

For weekly News Column
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Who's Parenting Our Children?

“Teenagers who don’t do well in school wouldn’t be allowed to get a driver’s license under Missouri legislation given initial House approval last week.” This was the lead line of a news story last week. I just shook my head and thought, here we go again, another example of government trying to “fix” a family problem. This time it’s a problem of teens not going to school and not doing well in school. Where are the parents of these teens?

Now the government wants to legislate school attendance and academic requirements for teens to get their drivers license. How did we get to this point? Perhaps lack of parenting skills or a lack of responsible parenting have lead to this punitive legislation.

Many parents are simply not doing their jobs as parents. Parenting is a challenging, time-consuming, complicated job. You have to think and react appropriately. You must make the time for it. You have to teach and guide. You are the adult, not a buddy or best friend. You are the one responsible for rules, monitoring, enforcement and consequences.

As a parent educator and Human Development Specialist with University of Missouri Extension, I have concerns about many children being raised by parents who either don’t have the skills to parent effectively or are too overwhelmed by stresses from jobs, relationships, drug use or economic conditions to parent effectively.

In many homes, parents let their children make too many decisions and allow their children to be disrespectful to them as authority figures. Parents must take back their jobs as parents! Say the oath of parenthood, “I am the parent...I am in charge” and mean it. Be strong

enough to make the rules and enforce them. Say no when needed. Make the time to do your parenting job. Research clearly shows that parents are the most influential part of a child's life – even teens. Through your rules, teaching and modeling behavior, your children learn right from wrong and good from bad. Accept the influence you have in your child's life and make it positive.

Start early with simple family rules such as, we don't hit in our family, we pick up after ourselves, and we brush our teeth before we go to bed. These simple rules are setting the stage for living in a family and they help establish good habits for children. Then, as your children grow older, you make rules related to cell phone use, curfew, attending school, doing homework, and dress codes. Don't forget, if you are parenting as a couple, both parents must agree on the rules and consequences. Provide a united partnership when parenting so your children don't divide and conquer.

Do your job at home and let government do their job at the Capitol.

Need to sharpen your parenting skills or want parenting information? Check out www.missourifamilies.org or give Lisa a call at 885-5556 or email her at wallacel@missouri.edu.