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Is the school really where the action is? As school winds down for the year, it would be a good time to look at the impact our schools have on the lives of our kids. There is no question that school classes and activities are a central aspect in the lives of our kids. Because of this, schools are historically looked to to be the front line in delivering information to our children and grand children about readin' and writin', and many other aspects of "real life". The school systems all across the country have been directed and, in some cases mandated to provide classes on drugs, alcohol, sex, family relations and just about every other conceivable aspect of personal and community life.

The schools have also been handed the blame when kids don't turn out like we as parents and fellow community members feel they should. Is the responsibility we hand the schools appropriate? If grades are not high enough, is it the schools fault? If drug use, teen pregnancy and destructive behavior are too high, do we look to the schools for not doing their job?

In 1991, some pretty revealing research was completed, which defined the actual linkages between the lives and learning of children and the many groups in the community around them. Until this research was done, all we had was opinion. Now, it seems fairly clear that outside of the immediate family, the school is NOT the single most significant source for information and learning about the world. That place in a child's life is shared equally by the child's peers, the work setting of the family, the church-based support in the community and, finally, the school. In fact, if a child is not hearing and experiencing consistent attitudes, values and information from all four of those places in their life, they are at much greater risk of making unhealthy choices for themselves and others. It would seem that if we expect a positive direction in the lives of our own children, and in the lives of children next door and across the street, we as employers, congregation members and next door neighbors have to have our act together! It has been easy to brush that responsibility off on to the schools. After all, the schools have these kids as a captive audience for six or seven hours every day. We plow thousands of tax dollars into the schools and we expect them to do the job.

Reality however, now shows that no matter how well funded, how well organized the school is to tackle teaching our kids "how to live", we are really just wasting the time of the school staff, wasting our tax dollars and wasting the time of our kids that could be

better used on learning other things. This is NOT to say that the school hasn't an important role in teaching and modeling healthy behavior and decision making for our kids. But if the school is expected to be the most significant source of that information, we kidding ourselves.

As employers, we need to be reminded of the importance of our role in what happens to and for the children of our employees. As church members, there needs to be consistency between words and actions--and the actions must be real and relevant in the lives of our families and children. As we work with our own children, we must remember that we are not only giving guidance and support to our own kids, we are also responsible in very real ways for the actions and decisions of the friends of our children.

Finally, as we decide what we expect our schools to teach and how we expect the schools to guide, we have to make sure that the community, the workplace, our families and our schools are all on the same page. As parents, teachers, employers and neighbors, we have to make a concerted effort to talk to and listen to each other. We have to accept the joint responsibility we've had all along

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