher communication, the district may be breaking new ground by asking all schools to participate in the program.

Schools will not be required to use the checklist model, but Mr. Vallas said that he plans to require that schools have some type of community-outreach program starting this fall.

"We are very interested to see how it works," said Patty Yoxall, a spokeswoman for the National PTA, which is based in Chicago. Ms. Yoxall warned that the checklists should not develop into critiques of parenting skills that "could turn people off."

And some parents already know what it takes to ensure that their child is ready for school, which means that it won't be effective for all parents, said Brenda Diehl, the president of the Illinois PTA.

She added that checklists are less inflammatory than report cards, which suggest that parents are being graded even if they don't actually assign letter grades. "I hope that Chicago Public Schools provides a welcoming environment for parents," she said.

Parents generally hear from school only when there is a problem, said Ms. Woestehoff of PURE. She added that good communication has to flow both ways.

"This report card is a one-way communication of parents' weaknesses," she said. Another problem, she said, is that five weeks is too long to wait to express certain concerns to parents. For example, if children are attending school without their eyeglasses, their parents should be informed immediately, she said.

A group of community-based organizations will be working with district officials to develop the checklists, which will vary depending on a student's grade level, Mr. Vallas said. "We are not developing this in-house in a vacuum," he said.

Missing Link

Beverly Tunney, the president of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, said she supports the idea of sending home checklists. Parents have traditionally been the missing link in a child's education, she said.



**Beverly
Tunney**

"Parents need to be held accountable for doing their part," Ms. Tunney said. "We want to make sure we are working together as a team to do what is best for the child."

Because many parents whose children attend public schools are inexperienced, the checklists will facilitate parent involvement by keeping them better informed, Mr. Vallas said.

"The bottom line is: We are either going to talk the talk or walk the walk," he said. "Let's stop complaining about parent involvement and do something about it."

on the Web

["A Checklist for an Effective Parent-School Partnership"](#) is provided by [Project Appleseed](#).

Review ["Developing Family/School Partnerships: Guidelines for Schools and School Districts,"](#) from the [National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education](#).

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Bright Ideas

Washington School grades parents

On Feb. 7, Harold Washington Elementary School in Burnside put two sets of report cards in the mail. One set graded students, the other graded students' parents.

Launched three years ago, Washington's Parent Report Card program has helped eliminate tardiness, boost attendance by several percentage points and increase parent participation in school activities by 75 percent, according to Principal Sandra F. Lewis. On any given day, some 25 parents volunteer time for work at the school.

Chief Executive Officer Paul Vallas was so impressed when he visited Washington School that now he is recommending parent report cards or contracts for schools citywide. "The card itself acts as a 'what you need to do,' a kind of reminder on some of the big issues," observes Vallas.

Every marking period, Washington parents and guardians are graded in several "subjects," including whether their child gets homework in on time, has regular attendance, is punctual, respects authority and dresses in the required uniform. They get A's, B's, C's or "area of concern."

Parents with high grades have their names posted on an honor roll and, at the end of the school year, are rewarded with certificates, trophies and accolades at an awards assembly and luncheon. "The kids feel really good because it says to them, 'You've earned your parents the chance to be on the honor roll,'" Lewis

notes.

Also, Lewis has continually "raised the bar," requiring more of parents to get honor-roll status. "The first year we concentrated on what the children were accomplishing. This year, parents also have to participate at the school, in any capacity at least once every marking period, to qualify." The school also asks parents whether they want a conference to talk about how they might improve.

Before the program began, almost 20 percent of the children were consistently late or absent, and parents weren't very involved, reports Lewis. "I was looking for a way to connect with them, a way that would show the significance of their participation in their children's academic and social behavior."

"Initially, teachers were wary," she recalls. "They didn't want to appear to be judgmental. But the parents themselves were so overwhelmingly supportive that it has become an integral part of what we're doing here."

"When I received my first report card, I looked at it and my children's, and it just made me feel good to know that my efforts in helping them with their school work were being recognized," says Rita White, mother of Don, a 2nd-grader, and William Jr., a 5th-grader.

Dar-Lisa Meaders, a 2nd-grader, says her mom is happy "because I'm working very hard now, and she knows that I'm on the honor roll because of her, and she's on the honor roll because of me."

—Naazish Yar Khan

For more information, contact Principal Sandra F. Lewis at (312) 535-6225.



The Parent Report Card

by Roslyn Duffy and Elizabeth Crary

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By
Roslyn Duffy and Elizabeth Crary

Useful for 5 - 12 years

Packet includes an eight page booklet and five report cards

\$5.95 per packet

About the Authors:

Roslyn Duffy
[Elizabeth Crary](#)

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Does your child feel safe, listened to and involved in your family plans? What are your son's thoughts about allowances, your daughter's questions on sex, or the reasons they don't invite friends over?

The Parent Report Card is a dynamic way for parents to learn more about their children, respond to problems, and achieve more harmony as a family. The parent grades her- or himself on 30 issues of concern to the child, such as "gives me hugs and kisses when I want them" and "provides and enforces rules." The child likewise grades the parent on the same issues. Then parent and child compare their grading, to see how their views are either similar or different. Each of the questions on the report card is keyed to additional resources and problem-solving guidelines in the accompanying booklet.

The Parent Report Card is easy to use and provides families with many new insights and opportunities to address problems, make changes, and celebrate successes.

Roslyn Duffy is a 17-year veteran child care director, lectures and teaches classes for both parents and teachers, and is a counselor. [Elizabeth Crary](#) is a nationally known parent educator and author of 27 books for parents and children.

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or other similar activities? Yes No

How Familiar Are You With School Information?

1. Have you attended at least one school program? (Examples are an awards assembly, a play, an athletic event, or a school party.) Yes No
2. Have you read the Allen Dale Parent/Student Handbook? Yes No
3. Do you regularly read the school newsletters and Panther Press? Yes No
4. Are you familiar with the extra services provided at your child's school? (Examples are speech therapy, resource help for gifted students, and counseling.) Yes No
5. Are you aware of current trends in education which are being given state-wide and district-wide attention? Yes No
6. Are you familiar with the grading scale used on your child's progress report? Yes No

How Well Do You Support Your Child's Learning?

1. Have you identified a regular time and place in your home for your child to do homework? Yes No
 2. Do you monitor your child's homework? Yes No
 3. Do you participate in RAH (Read-At-Home) ? Yes No
 4. Do you insist that your child display good work habits; i.e. do you hold your child responsible for completing all assignments on time and to the best of his/her ability? Yes No
 5. Are you knowledgeable about what information and skills your child should master at his/her grade level or in his/her major subject areas? Yes No
 6. Do you ensure that your child has excellent attendance at school? Is he/she absent/tardy only when necessary? Yes No
 7. Have you discussed with your child the importance of a good education? Yes No
-
1. Do you work with the teachers and the counseling department to ensure that your child has a positive learning experience at Allen Dale? Yes No
 2. Are you aware of your child's academic strengths and weaknesses? Yes No
-
1. Do you support and reinforce the school's discipline plan so that all students can benefit from a good learning environment? Yes No
 2. Rather than wait until your child is experiencing problems, do you initiate contact with your child's teacher or school administrator just to show your support ?

Using a teacher or school administrator just to show your support :

- Yes No
1. Do you support your child's learning by providing nutritious meals and adequate time for sleep? Yes No
2. Have you made opportunities to discuss the "Thought For The Week" with your child? Yes No
3. Are you a model of "good sportsmanship" when attending school and community events? Yes No
4. Do you insist that your child exhibit good sportsmanship at all times? Yes No
1. Do you encourage your child to participate in volunteer projects which serve the community? Yes No
2. Have you taken time to work with your child in volunteer projects? Yes No
3. Do you stress to your child the importance of honoring a commitment? Yes No

SCORING:

21-30 Congratulations! You are a strong partner in your child's education!

10-20 You are making worthwhile contributions to your child's education but there are even more ways that you can help.

0-9 We need your help! Your child's success at school might be increased if you were able to help more.

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THE NEPONSET VALLEY DAILY NEWS

Thursday, May 25, 2000

Time for a parent report card

By TOM MORONEY
CNC COLUMNIST

Too many parents today are major-league twerps, meaning they are thin-skinned, petty, and quick to blame everyone else when their kids don't do well in school.

This is why the idea just proposed out in Chicago, a city known for its bare-knuckled approach to life's problems, is so refreshing.

The city's school superintendent wants his teachers to issue reports cards to the moms and dads.

Once every five months, the at-home adults would be graded by the in-school adults, that is, the teachers.

The superintendent has even come up with a series of questions to help teachers score the parents. Are the parents sending their children off with the basics such as eyeglasses and boots? Are they making sure their children get enough sleep? Are they monitoring their homework?

I think he's on to something. And not just for Chicago. From what I see here in the suburbs of Boston, many moms and dads are screwing up on the job. And when they get caught screwing up, they just blame someone else.

A case in point: From time to time, parents raise a ruckus saying teachers give out too much homework. Boo hoo.

What they never seem to grasp is that their children are doing so many things after school that there's no time for homework. Who's to blame for that? The parents of course.

That's why we need a parent report card around here too. To kick it off, here's mine, based on skills as outlined by the Chicago plan.

1. Am I helping my kids to remember the essentials for school each day?
I'm usually OK with this. But just OK.

My job in the morning is Enforcer, making sure my kids get in and out of the shower as quickly as possible, and that they eat their breakfast. During that time I often ask questions about whether they have packed up their homework or permission slips or lunch money. The one recurring problem are those mornings when my oldest brings his lunch in a brown bag. He'll sometimes leave it on the kitchen table. And I'm always torn.

Should I bring it to school so he can eat lunch? Or should I leave it home and make him go hungry or beg or steal the food - all valuable skills when he's out on his own. Especially if he's going into politics.

In the end, I usually cave and bring it to him. But I know what some of the teachers will say: Don't bring it. It's the only way he'll learn.

Grade: B-

2. Do I make sure they get enough sleep?

This is a biggie. I talk the talk, that is, I'm always getting up out of my chair around 9 each night and pointing them in the direction of bed. But kids are slow. And I mean slooooooowwww. With all the washing up and picking out of the next day's wardrobe, my kids need more time to get ready than the guy who played the Wookie in Star Wars.

This usually brings us to 9:45. In some cases, even later. If I get them up at 6:15 in the morning, this leaves barely enough time for adequate sleep. Sometimes my oldest is still rattling around after 10. And then he's tired the next day. I need to work on this.

Grade: C

3. Do I make sure they are doing all homework and staying on top of their studies?]

Some marking periods I'm right on top of this. I make sure I look at homework. I make sure I'm available to help review the night before for tests and quizzes. And frankly when I am conscientious, the kids do better. But then I have times when I'm not. Part of it is because I want them to become self-sufficient. But the other part is pure laziness, especially during the May sweeps on TV. I mean, who has time for algebra with all these season finales?

Grade: C+

As you can see, a quick tally of my average grade puts me somewhere around a gentleman's C. I expect more from my kids.

Maybe it's time to expect more from myself.

Tom Moroney is a columnist based at the Metro West Daily News in Framingham. He is also host of a talk show every Saturday from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. on WRKO, AM 680.

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Grading Parents



Chicago Schools Could Begin Grading Parents on Kids' Performance

Chicago schools could begin grading parents on children's performance. (PhotoDisc)

By Maria F. Durand



May 19 — When Brenda Williams' son brought home his grades from Chicago's Harold Washington Elementary School last year, she was shocked to receive a report card with her name on it, from a teacher she had never met.

Williams, it turns out, was part of a parental evaluation program being tested this year by Chicago Public Schools. Under the plan, parents are evaluated on a checklist of parenting issues, such as whether their children attend school regularly, have the supplies they need and are getting to bed at the right time.

School officials say the proposed program is to help parents help their children in school.

"The need should be obvious," says Paul Vallas, chief executive officer for the Chicago school district. "If your child is asthmatic and doesn't have his ventilator, if your child is sleeping in class, we have to ask what is happening at home. Who is responsible?"

The checklist, which will be handed out quarterly, rates parents on a pass/fail basis. Parents falling short may be offered workshops to help improve their parenting skills.

Who Grades the Teachers?

But this proposal has baffled parents and parent groups in Chicago, who say communication with parents can be improved in other ways.

While the notice wasn't critical of her, Williams said just the idea of being evaluated by her son's teachers rubs her the wrong way.

"I got so angry," said the 51-year-old woman with two children and a grandchild who attend school in Chicago's

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Southside. "If you have never even met me, you don't know me, how can you give me a report card."

"I don't think they are doing a good job of evaluating students. How are they going to do a good job of evaluating parents?" says Julie Woestehoff, director of Parents United for Responsible Education, a parent group in the Chicago area. The citywide group encourages parental involvement, but Woestehoff said a checklist for parents is the wrong way to change bad habits.

"In helping parents be more involved, the most important element is trust," Woestehoff said. "That cannot be developed and might even be harmed by having a parent checklist. Communication is a two-way street and has to all be in an atmosphere of trust and respect."

Williams said she feels if she is going to be graded, so should the teachers.

"I would support this if I could be given the same opportunity to evaluate my son's teachers and principals," she said.

And why wait when most parents can be contacted on the phone or through a personal visit?

"I really see the importance of welcoming parents' presence in school but if there is a problem, you need to call me and tell me right away," She said. "I don't really need a see for a checklist."

Still Testing

Although the parent report card has been tested out at some schools, the program has not yet been implemented districtwide. It is part of next year's budget and has to be approved by the school board later this year.

Some doubt the proposal will actually be implemented and some see it as an attention-grabbing campaign from the school chief.

But Vallas, who has headed the school district for five years and has received praise for his down-to-business attitude, hopes his critics will see the positive aspects of the new plan.

"The key is parental involvement," Vallas said. "I want all my schools to be successful. I may irritate a few parents, but if one or two out of three parents are reminded, then I will certainly declare victory." ■

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Parent Report Card

Now Your Child Can Grade You

Being a parent today is a tough job. Try as you might, you can't always be certain you're doing the right thing. But there's one sure way to find out - and that's by asking your children what they think of the job you're doing.

The following report card asks your child to rate your performance as a parent. You and he can fill it out separately -- choosing the grades A, B, C, or D-- and then compare the marks you gave yourself with the marks your child gave you. The results might surprise you! You may think you are doing one kind of a job, while your child perceives things very differently. The purpose of this report card is to show you where you and your child disagree, to open up communication between you, and to help you improve your relationship.

Compare Results

After you and your child have filled out the report card, focus on the grades that are alike or almost alike. Are there more of these than marks that are widely different? What areas do you agree on? Are there improvements that can be made, even in these areas? Talk about it.

Now take a look at the grades that show wide disparities. Ask your child to explain why he graded you the way he did. Be positive and open. If your child feels that you want him to defend his opinion, or that you feel upset or hurt about the way he completed the report card, the lines of communication between you may shut down.

Ask your child how she would change things to make them better. Listen to her advice. It may be reasonable, or it may not work for you. That's O.K. The point is to find out what she is thinking and to show her that you are willing to listen.

Take into consideration that there are times - especially in the early teen years - when children tend to be highly critical of their parents. The results of this report card may reflect your child's normal tendency to be more independent by questioning and criticizing what you do.

If your child did not grade you on something, ask why. It could be that he couldn't understand the category or couldn't think of an appropriate grade. But if he didn't want to give you a grade, try to find out if that's an area he's very unhappy about.

Finally, don't expect a perfect report card! Focus on the positive - the things that you are doing right - instead of focusing on your failings. Discovering your weaknesses can be an opportunity, a first step toward improving your relationship with your child. So open up the discussion and keep a sense of humor. You may be amazed at the results.

How do you rate?

1. Time

Do I spend enough time with you?

Am I available to you when you need me?

2. Feedback

Do I give you praise when you deserve it?

Do I criticize you too much?

3. Communication

Do I listen to your concerns?

Do I make my views clear?

4. Caring

Do I let you know that I care about your problems and your schoolwork?

5. Independence

Do I allow you a reasonable amount of independence?

6. Teaching

Do I help you learn new things?

Do I help you learn life skills?

7. Friendliness

Am I pleasant to be around?

Am I approachable?

8. Acceptance

Do I accept you for who you are instead of trying to make you into who I think you should be?

9. Love

Do you always feel loved by me, even when I'm angry?

Do I show you that I love you often enough?

10. Role model

Do my actions suggest good ways to behave?

11. Authority

Do I make fair and just rules?

Do I consider your opinions and ideas when making rules?

12. Basic needs

Do I provide you with enough meals, clothes, money and safety for you to feel comfortable?

Kathy Faggella and Janet Horowitz are mothers, educators and the authors of many books, including "My Mom" and "My Dad."

Parents Will Get Their Own Report Cards

--Boundary_(ID_+2+gaUhVVmW6P/66RDI9lw)

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FWD via Conservative Christian News Network (CCNN)

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PARENTS WILL GET OWN REPORT CARDS

<http://www.chicago.tribune.com/version1/article/0,1575,SAV-0009220304,00.html>

By Michael Martinez

Tribune Education Writer

September 22, 2000

Many parents of children in Chicago public schools can expect to receive what officials loosely call the system's first "parents report card" from teachers during the first week in November, officials said Thursday.

School officials unveiled the final version of the report card--really a checklist--and parents can expect to be evaluated on 23 responsibilities three times during the academic year.

Those responsibilities address parent-school communication, parental involvement in education, student attendance and punctuality, and health and safety.

The system's 601 schools will have the option of using the new parent report cards or their own model to reach out to parents, said schools chief Paul Vallas.

Also, schools can send the checklists home to every parent or only to those identified by teachers and principals as needing help with their children.

Parents who get several bad marks will receive a home visit every 10 weeks--including those weeks when the checklists are sent home--from one of 1,050 designated school staff members or counselors, who will offer to help parents.

Teachers will use check marks to identify parents' deficiencies--much like how check marks are used on elementary school report cards to identify pupils' problems.

Teachers will pass judgment on such responsibilities as whether the parent or guardian:

Has the child at school on time daily.

Has the child eat healthy meals and snacks.

Dresses the child appropriately for the weather.

Prepares the child for school each day.

Has the child return completed homework to school each day.

Praises the child often.

Spends quality time with the child.

The checklist will be issued during parent report card pickup days Nov. 1-2 and April 4-5 and during the last week of school, officials said.

Critics contend the checklist could create hostility between parents and teachers, and some have even asked for "teachers report cards."

Vallas defended the checklist and said parents can pass judgment on teachers by participating through their local school councils.

"Hopefully this will be instructive. I think it will be positive," he said.

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--Judge Robert Bork in "Slouching Toward Gomorrah."

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