

FROM DATATIMES

In busing debate, keep the focus on education

By PHILIP GAILEY

10/02/94

ST. PETERSBURG TIMES

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When U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley speaks on the state of public education, he often invokes the words of John Dewey: "What the best and wisest parent wants for his (or her) child, that must be what the community wants for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools . . . destroys our democracy."

At this moment Pinellas County is engaged in an emotional and at times wrenching debate over proposed changes in its court-ordered busing plan. I believe most parents know what they want for their children. The only question is whether the educators and the politicians, the ministers and community activists, the opinionmakers and the defenders of the status quo will lead the way or stand in the way.

Contrary to what some may say, this debate is not about desegregation. Pinellas schools achieved that 23 years ago. Nor is it about resegregation. That simply will not be allowed to happen. Although some people seem reluctant to acknowledge it, this debate is about the quality of education our children are getting. The issue of desegregation is little more than a convenient diversion for those who would rather not confront the reality of what is happening in our public schools.

It is African-American parents who have forced us to focus on education - not the white opponents of busing, not the white liberals who would prefer to dwell on black-white ratios and social ideals. For more than two decades Pinellas schools have been a model of desegregation. But in recent years African-Americans have begun to look behind the numbers, as impressive as they are, and ask a critical question: Why are the schools failing their children?

That question needs to be broadened to whether the schools are failing most children. Something is seriously wrong in public education, not only in Florida, but in schools throughout the country. That's why charter schools are spreading where public schools have failed miserably. People are willing to try something different, to at least risk change. When some people rhapsodize about the wonderful education Pinellas schools are providing all children, black parents especially must wonder if they are talking about the same schools their children attend. Pinellas schools may be among the best in the state, but that's not saying much.

Pinellas school Superintendent Howard Hinesley, responding to community dissatisfaction with the present system, has proposed changes in the county's 23-year-old busing plan. Though not perfect, his plan would promote greater stability in the system without doing

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serious harm to desegregation. It would allow more children - black and white - to attend desegregated neighborhood schools, reducing busing by 20 percent. The plan also would direct more resources to schools in low-income neighborhoods.

African-American children would be the primary beneficiaries of many of the changes he is proposing. Yet, the plan is encountering stiff opposition from both African-Americans and white liberals, for different reasons. Part of the black community simply doesn't trust the education establishment to keep its word. It fears that any change will be a step backward, another broken promise. Other African-Americans are ready to abandon integration and return to neighborhood schools, even if they are all-black schools, as long as they get their share of resources.

Sadly, some well-meaning defenders of the status quo are stuck in 1970. They seem to have trouble really believing that they won the battle, that segregated schools no longer exist in Pinellas County. They object to the proposal to increase the maximum black enrollment in any south Pinellas school from 30 to 40 percent. They fear it would trigger white flight. Never mind that it would mean more children, black and white, would be able to attend desegregated schools near their homes.

Some people still believe desegregation has to be carefully calibrated and achieved through rigid formulas. To them, the racial ratios set by the 1971 court order are sacred, even magical. The existing court order allows a maximum 30 percent black enrollment in any south Pinellas school, although a few are pushing 35 percent. Hinesley would raise the cap to 40 percent. How much of a difference would that make? In a school of 900 students, the new cap would mean that the maximum black enrollment could increase from 270 to 360. Does anyone really believe that would trigger white flight? Remember, a modified court order would still be a court order. It would have to be enforced, whether the cap was 30 percent or 40 percent. Not one predominantly black school would be tolerated.

The other emotional bridge some people simply can't bring themselves to cross is the proposal to eliminate the 4 percent black minimum in north Pinellas elementary schools. That would create a few all-white schools, which would be a setback for the ideal of diversity. But it also would allow more African-American children, who have borne most of the busing burden from the beginning, to attend desegregated schools closer to home. Is that really so bad?

The upcoming series of public hearings is an opportunity for citizens to cut through the fear, mistrust and old thinking to seek answers to parts of the Hinesley plan that may trouble them. Some proposals need to be fleshed out with more specifics. For example, what would be the implications of the proposed "guaranteed school zones" for magnet schools?

Some people also need to be reassured that the proposal for coalition schools is designed to improve schools that serve low-income neighborhoods, not label the children who attend them. These schools already are serving children from poverty-stricken areas, and about the only thing that would change is that they would

More...

GAILEY, continued...(3)

get additional resources to try to improve student achievement. I simply can't understand why anyone would want to turn this effort to help the children with the greatest needs into a controversy over stereotyping.

The Hinesley plan needs careful study and honest, vigorous public debate. There may be room for improvement in some areas. The community may need more time to consider the proposals. There's no rush. Let's get on with this important work, but let's try to keep the focus where it belongs - on education.

Philip Gailey is editor of editorials of the Times.

Home Work for Parents

By Laura Sessions Stepp
Washington Post Staff Writer

Prepare to hear a lot this year about parent participation in schools. Education Secretary Richard Riley has placed it at the top of his agenda, saying American students would perform better if Mom and Dad got more involved—and stayed involved.

It's the staying that's the biggest problem, according to the national research organization Child Trends. Child Trends, using Education Department data, reported recently that only half of U.S. parents take part in school activities once their children reach middle school or high school, compared to three-fourths of elementary-school parents.

Educators cite a number of reasons for declining parent attention: greater economic pressures than when the children were younger, more marital problems, poorer health, more responsibilities at work. Also, older children often actively object to the attention they once welcomed.

"You're dealing with an emerging adult and you can't do it the same way you potty trained the kid," says Washington educator Dorothy Rich.

Stay away, however, and you may impair your student's performance, Rich and other experts say. Stay involved—in the right way—and you can help sustain, and even improve achievement, attitudes and goals.

Riley suggests three things parents should be doing at a minimum: make sure their children go to school, provide different kinds of reading material in the home, and limit television to two hours per weeknight.

In countless other ways as well, parents of older children can boost learning. Here are some examples, provided by education specialists:

- Involve youth in making household purchases. Give them a list and in-

structions on finding the best buy. When considering a big item such as a washing machine, ask them to check newspaper ads for sales. Compose together a list of questions about the product and then ask them to phone several stores for answers, which can be written down and compared.

Having a party? Your child can tally the items that will be needed and the cost of each one.

- When you're measuring a window for new curtains, or a floor for new carpet, ask your child to figure out the dimensions. Install the curtains or carpet together, after you've both read the directions.

- Sharpen reasoning skills by discussing family rules. If your child objects to a particular decree, ask for two reasons why it is a bad rule, then two reasons why it makes sense. Explain your point of view the same way. You may decide to keep the rule, but at least your child will know you considered his or her side.

- If you're having trouble enforcing a particular chore, ask your child to explain in writing why it's not getting done. Alternatives also must be suggested in writing with reasons stated. This not only encourages writing skills, it also may prompt a dialogue about something that has been bothering both of you.

- If someone in the news, or a particular company, irritates your child, suggest writing a letter of complaint.

- Go the library at least once a week. Give children time to browse and let them take books home even if you think their choices are too difficult or too easy. (You can always find something appropriate to check out as well.) Find a music tape or video that corresponds with the book or books your child is interested in.

- Read bank statements, insurance policies, medicine labels. "Read the big print, read the fine print, but read," says Dorothy Rich, who makes

this suggestion along with many others in her book "Megaskills."

- Encourage your child to make a homework chart recording days of the week down one side and subjects across the top. Post the chart. Each day after school, the child checks the subjects assigned for that day and later circles the check to show the assignment has been completed. Attach a marker or pen to the chart so it's always handy.

Another chart could come in handy for long-range projects, helping your student plan the timing and sequence of work from beginning to deadline. Don't assume the teacher will do that, says Fran Litman, director of the Center for Parenting Studies at Wheelock College in Boston.

If your high schooler is preparing a term paper, ask how you can help, whether it's arranging a trip to the library or photocopying resource material. Offer to look over the final report if you feel you can be helpful, says David Winch, an education specialist in Boston.

- Establish early that homework time is quiet time—no television, no phone calls. (Whether music is allowed depends on how your child works best.)

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HOME WORK...continued...

During middle school, it's still appropriate to look over completed homework, says Winch. Once your child reaches high school, you can negotiate how often. Every three days may work, or you may choose to wait until the first progress report.

Carry on conversations about homework, but not when your child is in the midst of it. If specific questions are resisted, be general: What's fun about math? What's not?

■ Consider learning a hobby with your child—piano, cooking, woodworking. Transmitting a sense of inquisitiveness, a love of learning and a willingness to be challenged intellectually may be more important than teaching specific skills in math or reading, some educators suggest.

■ Continue to attend school functions. "It matters to the child, even if (he or she) protests," says Fran Litman. Network with parents of children a grade or two higher than your child's, so that you know what to expect.

■ If your child objects to you volunteering in his class, find another one, even if you can visit only once or twice a year. "You get to know the school culture, what it's like to walk through crowded halls," says Winch. "It establishes a concrete connection between what your child does and what you do." It also reinforces the notion that you think education is important.

Winch says parents of older children tend to withdraw from school when the schoolwork begins to tax their own knowledge and skills. They don't realize they can still be effective goaders, supervisors, cheerleaders.

Pediatric neurologist Benjamin S. Carson recounts how his mother, a high school graduate, helped him to two or three hours of programs weekly and encouraged that he read and write reports on two books per week from the library. Once considered the class dunce, he began to excel, finishing third in his high school class and entering Yale University on an academic scholarship.

"Years later, Carson discovered that his mother could not read those book reports," Diane Scott Jones, a Temple University psychology professor, notes in a research paper account of Carson. "Parental monitoring can be beneficial even in the absence of parental academic skills."

And That's An Order

If you're a parent and a soldier stationed at the world's largest Army installation, you may not have a choice about supporting your child in school.

Lt. Gen. Paul E. Funk, commanding officer at Fort Hood, Tex., told more than 200 soldiers in the First Cavalry Division last fall that their "place of duty" was parent-teacher conferences held twice every six weeks. The soldiers were parents of students at two public schools—elementary and middle—located at Fort Hood.

This fall the pilot program is expanding to hundreds of other soldiers whose children attend six schools off base, according to project director Tricia Christ. She

hopes the project ultimately will engage all soldiers who have children in the public schools.

"It was not an easy sell at first. Some soldiers objected," Christ says. "When you say 'parent-teacher conference,' the first thing that comes to mind is negative."

But Christ says the program is now a success. "We've had a lot of positive feedback from the soldiers," she says. "They're now seeing the value of it."

For example, she says, a soldier named John Smith, who was a grade school teacher, told her that during that time, he had learned a lot about his child's school. "He was a great teacher," she says. "During that time, he learned a lot about his child's school. He was a great teacher."

He discovered that his child was doing well in social studies. "She just wasn't asserting herself in that area," he says. So he established some

goals for her and watched her grades go up in all subjects. She wasn't the only one whose performance improved. School officials from the district that includes the two Fort Hood schools reported that among the students participating, the number of pupils who mastered reading and math doubled.

Kecia was as jittery as her dad at first. "She thought, now Mom and Dad will know everything." But it wasn't long before he'd tell her he was going to the school and she'd say, "Oh that's good, here's what we're doing."

Manson believes "parents need to get more involved in their kids' lives" and if it takes an employer to nudge them along, that's okay. Of course that's easier in the military.

"The police can't call a parent and make them be at school," he says, "and the principal can't. But the Army sure can."

—Laura Sessions Stepp

William Raspberry

Simple Things Parents Can Do

The schools that were once havens from neighborhood violence and turmoil now have turmoil of their own. Principals don't know whether to lock the schoolhouse doors, in violation of the fire codes, or leave them unlocked, allowing disruptive and sometimes violent outsiders to come in.

Parents don't know whether to teach their children to walk away from trouble—punking out, the tougher kids call it—or encourage them to arm themselves against trouble they can't control.

Here's how rough it is: Two Chicago teenagers just "executed" an 11-year-old member of their own gang who himself was being sought for killing a 14-year-old girl a few days earlier. The "execution," by the way, was not for revenge but because the boy had brought police "heat" on the gang.

Given this awful state of affairs, it sounded almost naive the other day when Secretary of Education Richard Riley called for increased parental participation as a major element in setting the schools right again. He wasn't calling for parent patrols, either. He was asking parents to do such ordinary stuff as reading to their

children, limiting their TV time and making sure they attend school.

You know what? Riley is right.

Only an idiot would believe that increased study time would suppress the violence that has us on the verge of giving up. But the truth is, for all the media attention we necessarily

The elements of school success.

give it, school violence remains relatively rare. School failure is considerably more widespread. (And I, for one, believe there is a link, however indirect, between the two.)

Riley's remarks, which accompanied the release of a Department of Education report called "Strong Families, Strong Schools," were directed not just to parents in America's troubled neighborhoods but to parents of all school-age children. The gist of his message:

"Three things over which parents exercise authority—student absenteeism, the variety of reading materials in the home and excessive televi-

sion watching—explain . . . almost all the differences in average student achievement across the states."

As a matter of fact, there is nothing new in the new release; it is a distillation of 30 years of widely accepted educational studies. But it is startling how much of the evidence points to the overwhelming importance of what happens at home—for instance, that "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children," or that what parents do at home has more influence on their children's academic success than how much schooling they've had or how much they earn.

More startling yet: We know it. Forty percent of America's parents believe they aren't devoting enough time to their children's education. Fully 72 percent of children aged 10 to 13 say they would like to spend more time talking to their parents about homework.

So if the children want it and the parents know it's important, why aren't we doing it?

Riley, who spoke at the National Press Club, offered a few reasons: Too

little time, as the number of stay-at-home parents continues to shrink; poverty and isolation, which limit after-school access to libraries or museums; language and cultural barriers.

But I suspect that the single biggest reason for noninvolvement is as simple as this: Parents don't know how important they are to their children's academic success, and they don't know what to do. This is especially true for parents whose own education is limited and who, because they don't know the material their children are trying to learn, think they can't help them learn it.

There's a growing list of experts in effective parenting, from Kerby Alvy in Los Angeles to Dorothy Rich in Washington, who can teach even poorly educated parents how to contribute to their children's school success. Their work is vital, and it needs to be spread.

But Riley's reminder is vital, too: Even without expertise—even in the face of poverty and violence—parents can be of enormous help if they only show a sustained interest in their children's schoolwork and enforce study time.

The State

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Riley's right: Involvement leads to better education

South Carolinians who knew him always believed Dick Riley would do a good job as U.S. Secretary of Education.

But education is, on the whole, a local matter, and there's only so much that a Cabinet member in Washington can do, at least in the short term. Nevertheless, the Secretary of Education has the opportunity to focus attention on broader issues relating to schools in a way that can motivate those with more direct operational control to address them effectively. And his most recent initiative shows clearly that Dick Riley knows what's wrong.

In the post-World War II age, the Age of the Expert, we have tended to believe that the most important functions of our society — from keeping our streets safe and orderly to raising our children — can be delegated to trained "professionals."

When this approach turns out not to work, the tendency has been to demand more of the same: better schools, better teachers. If the kids aren't getting smarter, it must be the teachers' fault, right?

To a certain extent we found that the schools could be made somewhat better, and that some teachers could be better prepared, up to a point. In many areas, we've reached that point. Schools — not all of them, but many — provide the opportunity for a better education than previous generations were exposed to. And yet, by some of the more prominent measurements, kids aren't doing as well. Why is that?

Educators have been telling us the answer for years. They've said that there's only so much they can do. They can only work with the raw material they're given. Kids are buffeted from every side by problems their parents seldom had to face. They come to school less well prepared, with more distractions, and with less support at home. It's simply not reasonable to expect the schools to overcome all this — at least, not alone.

What is needed is engagement in the lives of our kids by the rest of society. Parents must get more engaged, of course, but parents can't do it alone any more than the schools can.

That's the message Secretary Riley is delivering in a more sweeping manner than any of his predecessors. He's speaking first to parents, urging them to get more involved with their children. He says that the rushed, harried lives that parents lead has created a situation in which "we are letting our children grow up almost alone and disconnected." He says parents need to read more to their young ones, and that's not all. He notes "that three factors over which parents exercise authority — student absenteeism, variety of reading materials in the home and excessive television watching — explain nearly 80 percent" of variations in standardized tests.

Now how, one might ask, can parents do more than they're doing when it takes two jobs to make ends meet? And what about the fact that in the increasingly competitive job market, getting ahead or even keeping a job means putting work first, home life second?

Mr. Riley is exhorting employers to help out. He's asking corporate America to "see the value in job-sharing, flex time and release time for families to give attention to the children." He calls for "schools at the plant site, day care in the office, parents working at home without stigma or financial loss — what-

ever it takes — we need to use all of our ingenuity to find new ways to connect families to their children in these hectic times."

To his great credit, Mr. Riley isn't talking about accomplishing this with new laws or federal programs. There'll be no mandates upon employers or new bureaucracies. Such things not only wouldn't help, but could hinder the kind of change he's seeking. What he's looking for is a change of attitude on our part. That's not easy to accomplish, and it won't show dramatic results right away.

But it's where we must start.



Riley

Ted Riley gave much to S.C.

Education Secretary Dick Riley should know the value of strong parental support. As he climbed toward the various achievements in his own career, his father was with him every step of the way.

In fact, it was reluctance to leave his father behind in South Carolina that nearly caused the former governor to turn down the Cabinet post.

But Edward Patterson "Ted" Riley, who died Saturday at the age of 93, had many accomplishments beyond raising successful offspring.

As a lawyer, he was admitted to practice before the U.S. District Court and Court of Appeals. He also served as Children's Court judge in Greenville County and as assistant U.S. attorney.

He was also active in politics, serving as a delegate to several party nominating conventions and as Democratic Party chairman in 1960. But set party labels aside, Republicans have joined Democrats in offering tribute to a man who gave much back to his home state.

The Riley family's loss is South Carolina's as well.

U.S. education secretary makes appeal to families

By **RICHARD W. RILEY**
U.S. Secretary of Education

Very few things are more important to our children's future or to America's future than the quality education of our children.

We believe that the concerted efforts of entire communities to create and sustain disciplined learning environments, where our children can be challenged to meet high academic and occupational skill standards, are what will provide our children - and America - with a strong future.

All across America, there are communities which are pulling together to strengthen education. Parents, teachers, community leaders,



RILEY

business leaders, and educators in every part of our country are starting to work together to improve teaching and learning and to improve student achievement.

With passage last spring of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (by a strong bipartisan vote in Congress), new opportunities have been created for schools and neighborhoods, themselves, to accelerate local and state improvement efforts. But these opportunities for educational excellence can only be taken advantage of through greater family involvement in children's education - both at school and at home.

I believe that all parents, regardless of income or occupation, have the capacity and the obligation to teach their children not only a love of learning, but also other critical American values such as responsibility, respect and hard work. Research shows that all families, whatever their income or education level, can take concrete steps that significantly help children learn. And yet families are often the missing link in American education.

Many parent, education, community and religious organizations are coming together to promote greater family involvement in learning, and I, as the U.S. Secretary of Education, encourage such efforts right at home - in every neighborhood and community. As we work to increase strong family-school partnerships, we all need to be mindful of the pressures parents face and the escalating demands on their time. But I believe we, as a nation, must recognize something else as well: parents, when they can, need to slow down their lives and help their children grow.

As I travel around the country, I meet many parents who are trying hard to do the right thing by their children. They are being responsible, juggling jobs, trying to squeeze more

hours into the day. They are worrying about their children's safety and doing all they can to keep their families together.

Yet, some 40 percent of parents themselves believe they are not devoting enough time to their children's education. Almost three-quarters of students between the ages of 10 and 13 say they would like to talk to their parents more

about schoolwork. A survey taken last year showed that teachers believe the most important issue in educational policy is strengthening the role of parents in children's schooling.

And data compiled by the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that three factors over which parents exercise authority - student absenteeism, variety of reading materials in the home and excessive television watching - explain nearly 90 percent of the variation in eighth grade mathematics test scores among 37 states and the District of Columbia.

Successful family involvement is not a sporadic activity. It is sustained commitment to instill the habits of learning and to set high expectations. It is making connections to teachers and schools not only when trouble arises, but as part of the everyday process of children's schooling.

Parents are children's first and most influential teachers. By reading to children or having them read to us, by making sure homework is done, by monitoring television use, by knowing how children spend their time, parents can have a powerfully positive effect on their children's learning.

Parents can also help children by participating in local and state efforts to raise educational standards. And we can urge schools to offer and enroll many more students in the challenging courses which prepare them for postsecondary education and/or a promising occupation.

More...

SECRETARY MAKES APPEAL, continued...

At the same time, we know that the responsibility for expanding and deepening family involvement extends well beyond families. Schools, communities and businesses can all be part of a network of support for families and students.

Schools can reach out to families at convenient hours and promote family and community involvement in helping all students to reach high standards. Communities can help to make schools safe and drug-free, provide support services for parents and encourage volunteers to serve as

mentors. Businesses can adopt "family-friendly" policies such as child care or flexible leave that would make it easier for parents to visit or volunteer in schools.

We have joined with more than 45 different organizations, and together we are identifying successful approaches to strengthen family involvement in learning.

Working together, we can reinforce the central role of the family in education - and bring out the best in every child. We need your help.

24.

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EDUCATION

Parental involvement urged

Most parents are active in education when children are young but lose interest by the time they reach high school — and that's a mistake, says a new report on American families. The report, "Running In Place," contends that children of parents who stay involved in school-related activities tend to do better in class and take part in more extracurricular activities. "Children need parents who remain actively involved right through high school," says Child Trends, a private research organization in Washington, D.C. "But many of today's parents yield too much of their influence to their children's friends. And many schools

do little to encourage continued parental involvement." The report comes on the eve of a campaign by the U.S. Department of Education to promote more parental involvement in public education. The report argues that "the social environment at many of the nation's high schools is hazardous to a young person's health and disparaging of a love for learning." It was written by psychologist Nicholas Zill and demographer Christine Nord and financed by grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Nord Family Foundation. Many of the findings are based on data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics, the Census Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics.

Role of Parents in School Activities Drops as Children Grow, Study Finds

By Barbara Vobejda
Washington Post Staff Writer

As children move from elementary school into junior high and high school, their parents become less and less involved in their school activities, according to a new study on the American family.

By the time they reach high school, nearly half of the nation's students have parents who stay away from class plays, PTA meetings, football games, volunteer activities, back-to-school nights, science fairs and virtually every other school function.

The study released today also finds that working mothers are as active in their children's school lives as are stay-at-home mothers. And mothers who work part time or part of the year are more involved than full-time homemakers.

Parents of private high school students are more likely to be involved than the public high school parents, the report said. And families where the child lives with both birth parents tend to be more active than single-parent families or stepfamilies.

The study, released by the research organization Child Trends, is the first to track parental involvement as children age and offers the most detailed evidence to date on the issues surrounding what many say is a critical component in improving school success.

It confirms earlier research showing that children whose parents are active at school are more likely to thrive academically and participate in extracurricular activities.

While three-quarters of elementary school parents are either moderately or highly involved in their children's school lives, that drops off quickly at junior high and again at high school, researchers found using data from the Department of Education.

"The thing that is very striking is the number of parents, when asked, 'Did you go to a PTA meeting, a meeting with teachers . . . a play, a sports event?' . . . And they said 'No,'" said study coauthor Nicholas Zill. "There's this real

withdrawal in the teen years. They almost seem afraid to be parents when their kids get older."

Dale Sander, principal at Herndon High School, agreed that parental involvement tends to fall off by the time students reach secondary school, but he doesn't see that as a reflection of parental neglect.

"Parents care just as much, but there is this feeling parents have that they're not wanted [in school] by their children," he said. "I think mom and dad think, 'We're in the way.'"

But Sander added that he has a very active group of parents at his school, that the students seem to enjoy their parents' involvement, and that they're better off for it.

Zill offered several other explanations for the drop-off in parental involvement, including lack of motivation and an unwelcoming school environment.

While many parents are trying very hard to do the best for their children, Zill said, the low level of school involvement is one sign that "they're not doing that well."

Zill and coauthor Christine Winquist Nord wrote in the report that "parents may be yielding too much of their influence to their children's friends and to other forces." Their study, titled "Running in Place," also offered the "disquieting message" that the "peer culture in most American high schools is working in opposition" to most goals parents hold for their children, including academic success and avoidance of harmful behaviors like smoking and drinking.

"It is hard not to conclude that U.S. secondary schools are letting American families down in a major way," the study said, citing the relaxed attitude toward harmful behaviors in many high schools.

But several Washington area principals offered another picture, saying when there are negative peer influences, it is a reflection of society generally and busy families with two working parents.

But the school officials also described their own successful efforts to involve parents in school activities.

"We have been really lucky," said Sheila Dobbins, principal at Earle B. Wood Middle School in Rockville. "We have parents working in the school library, the health room, helping teachers in classrooms and some parents even volunteer for lunch duty."

"What we all appreciate," said Janice Mostow, principal at Briggs Chaney Middle School in Silver Spring, "is when we call parents and ask for their involvement or support and they are able to do it. When they're not as able, it can be difficult for both them and their children."

The study recommended that high schools improve parental involvement by ensuring that there are school-family activities for those students who are not college bound and that schools offer a welcoming atmosphere, partly by having at least one teacher who knows each family and student well.

Researchers measured involvement by asking parents if they had attended a general school meeting, such as PTA, or a school event, such as a play or sporting activity, or acted as a volunteer.

If parents said they had done none or one of these things, they were measured as showing low involvement. Those who said they had done two types of activities were considered moderately involved, and those who reported three types were judged to be highly involved.

The study found that families with higher incomes and more educated parents are more likely to be active. Even when differences in education and income are taken into account, families with working mothers were more likely to be moderately involved.

While there is not a direct relationship between parents attending a back-to-school night and their children scoring better on school work, involvement is important because parents are more likely to monitor the school, which can lead to better coordination, more attention from teachers and early attention to problems, the report said.

Parents' education interest wanes as high school starts

By Kenneth Eskey
SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

Most parents are active in education when children are young but lose interest by the time they reach high school — and that's a mistake, says a new report on American families.

The report, "Running In Place," contends that children of parents who stay involved in school-related activities tend to do better in class and take part in more extracurricular activities.

"Children need parents who remain actively involved right through high school," says Child Trends, a private research organization in Washington. "But many of today's parents yield too much of their influence to their children's friends. And many schools do little to encourage continued parental involvement."

The report comes on the eve of a campaign by the U.S. Department of Education to promote more parental involvement in public education.

Among the findings in the re-

port:

- Working mothers are just as active in school affairs as mothers who are full-time homemakers.

- Single-parent families tend to be less involved in school affairs than families in which the student lives with both parents.

- Parents of students in private high schools are more active in school affairs than public high school parents.

The report argues that "the social environment at many of the nation's high schools is hazardous to a young person's health and disparaging of a love for learning."

It was written by psychologist Nicholas Zill and demographer Christine Nord and financed by grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Nord Family Foundation.

Many of the findings in the report are based on data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics, the Census Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics.

The report points out that conditions for family well-being vary

dramatically from state to state and from city to city.

Singled out as states with generally favorable indicators were Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Utah and Vermont.

States with generally unfavorable indicators in the report were Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico and South Carolina.

"There is some relation with income, but income is by no means the whole story," Mr. Zill said. He noted that some of the richest states — New Jersey and Connecticut, for example — have depressed cities where poverty and family stress are common.

The study found that 42 percent of children in grades 3 through 5 had parents who attended PTA meetings, went to school plays or sports events and served on school committees; 32 percent had parents who were moderately involved, for a total of 74 percent.

Percentages of parents highly or moderately involved fell to 57 percent in junior high and 50 percent in high school, surveys found.

Getting Parents to Help Their Kids - In School

By CAROLE FELDMAN
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - When attorney Kay Rigling wants to take an hour off to volunteer in her children's suburban Virginia classrooms, her employer - the Education Department - tells her to take two.

The department matches each hour of annual leave that Rigling takes for school volunteer work with an hour of administrative leave.

"It just sends a message to department employees that volunteering is important," she said recently.

As children return to school, Education Secretary Richard Riley is launching a major campaign to get families more involved in their children's education. He calls them "America's secret weapon" in the fight to improve education.

A draft of the "Strong Families, Strong Schools" initiative describes why:

"Studies of individual families show that all families can take concrete steps that significantly help their children succeed in school, regardless of income, education or knowledge of the English language."

"International comparisons show the high academic success of students from Asian countries, which many attribute to the priority that families give to education."

In an interview, Riley said that greater family involvement can raise student achievement, help teachers and principals do their jobs better and improve classroom discipline.

"You don't have to be a whiz in chemistry or history to help your kids," he said. "You just have to care and be involved. Often, just talking to children about their schoolwork on a regular basis can send them the message that you value their education and that you expect them to learn."

Rigling, who worked several hours a month in the computer lab with a daughter's fifth-grade class last year, said she would volunteer even if the department didn't match her time because of the message it sends to her two children.

"I feel like it shows them how important I view education and the fact that it's a partnership between parents and the school," she said. "It shows them that even though I work full time, I care about them and I make time to be involved in things that they're involved in."

The matching program gives her the option of spending twice as much time in school. "I would love to do it once every week," she said, depending on her workload.

No one knows exactly how many Education Department employees participate in the program, which has been in place for several years.

Riley is calling on businesses to adopt policies that would accommodate school visits and volunteering, as well as parenting and literacy training. It's part of a partnership he sees developing among parents, schools, businesses and employers.

In addition to volunteering at school, the family-school initiative sees parents reinforcing learning at home by making sure homework is completed, television viewing is limited and children read and are read to.

It asks communities to provide recreational and cultural

More...

opportunities for families, as well as public services.

Riley sees the Education Department acting as a resource for parents.

"We'll help adults understand how the education system works and how they can develop partnerships with schools," he said.

"We'll provide helpful tips for supervising homework, reading with children, and cutting down on unnecessary TV viewing. And we'll encourage families who can't do the job alone to reach out to others in their communities for assistance and support."

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Riley urges family input for better education

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Rise Of Nontraditional Families Sparks Worries About Education

Concerns about students' education are being stoked by new Census Bureau findings that half of the nation's children did not have a "traditional nuclear family" in 1991.

Census reported last week that 32.2 million children didn't live in a household containing only two natural parents and their biological offspring. Instead, their homes often included a stepparent, a grandparent or a non-relative.

"More children than ever are spending at least part of their childhood in single-parent families or other alternative family situations," author Stacy Furukawa said. She cited women bearing children out of wedlock and high divorce rates as causes.

Some researchers say children's education is at stake in fading traditional family structures.

"More and more kids are going to be in schools with unmet needs and family stresses that schools are going to have to respond to if they're going to be effective," Eugene Roehlkepartain, spokesman for the Minneapolis-based Search Institute, said in an interview.

In a 1993 survey of 47,000 sixth- through eighth-graders, the institute found that children in single-parent families were much less likely than those in two-parent families to express high levels of commitment to schoolwork.

One-parent children lagged behind two-parent classmates in reports of above-average school performance, doing homework at least six hours a week, motivation to do well in school and plans to pursue studies after high school.

Educators can head off problems by providing children with a "warm and accepting" school environment and promoting single parents' involvement in education, Roehlkepartain said.

Census found that family structures varied by race and ethnic group.

Fifty-six percent of white children had traditional nuclear families, compared with 38 percent of Hispanics and 26 percent of blacks.

Only a fifth of children in families headed by single mothers had an adult male living with them, such as a grandfather or man who was not their relative. Roughly two-fifths of children living with a single father had an adult female in the home.

The report, "The Diverse Living Arrangements of Children: Summer 1991," is Census's first based on data from the bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation on children's living arrangements.

"The Diverse Living Arrangements of Children: Summer 1991" is \$2.50 from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15250-7954, (202)512-1800. Cite stock number 803-044-000-27-9. —Geoff Camphire

115
SEP - 6 1994

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Push to get parents into schools

Riley calls families 'secret weapon' for better education

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GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

September 7, 1994, Wednesday

RILEY CALLS FOR PARENTS TO GET INVOLVED IN EDUCATION

BY RICHARD WHITMIRE: Gannett News Service
WASHINGTON

Too many American schools fail to include parents and too many parents fail to volunteer, Education Secretary Richard Riley said Wednesday as he unveiled a national parent-school network.

Parental participation in school is a stronger predictor of how a child will do in school than whether a family is rich or poor, Riley said.

The Education Department report, "Strong Families. Strong Schools," pulls together numerous research findings on the connection between family involvement and how a child performs in school.

Research shows there are three factors that can predict the differences between low-performing students and high-performing students, said Riley. They are:

- Student absenteeism
- The variety of reading materials in the home
- Excessive television watching

Riley's report comes only days after a report from Child Trends, a Washington-based think tank, also documented the connection between parental involvement and student outcomes.

Among students whose parents had low involvement in schools, 25 percent repeated a grade, compared to 11 percent of those with parents of high involvement. Among students who were suspended, 21 percent had parents with low involvement, compared to 7 percent with high involvement.

Riley's report focused a lot of criticism on television.

"I am concerned when report after report tells us that reading scores decline at all grade levels tested when young people go into the 'red zone' of danger and watch more than six hours of television on a weekday," the education secretary said.

Parents should know that it's possible and necessary to fight cultural influences that detract from their child's education, he said.

More...

WHITMIRE, continued...

"I believe that many parents feel overwhelmed by all the outside influences shaping the lives of their children," he said. "They feel that our popular culture, with its current emphasis on making fame a virtue, and often for the strangest of reasons, undermines the values they want their children to have."

Riley announced that his department would join the 45-member National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education to coordinate more parent-school involvement. That coalition includes groups such as the National Alliance of Business, the National PTA and Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

Riley noted that the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which President Clinton signed in March, calls on schools to promote parental involvement.

"The essential building block for learning is how the American family uses its strength and power to support and encourage young people to meet the high expectations now being demanded of them in the classroom," Riley said.

Riley's report listed several examples of improving the links between school and the home:

- Home-school coordinators in Tennessee visit homes, run meetings to improve parenting skills, and coordinate parental volunteering in schools.

- Some schools involve parents directly in homework assignments, according to the report, which praised the TIPS project, or Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork. Each assignment calls for comments from the parents.

- Parents as Teachers is a highly successful home visitation program first launched in Missouri. The program teaches parents child-raising skills in home visits and through small gatherings in community centers. Independent evaluations of children who went through the Parents as Teachers program show those children outscore others on language and other school skills.

The president of the National School Boards Association praised Riley's call for increased family involvement in education.

"The Clinton administration is reaching beyond the usual talk about the need for greater family involvement in our children's learning with a coherent plan of action intended to attain the national goals of education," said Boyd Boehlje, NSBA president and school board member from Pella, Iowa.

But Boehlje said the success of the national initiative relies on participation of local leadership, including local school board officials.

Parent Involvement Drops Off After Early Grades

By Deborah L. Cohen

Parents' involvement in their children's education drops off sharply after elementary school, but students whose parents stay involved tend to fare better aca-

New study finds older students do better if parents stay involved.

demically and socially, a study being released this week shows.

The study, which is based on data from the U.S. Education Department's 1993 National Household Education Survey, involved 12,236 parents of children from 3rd to 12th grade. It showed that the percentage of students whose parents were either highly or moderately involved in schools dropped from 73 percent for children ages 8 to 11 to 50 percent for those 16 and older.

About 42 percent of children in grades 3 to 5 had parents who were identified as highly involved—meaning they attended P.T.A. meetings, plays, sports, and other activities and volunteered at schools or served on school committees—compared with 24 percent of students from grades 6 to 12.

The 6th to 12th graders whose parents were highly involved were significantly less likely to repeat a grade or have behavior problems and more likely to take part in extracurricular activities.

While it is natural for parents to want children to become self-sufficient as they get older, the study shows that they should "balance the need for independence with a continuing need for involvement," said Christine Winqvist Nord, a co-author of the report and a senior research associate at Westat, a Rockville, Md., consulting firm.

The report was prepared jointly by Westat and Child Trends, a Washington-based research company, with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Nord Family Foundation.

The study showed that parents with children in private schools were more involved than those whose children attend public

schools and that single-parent families and stepfamilies tended to be less involved than families with both birth parents living at home. Working mothers generally were as active in schools as full-time homemakers, although those who worked part time were more active than those who worked full time.

Based on a 1990-91 Education Department survey of teachers' perceptions, the study ranked states on parental involvement in schools. The best were Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming, while those with the lowest marks

were Alabama, Arizona, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Texas.

Peer Problems

A big challenge for parents, the report says, is the negative influence of peers. A majority of the 6,504 high school students polled in the household survey said their school friends thought it was acceptable to smoke or drink. Large numbers said they had easy access to cigarettes and alcohol at school.

Only 38 percent of the students in grades 6 to 12 said their friends

considered schoolwork very important, and 30 percent said their friends thought it was very important to behave properly in class.

Nicholas Zill, a vice president and study-area director of Westat and a co-author of the report, said schools should involve parents in fashioning discipline policies.

He also suggested that schools involve parents in developing counseling programs for noncollege-bound youths and advised restructuring large high schools so that teachers can get to know students and families.

The report also suggests that schools work harder to accommodate parents' schedules.

The report points out that stagnant wages, eroding job benefits, increases in unmarried childbearing, and high divorce rates are making it harder for families to meet children's basic needs, and it ranks the states and 135 cities on key indicators of family well-being.

Copies of "Running in Place: How American Families Are Faring in a Changing Economy and an Individualistic Society" are available for \$15 each from Child Trends, 4301 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 100, Washington, D.C. 20008.

Riley: Educators, parents must work together for children

By Dan Hoover

Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Education Secretary Dick Riley warned of an unsettling disconnection between educators and parents Wednesday and proposed strengthening the tie between parents and schools.

Riley had some Dutch uncle words for parents and educators. For many administrators, Riley said, "parents are less than welcome." Instead, he said, they should "reach out to parents as partners."

But he had harsh words for some parents, as well.

"America needs to give up its get-it-now, live-for-today mentality and start looking down the road to make sure that we give all of our children the America they deserve."

He said that federal officials would work with the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education and other groups to increase the role of parents in the educational process.

Riley's remarks came during a nationally televised appearance at the National Press Club during

which he released the related study, "Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning."

Riley called the report "a call to arms against ignorance and against low expectations."

He said that income and levels of parents' education are immaterial, that research findings show parental participation improves students' learning.

He suggested a six-step approach for parents:

- Taking a time inventory to find time to devote to promoting the learning process.
- Setting high standards and expectations for their children.
- Limiting television time to two hours maximum per school night.
- Reading together.
- Making sure children take tough courses and satisfactorily complete their homework.
- Seeing that children attend school each day and supporting school-related community activities.
- Setting an example and warning children of the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

Rocky Mountain News

September 8, 1994, Thursday

TV makes Jack very dull boy: Education secretary blames boob tube for declining scores, urges parents to set limits

By Kenneth Eskev: Scripps Howard News Service

WASHINGTON

A child who watches too much television can end up with "a very dull mind" and "a very dull and perhaps risky future," Education Secretary Richard Riley said Wednesday.

Riley urged parents to limit TV viewing on a school night "to a maximum of two hours, even if that means the remote control may have to disappear on occasion."

In a report, *Strong Families, Strong Schools*, Riley complained that parents spend too little learning time with children and schools often make parents feel unwelcome when they do show interest.

But he reserved his harshest criticism for excessive TV.

"I, for one, want to suggest that the teen-ager who is perpetually glued to the tube is well on the way to having a very dull mind and a very dull - and perhaps risky - future," he told members of the National Press Club.

"Television is part of our culture and anyone who has children knows its power to mesmerize, captivate, excite . . . and yes, teach as well. But I am concerned when report after report tells us that reading scores decline at all grade levels tested when young people . . . watch more than six hours of television on a weekday."

Riley blamed four aspects of modern life for making it difficult for families to become more involved in education:

- * Two-thirds of employed parents with children under 18 say they do not have enough time for their children.

- * Many parents say they would be willing to spend more time on activities with their children if teachers gave them more guidance.

- * Language barriers of immigrant families, and hostility by parents who had bad school experiences, limit family-school contact.

- * Many poor neighborhoods lack easy access to libraries and cultural institutions.

Riley said parents can provide reading material at home and limit TV-watching.

INFOBOX

Helping with learning

Steps families can take at home to help educate their children: * Read together * Limit television viewing * Establish a daily family routine * Schedule daily homework times * Monitor out-of-school activities * Talk with young children and teen-agers * Communicate positive values and character traits, such as respect, hard work and responsibility * Express high expectations and offer praise and encouragement for achievement Source: U.S. Department of Education

Wall Street Journal, September 8, 1994, P. 14B

Education Chief Urges Parents to Limit TV Viewing by Students to 2 Hours Daily

By RICHELLE SHARPE

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — Education Secretary Richard Riley launched a campaign to get parents involved in their children's schoolwork, urging them, among other things, to limit students' weekday television viewing to a maximum of two hours a night.

The teenager who is perpetually glued to the tube is well on the way to having a very dull mind and a very dull — and perhaps risky — future," Mr. Riley said in a speech here announcing the new National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education. The coalition, which includes such groups as the National PTA and the National Alliance of Business, will offer tips to parents and serve as a clearinghouse for model school programs that encourage family participation.

Mr. Riley cited research showing that parents exert enormous control over their children's academic success.

Nearly 90% of the difference in 8th grade math test scores can be explained by three factors that parents influence: student absenteeism, variety of reading materials at home, and excessive television watching, according to a study released yesterday by the Education Department. Family involvement is more important than family income, the study said.

The question of "family values" again

is heating up as a political topic. Mr. Riley made his speech just one week before the Christian Coalition opens a national conference here to discuss its strategy for the 1994 elections and beyond. At that conference, former Vice President Dan Quayle is scheduled to give an address revisiting his famed "Murphy Brown" speech, in which he decried the decline of traditional family values in the entertainment world and society more broadly.

In his speech, Mr. Riley said parents with strong religious values should be involved in schools too, but he argued they shouldn't view public education as the enemy. "I assure you that nothing will be gained by tearing down public education and making the public-school classroom the Bosnia of America's competing factions," he said. "When a community is divided, the children always suffer. Good common sense should tell us that now is the time for quiet voices to be heard in the search for common ground."

Mr. Riley urged parents to read to their children and to encourage them to take rigorous academic courses in school. He suggested families take a "time inventory" too, examining their schedules so they can establish a daily routine and carve out more time for family learning.

Parents also should check their children's homework every day, he said, and speak to teenagers about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

Only half the parents of high school students are involved in school activities like attending class plays, football games, or back-to-school nights, according to a study by Child Trends, Inc., a private, nonprofit research group. Parents of elementary school students are more active; about three-quarters of them are at least moderately involved in their children's education, the study said.

Schools may reach out, touch parents

By Tamara Henry
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Getting families to become more involved in their children's learning may require teachers to knock on doors and schools to install telephones in all classrooms, says Education Secretary Richard Riley.

Riley announced Wednesday a partnership of parent, education and community groups to develop ways to get families involved in schools. Among the partners: the Education Department, National PTA, National Alliance of Business and the 45-member National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education.

Riley insists telephones in every class should be "the first tool for teachers to have" to improve communication with families. He says the teachers could use the phone to inform parents of their children's classroom work, assignments and behavioral problems.

But Riley rejects the idea of a "family school leave" law that would require companies to give parents time off work to attend school functions.

"I prefer talking with business leaders to do it voluntarily," he says. "That kind of personal attention and personal interest is what works."

Parental involvement is a crucial factor in a child's education, studies show. Unfortunately, parents tend to become less involved as kids get older.

Riley points to a new Child Trends Inc. study that found 73% of parents participate in school activities when their children are ages 8-11, but only half visit schools for PTA meetings, plays or science fairs for older children.

He says a new department study found nearly three-quarters of students ages 10-13 would like to talk to their parents more about schoolwork; 40% of parents believe they are not devoting enough time to their children's education.

Families Urged to Become More Involved in Children's Education

By IRVIN MOLOTSKY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 7 — Education Secretary Richard W. Riley today called for greater family involvement in schools and said teachers and employers had to be recruited to make it work.

The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built," Mr. Riley said as he issued a report entitled "Strong Families, Strong Schools." But parents acting alone cannot do the job, he said.

"There is a disconnection between educators and parents that needs our attention," he said. When parents enter schools, the Secretary said, they often find nothing inviting. "nothing that suggested that parents were, in fact, the true owners of the school."

Employers, Secretary Riley said, should be more understanding of the needs of working parents. "We must see the value in job-sharing, flex time and release time for families to give attention to the children," he said. "Schools at the plant site, day care in the office, parents working at home without stigma or financial loss."

Mr. Riley's presentation, made in a speech at the National Press Club, both borrowed from and indirectly criticized recent Republican Administrations.

For example, he referred to the "rules and moral standards that we live by as a nation," a notion often invoked by William J. Bennett, Secretary of Education in the Reagan Administration.

Asked later about that, Mr. Riley said, "Neither one of us invented this

issue," and he added, "I share a lot of his views about virtues."

At the same time, Mr. Riley appeared to be repeating Democratic accusations against the Reagan and Bush Administrations when he said, "America needs to give up its get-it-now, live-for-today mentality and start looking down the road to make sure that we give all of our children the America they deserve."

Free copies of "Strong Families, Strong Schools" can be obtained by telephoning 1-800-USA-LEARN. The report is largely a review of past studies and summarizes what families, schools, communities, businesses and government can do to improve education.

Mr. Riley said parents should limit the time that their children spend watching television. At the same

time, he said parents had an obligation to read with their children and to spend more time with them instead of "letting our children grow up, at times, almost alone and disconnected."

Employers, he said, should help working parents find ways to help in their children's education, but he added that this should be voluntary, not through legislation mandating such things as flexible working hours.

William Kolberg, president of the National Alliance of Business, appeared with Mr. Riley and endorsed the recommendations. Echoing Mr. Riley, he called on employers to be "family friendly companies" but said that each company had to find for itself how to accomplish this and that there should be no legal compulsion involved.

Washington Post, September 8, 1994, P. 3

Education Chief Seeks Wider Role for Parents

Campaign Will Promote Family Involvement

By Barbara Vobejda
Washington Post Staff Writer

Education Secretary Richard W. Riley yesterday announced a major initiative to actively involve families in education, saying that parents can make a significant difference in their children's academic success by reading with them, limiting their time in front of the television and making sure they attend school every day.

Riley, returning to a theme he has emphasized in the past, promised that promoting parental involvement in education would be at the top of his agenda for the next year and said the federal government would join with dozens of other groups to promote the cause. The campaign is still in the planning stages, but its organizers said they would disseminate information about successful parent-school programs, organize meetings of business and community leaders and help schools become more welcoming to parents.

"Thirty years of research tells us that the starting point of American education is parent expectations and parental involvement with their children's education, regardless of their station in life, their income level or their educational background," Riley said in a National Press Club speech.

He urged parents to find extra time to learn as a family, schedule time daily to check children's homework, set high expectations for children and encourage them to take tough courses, talk to children about drugs and alcohol and support community efforts to keep young people safe. He suggested that parents limit television viewing to a maximum of two hours on weeknights, "even if that means that the remote control may have to disappear on occasion."

The department's efforts are in partnership with several organizations, including the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, the National PTA, the National Alliance of Business, the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

On the same theme, Jesse L. Jackson and a coalition of judges, elected officials and community leaders yesterday launched an initiative in Washington to get parents to be more active in their children's education.

They are asking parents to sign

pledges to take their children to school on the first day of classes, meet teachers, exchange telephone numbers with teachers, pick up their children's report cards, look at the results of every test their children take, and turn off the television for three hours of study time each night.

Riley, who raised his concerns about the lack of parental involvement in his "State of American Education" address seven months ago, said that since then, he and members of his staff have met with 125 groups on the issue. While the department has not set aside funds specifically for this campaign, it has requested \$10 million under the Goals 2000 legislation to establish parent resource centers in every state.

Riley also released a study, "Strong Families, Strong Schools," that cited research indicating 40 percent of parents believe they spend insufficient time on their children's education.

That lack of involvement, he said, has several causes, including lack of time, inflexible work schedules, language barriers, uncertainty about how to contribute, the burdens of poverty and the "unsettling disconnection" between educators and families.

He urged businesses to find ways to allow job-sharing, flextime and on-site schools and day care. And he asked that schools create a welcoming environment and use new technology—from voice mail to computer products—to get parents involved.

The study reported that, in comparing eighth-grade math test scores, researchers found that 90 percent of the difference between high and low scores could be explained by three factors under a parent's authority—student absenteeism, the variety of reading materials in the home and excessive television watching.

The department cited successful programs around the country, including the MegaSkills Program, which helps parents work with children at home, and is being used in the D.C. public schools. In Virginia, the department pointed to the Even Start program in Richmond, which brings disadvantaged parents into their children's preschool classrooms. In Maryland, the department cited a Baltimore public school program to send home parenting tips.

Riley: Home life key to school

Education chief urges parents to slow down, help kids

By Carol Innerst
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Three things parents can control — student absenteeism, the variety of reading materials in the home and television viewing — make a world of difference in students' achievement, Education Secretary Richard Riley said yesterday.

These factors "are some of the strongest indicators we have that home life makes a difference when it comes to learning," Mr. Riley said in a speech at the National Press Club, where he announced a national effort to get families involved in the education of their children.

"I, for one, want to suggest that the teen-ager who is perpetually glued to the tube is well on the way to having a very dull mind and a very dull — and perhaps risky — future," he said.

The secretary acknowledged "significant obstacles" to parental involvement, including the "disconnection" between educators and families.

Too often, he said, parents and educators "talk past one another," and parents feel that their right to be full participants in the learning process is "ignored, frustrated and sometimes even denied."

"Parents, including those who have strong religious values, must be at the table when it comes to public education," Mr. Riley said. "But they must also be willing to build bridges and not see public education as the enemy."

"I assure you that nothing will be gained by tearing down public education and making the public school classroom the Bosnia of America's competing factions."

"I think Secretary Riley is taking a swipe at families who are people of faith," said Beverly LaHate, president and founder of Concerned Women for America, a pro-family women's organization with 600,000 members.

"The secretary isn't recognizing that families are concerned about their children, that they're only in the system a limited number of years, and they've got to pro-



Richard Riley says too much television makes for dull minds.

tect them in those crucial years," Mrs. LaHate said.

"They feel we should build bridges, but how long can you do that when children are sacrificed at the altar of this kind of government school?"

"He's putting all the responsibility on parents. I think the educational system needs to reach out to parents, and government schools should start becoming public schools for all the people."

Noting time constraints, Mr. Riley urged busy parents to stop "rushing around" and to get involved in their children's education.

"America needs to give up its get-it-now, live-for-today mentality," he said. "The most important single change we need for American education is to find new ways to help parents slow down their lives. Many parents and other family members are stretched to the limit: juggling jobs, putting food on the table, getting their children to safe after-school programs, doing all they can to keep body and soul together."

"But I believe that we are missing something far deeper in all this rushing around. We are letting our

children grow up, at times, almost alone — and disconnected."

To combat the time problem, he proposed job sharing, flex time, release time, schools and day care located where parents work.

"I also urge educators to give special attention to the recent report of the National Commission on Time and Learning called 'Prisoners of Time,' which speaks directly to how time is being taken away from academics during the American school day," he said.

"We will not be able to be first in anything — math or science or any other subject for that matter — if only 41 percent of the school day is given over to the core academic subjects."

Drawing on a new report titled "Strong Families, Strong Schools," which documents the connection between home life and school achievement, Mr. Riley said his department has begun a national effort to involve families in their children's education with the formation of a 45-member National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education. It includes the national PTA, the National Alliance of Business, the U.S. Catholic Conference, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

He concluded by giving parents homework. The first assignment: Take an inventory of how the family is using time.

Then, he suggested, parents should set high academic standards for their children, limit television viewing to two hours on school nights, read, make sure children take the "tough courses" at school, see that they don't skip school, and model the values they expect their children to emulate.

9/8/ 7:45p

Riley Urges Greater Family Involvement in Education

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Education Secretary Richard Riley has new ammunition for his campaign to get families more involved in children's learning - a new report documenting the benefits of such interaction.

Riley says the Education Department will team with the 45-member National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education and other groups to make increased family participation in education a top national goal.

"The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built," Riley said in a luncheon speech Wednesday.

The secretary has spoken often since February about the need to increase family participation in education. It is included among the eight national education goals enacted this year as part of the Goals 2000 initiative that sets benchmarks for what children should be able to do in English, math, science and other subjects by the year 2000.

Organizations such as the National PTA, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the National Alliance of Business and the U.S. Catholic Conference will be included in the partnership.

The Education Department report used three decades of research to show a correlation between a child's learning and increased family involvement, calling it the "critical link to achieving a high-quality education."

Among the report's findings:

- Pupil absenteeism, the variety of reading material at home and excessive television watching - all of which can be controlled by parents - correlate with differences in eighth-grade math test scores across 37 states and Washington, D.C., on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

- Reading scores, which have remained flat in recent years, can be improved by learning activities in the home.

- Studies of individual families show that family involvement plays a greater role in pupil success than income or education.

- The single-most important activity for a child's eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.

Time constraints, uncertainty about becoming more involved, cultural barriers and lack of support are some obstacles confronting many parents, Riley said.

But they can overcome them by reading with their children, limiting their television viewing, talking with them, getting into a daily family routine, scheduling daily homework times and keeping an eye on their out-of-school activities, he said.

Riley Pushing Parents, Schools To Form Stronger Partnerships

Education Secretary Richard Riley yesterday launched a national campaign to better involve parents in their children's education.

"More sustained attention needs to be paid to that most vital of links: the promise and potential of parents and other family members as the more important teachers of their children," Riley said during a speech in Washington, D.C. "The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built."

Riley promised the parent involvement initiative will consume "much of my effort" in the next year, reviving a theme of his state of education address this winter.

Reaching Out

On the national level, the Education Department will be working closely with the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPPIE), which encompasses 45 associations representing educators, parents and advocacy groups.

Together, they will develop a long-range plan for using resources and encouraging the participation.

NCPPIE will be planning how to spread ideas for increasing and improving parent involvement in education, Chairwoman Sue Ferguson said at a news conference after Riley's speech.

And ED will be soliciting support from business and religious groups for NCPPIE's efforts, Riley said, adding he and other ED officials already have discussed the initiative with representatives of 125 groups.

"We're encouraging people to share and participate, and we are listening and pulling people together," Riley said.

Riley urged educators to open their doors.

He criticized, for example, signs on school entrances that compel visitors to report directly to the office.

"It's not a big thing, but it's an important tone-setting thing," he said. "There is nothing inviting, nothing that suggested that parents are, in fact, the true owners of the school."

Instead of impersonal signs, schools should use every technique they can, including homework hotlines, voice mail messages and commuter programs, to get "parents more involved in the learning process," Riley said.

"I urge educators everywhere to change those signs on the school door that give parents the cold shoulder," he added.

Multiple Choices

Riley spent much of his speech listing things parents can do to encourage student learning, such as reading to their children, restricting television watching, helping with homework and ensuring they take challenging courses.

The efforts will pay off in improved student learning, Riley said, basing his prediction on a report detailing 30 years of research that has found positive influences of family involvement.

--David Hoff

ED Backs Call For Parent Involvement With Research

Education Secretary Richard Riley's says a mound of research and the successes of innovative programs buttress his call yesterday for a national parent involvement campaign.

"Three decades of research have shown that parental participation improves students' learning," the Education Department says in a report released yesterday. "This is true whether the family is rich or poor, whether the parents finished high school."

In the report, "Strong Families, Strong Schools," ED says parents can promote learning even in the most mundane daily tasks and suggests ways for schools to encourage them.

Establishing Ties

ED cites research on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that found a strong correlation between students' scores and their home life, such as having reading materials available and the number of hours spent watching television (ED, July 12, 1993).

Students' homes "account for almost all the differences" in states' average NAEP scores, ED says (ED, June 7).

Parents should read daily to or with their preschool and elementary school children, ED says, because research shows that is "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success."

Parents also can turn shopping trips into mathematics lessons and ensure their children have a well-lit place to do homework.

Schools can encourage parents by creating "an environment in which teachers and staff make parents feel like full partners," the report says.

That means giving parents access to homework assignments through telephone voice mail systems, training teachers to work with parents and holding meetings when parents are able attend, such as evenings and weekends.

Forefront On Home Front

ED cites numerous local success stories.

For example, the Buffalo, N.Y., chapter of the Urban League donated space for a center where parents can take courses on topics such as computer literacy and find resources to help their children with school work.

And a New York City program gave illiterate parents a videotape explaining the Chapter 1 program for disadvantaged students and how parents can participate.

Riley said yesterday that he had forwarded the report to President Clinton and will make it widely available to educators and parents.

"Strong Families, Strong Schools" is free by calling (800)USA-LEARN. --David Hoff

Parents reading with children fashion many happy endings

School-family partnerships urged

By Mike Bowler
Sun Staff Writer

Linda Kleiner had read to her daughter when Emily was a child. But now Emily was 13, and Mrs. Kleiner was nervous as she agreed to participate in a program called "Pairing Up for Reading" at Rising Sun Middle School in Cecil County.

But with the help of one of Emily's teachers, Mrs. Kleiner found the perfect solution. "We dug out my old Nancy Drews and made reading them a family activity," she said. "She related to Nancy Drew, just as I had when I was her age. It couldn't have worked better. The teachers knew all along, of course, that kids that age would read with their parents. It was the parents who didn't know it."

Mrs. Kleiner, a mother of four who lives near Calvert in northern Cecil, already has heard the message delivered yesterday by Richard W. Riley, U.S. secretary of education, who called for a national commitment to school-family partnerships. She is a member of the Cecil County Home and School Committee, which for five years has been encouraging cooperation in learning among parents, students and schools.

With small financial help from Cecil County schools, businesses and PTAs, the committee has organized such activities as all-night "pajama parties," at which parents, teachers — and even an occasional county commissioner — send out for pizza, read to each other and finish the night in a sleeping bag. Other activities are aimed at helping parents help their children with homework.

Baltimore City doesn't throw pajama parties, but the city's Fund for Educational Excellence, in cooperation with Johns Hopkins University, has been promoting school-family partnerships for almost seven years. A pilot program at eight schools has expanded to 45, including all 22 elementary and middle schools in the southern area.

In a city in which many schools have no parent-teacher organizations because parents are said to be reluctant to go out at night, the "Baltimore Family and School Connection" has sponsored "family nights" so popular that some parents had to be turned away, said Lucretia Coates, program development director of the Fund for Educational Excellence.

The Cecil and Baltimore City partnerships have a common root in Hopkins' Center on Schools, Families, Communities and Children's Learning, which has made a science of family involvement in schools.

The center, headed by Joyce Epstein, has identified six major types of involvement — ranging from sending home better information to assigning homework that requires parent participation.

Secretary Riley yesterday spoke of schools "reconnecting" with families. He an-

nounced the formation of a partnership led by the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education and including such organizations as the National PTA, the National Alliance of Business, the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

"We are letting our children grow up, at times, almost alone — and disconnected," he said. "The education of American children — their moral development, their sense of citizenship and academic growth — is done by fits and starts. This is not how families want to raise their children."

PARENT & CHILD

Success in School Called Family Effort

By CARIN RUBENSTEIN

LAST week, Nancy Romanchek had a bad dream: she was in the seventh grade, and on the first day of school, she forgot her locker combination and lost her class schedule.

But she's not among those going back to school: Mrs. Romanchek, 45, of Langhorne, Pa., is jittery about the new school year for her two sons, James, 11, and Todd, 7.

James, who is entering the sixth grade, is to start middle school today, and Mrs. Romanchek is so concerned about how he'll adjust to being in school with 14- and 15-year-olds and the influence the older children will have on him that she is having anxiety dreams, she said.

Mrs. Romanchek is also worried about Todd, who she feels has not yet been helped to achieve his potential, and whether this time he'll get a teacher who can help him blossom.

As happens every September as schools around the country open, anxious parents are voicing their fears and concerns about the school year and how well their children will do.

But now, the first wave of completed research based on a continuing, comprehensive national survey of students and their parents, teachers and school principals over a decade, reveals that parents are justified in being concerned, since a great deal of the responsibility for children's school achievement falls on them.

Parents can no longer depend on

schools to look out for their child's interests, said Dr. Chandra Muller, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Texas in Austin, who is one of more than 150 researchers now analyzing the data from the survey, the National Education Longitudinal Study. "Parents have to be alert about what's going on; they have to take charge of their children's education and participate in an authoritative way," she said. That does not mean dictating to a child, she said, but talking with the child and reaching agreement on family rules.

The study, sponsored by the Education Department, includes information on 26,000 students who were eighth graders in 1988, who were randomly selected from 1,057 public and private schools. Beginning in 1988, the students took standardized tests in math, reading, science and social studies and answered a broad range of questions about their lives. One or two of each student's teachers, a school principal and a parent were also interviewed about the students. The testing and interviews were repeated when students were in the 10th and 12th grades, and the interviews continued after graduation.

"This is one of the first studies ever to include so much contextual data, with the point of view of children, teachers, principals and parents," said Dr. Jeff Owings, the chief of the Longitudinal and Household Studies Branch in the National Center for Education Statistics in Washington, who is monitoring the study's data. At least one more follow-up study is planned for 1998, he said.

Dr. Muller and other researchers

have compiled some of the findings:

- Students do best in school when their parents "take a managerial role in relation to the school, viewing themselves as being in charge of their child's educational career," Dr. Muller said.

- Children whose parents talk to them about school events or what they learned in class do better on achievement tests, said Dr. Muller, whose most recent paper on the work will appear as a chapter in "Trans-

forming Schools," a book to be published this fall by Garland Press. Thirty-seven percent of the eighth graders said their parents spoke with them about school three or more times during the school year, Dr. Muller said. The other students said their parents discussed the issue only once or twice, or not at all, she said.

- Children whose parents restrict television during the week, provide music classes outside school and offer some form of adult supervision

after school also do better on achievement tests, Dr. Muller found. About 16 percent of the eighth graders said their parents "often" limit the time they spend watching television. In addition, children who spend less than three hours a day without adult supervision have higher test scores than those who are unsupervised more often, Dr. Muller said.

- Children whose teacher expects the class to achieve at a higher than average level do better on math and reading tests, said Dr. Shelley Drazen, another researcher.

- The more homework that teachers assign, Dr. Drazen said, the higher the students' achievement level. When possible, parents should request a teacher for their child who will "expect that the child can succeed and learn more than a minimum, and one who also assigns a fair amount of homework," she said.

Because Allegra Kaiser's third-grade class had three different teachers last year at Public School 41 in Greenwich Village, Augusta Kaiser, 45, felt she had to select the best teacher for her daughter this year.

"The teacher shapes the year from Day One," said Mrs. Kaiser, who with the principal chose a teacher she hopes will be "understanding and sensitive to my daughter's needs."

Parent & Child, by a variety of writers and on a range of family issues, now appears periodically in The Home Section.

Boob tube: TV giving Johnny 'very dull mind'

Education chief urges limit to viewing

Scripta Howard

WASHINGTON — A child who watches too much television can end up with "a very dull mind" and "a very dull and perhaps risky future," Education Secretary Richard Riley said Wednesday.

Riley urged parents to limit TV viewing on school nights "to a maximum of two hours even if that means the remote control may have to disappear on occasion."

In a report, "Strong Families, Strong Schools," Riley complained that parents spend too little learning time with children and that schools often make parents feel unwelcome when they do show interest.

But he reserved his harshest criticism for excessive TV.

"I, for one, want to suggest that the teen-ager who is perpetually glued to the tube is well on the way to having a very dull mind and a very dull — and perhaps risky — future," he told members of the National Press Club.

"Television is part of our culture, and anyone who has children knows its power to mesmerize, captivate, excite ... and yes, teach as well. But I am concerned when report after

report tells us that reading scores decline at all grade levels tested when young people ... watch more than six hours of television on a weekday."

Riley blamed four aspects of modern life for making it difficult for families to become more involved in education:

- Two-thirds of employed parents with children under 18 say they do not have enough time for their kids.

- Many parents say they would be willing to spend more time on activities with their children if teachers gave them more guidance.

- Language barriers of immigrant families, and hostility by parents who had bad school experiences, limit family-school contact.

- Many poor neighborhoods lack easy access to libraries, cultural institutions, health services and recreation.

Riley said parents, regardless of income, can make sure children go to school every day, provide reading material and literature in the home and limit the amount of TV watching.

Employers can help, he said, by offering job-sharing and "flex time" for workers.

HOME-EDUCATION HELP LIST

Here are some steps families can take at home to help educate their children:

- Read together.
- Limit television viewing.
- Establish a daily family routine.
- Schedule daily homework times.
- Monitor out-of-school activities.
- Talk with young children and teenagers.
- Communicate positive values and character traits, such as respect, hard work and responsibility.

- Express high expectations and offer praise and encouragement for achievement.

Source: U.S. Department of Education

"Schools at the plant site, day care in the office, parents working at home without stigma or financial loss — whatever it takes — we need to use all of our ingenuity to find new ways to connect families to their children," he said.

Riley said he is forming a partnership with the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education and other organizations to bring families more directly into the learning process.

U.S. aims to reduce parents' work hours

Goal: Raise children's performance in school

By Nathaniel Sheppard Jr.
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON—Education Secretary Richard Riley said Wednesday his department will try to convince corporate America to offer increasingly stretched parents more flexible work schedules and time off to improve their children's educational performance.

The move, part of a broader department effort that also aims to reduce the time children spend watching television, will stop short of seeking new laws to force employer

changes, but nevertheless links parental involvement to improved classroom performance.

For example, Riley cited three factors over which parents exercise authority—student absenteeism, the variety of reading materials in the home, and excessive television watching—as explaining 90 percent of the difference between good and bad test scores nationwide on one standardized eighth-grade mathematics test.

But while national test scores for math and science have improved in

recent years, reading scores have remained flat, Riley said during a speech in which he focused on TV as a prime culprit.

He cited Education Department statistics indicating that 47 percent of 17-year-olds watched television three or more hours a day in 1992, up 16 percentage points over 1982, while the percentage of them who read daily for fun dropped to 27 percent in 1992 from 31 percent five years earlier.

"... [R]eading scores decline at all grade levels tested when young people go into the red zone of danger and watch more than six hours of television on a weekday," he said, adding that students should watch no more than two hours of television a day.

But as he reiterated that several studies have shown that parental participation can significantly raise student achievement, he argued that workplace demands have become an obstacle to such involvement.

"Many parents and other family members are stretched to the limit juggling jobs and putting food on the table, but we are missing something far deeper in all this rushing around—we are letting our children grow up almost alone and disconnected," Riley said.

"We must see the value in job-sharing, flextime and release time for families to give attention to the children. Schools at the plant site, day care in the office, parents working at home without stigma or financial loss—whatever it takes—we need to use all of our ingenuity

to find new ways to connect families to their children in these hectic times," he said.

"If every parent of a child aged 1 through 9 spent one hour reading or working on schoolwork with the child five days a week, American parents would annually devote at least 8.7 billion hours to supporting their children's reading," he continued. "If a teacher spent the same amount of time, it would cost taxpayers about \$230 billion."

Riley said he would not press for laws obligating businesses to give workers time off, but noted his agency's responsibility "to convince business that it is good for business in creating a future work force that is well-educated."

William Kolberg, president of the National Alliance of Business, said most businesses already are quite liberal on the use of leave and had instituted other policies to support families.

"Most American businesses would oppose the federal government trying to dictate what their policies should be or trying to micromanage in this context," he said.

Riley said his agency's effort would involve a broad-based partnership led by the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education and including such organizations as the National PTA, The National Alliance of Business, the U. S. Catholic Conference and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.



Richard Riley

Education official urges a greater parental role in learning

By Darlene Superville

PHILADELPHIA PRESS

WASHINGTON — Armed with a new report on the benefits of increased family involvement in children's learning, Education Secretary Richard W. Riley urged parents yesterday to do just that — get more involved.

He also announced that his department would join with the 45-member National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education and other groups to make family participation in education a national priority.

"The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built," Riley said in a speech at the National Press Club.

The partnership will include such organizations as the National PTA, the National Alliance of Business, the U.S. Catholic Conference, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

The desire to increase family participation in education is one of eight national education goals President Clinton approved in March as part of the Goals 2000 initiative. The law sets benchmarks for what children should be able to do in English, math, science and other subjects.

The Education Department report, "Strong Families, Strong Schools," uses three decades of research to show the correlation between a child's learning and the increased

involvement of his or her family, calling such interaction the "critical link" to a high-quality education.

Among the report's findings:

- Three factors that parents can control — pupil absenteeism, the variety of reading material at home, and excessive television watching — account for almost 90 percent of the difference in eighth-grade math test scores across 37 states and Washington, D.C., on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

- Reading scores, which have remained flat in recent years, depend on learning activities in the home.

- Studies of families show that family involvement is more important to pupil success than income or education is.

- The single most important activity for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.

The report also tells parents how they can become more involved.

Time constraints, parental uncertainty about how to become more involved and what they can do, cultural barriers and lack of support are obstacles confronting many parents.

Riley said.

But they can overcome the barriers by reading with their children, limiting their television viewing, talking with them, establishing a daily family routine, scheduling daily homework times and keeping an eye on their out-of-school activities, he said.

Riley also said his department would seek to persuade corporate America to give parents more flexible work schedules and time off to improve their children's educational performance.

BOSTON HERALD, Sept. 9, 1994 p. 30



William Raspberry

Simple Things Parents Can Do

The schools that were once havens from neighborhood violence and turmoil now have turmoil of their own. Principals don't know whether to lock the schoolhouse doors, in violation of the fire codes, or leave them unlocked, allowing disruptive and sometimes violent outsiders to come in.

Parents don't know whether to teach their children to walk away from trouble—punking out, the tougher kids call it—or encourage them to arm themselves against trouble they can't control.

Here's how rough it is: Two Chicago teenagers just "executed" an 11-year-old member of their own gang who himself was being sought for killing a 14-year-old girl a few days earlier. The "execution," by the way, was not for revenge but because the boy had brought police "heat" on the gang.

Given this awful state of affairs, it sounded almost naive the other day when Secretary of Education Richard Riley called for increased parental participation as a major element in setting the schools right again. He wasn't calling for parent patrols, either. He was asking parents to do such ordinary stuff as reading to their

children, limiting their TV time and making sure they attend school.

You know what? Riley is right.

Only an idiot would believe that increased study time would suppress the violence that has us on the verge of giving up. But the truth is, for all the media attention we necessarily

The elements of school success.

give it, school violence remains relatively rare. School *failure* is considerably more widespread. (And I, for one, believe there is a link, however indirect, between the two.)

Riley's remarks, which accompanied the release of a Department of Education report called "Strong Families, Strong Schools," were directed not just to parents in America's troubled neighborhoods but to parents of all school-age children. The gist of his message:

"Three things over which parents exercise authority—student absenteeism, the variety of reading materials in the home and excessive televi-

sion watching—explain . . . almost all the differences in average student achievement across the states."

As a matter of fact, there is nothing new in the new release; it is a distillation of 30 years of widely accepted educational studies. But it is startling how much of the evidence points to the overwhelming importance of what happens at home—for instance, that "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children," or that what parents do at home has more influence on their children's academic success than how much schooling they've had or how much they earn.

More startling yet: We *know* it. Forty percent of America's parents believe they aren't devoting enough time to their children's education. Fully 72 percent of children aged 10 to 13 say they would like to spend more time talking to their parents about homework.

So if the children want it and the parents know it's important, why aren't we doing it?

Riley, who spoke at the National Press Club, offered a few reasons: Too

little time, as the number of stay-at-home parents continues to shrink; poverty and isolation, which limit after-school access to libraries or museums; language and cultural barriers.

But I suspect that the single biggest reason for noninvolvement is as simple as this: Parents don't know how important they are to their children's academic success, and they don't know what to do. This is especially true for parents whose own education is limited and who, because they don't know the material their children are trying to learn, think they can't help them learn it.

There's a growing list of experts in effective parenting, from Kerby Alvy in Los Angeles to Dorothy Rich in Washington, who can teach even poorly educated parents how to contribute to their children's school success. Their work is vital, and it needs to be spread.

But Riley's reminder is vital, too. Even without expertise—even in the face of poverty and violence—parents can be of enormous help if they only show a sustained interest in their children's schoolwork and enforce study time.

Family involvement in learning enhances student achievement

By RICHARD W. RILEY

Very few things are more important to our children's future or to America's future than the quality education of our children. We believe that the concerted efforts of entire communities to create and sustain disciplined learning environments,

where our children can be challenged to meet high academic and occupational skill standards, are what will provide our children — and America — with a strong future.

All across America, there are communities which are pulling together to strengthen education. Parents, teachers, community leaders, business leaders, and educators in every part of our country are starting to work together to improve teaching and learning and to improve student achievement.

With the passage last spring of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (by a strong bipartisan vote in Congress), new opportunities have been created for schools and neighborhoods themselves to accelerate local and state improvement efforts. But these opportunities for educational excellence can only be taken advantage of through greater family involvement in children's education — both at school and at home.

I believe that all parents, regardless of income or occupation, have the capacity and the obligation to teach their children not only a love of learning, but also other critical American values such as responsibility, respect and hard work. Research shows that all families, whatever their income or education level, can take concrete steps that significantly help children learn.



Riley

And yet, families are often the missing link in American education.

Many parent, education, community and religious organizations are coming together to promote greater family involvement in learning, and I, as the U.S. Secretary of Education, encourage such efforts right at home — in every neighborhood and community. As we work to increase strong family-school partnerships, we all need to be mindful of the pressures parents face and the escalating demands on their time. But I believe we, as a nation, must recognize something else as well: Parents, when they can, need to slow down their lives and help their children grow.

As I travel around the country, I meet many parents who are trying hard to do the right thing by their children. They are being responsible, juggling jobs, trying to squeeze more hours into the day. They are worrying about their children's safety and doing all they can to keep their families together.

Yet, some 40 percent of parents themselves believe they are not devoting enough time to their children's education. Almost three-quarters of students between the ages of 10 and 13 say they would like to talk to their parents more about schoolwork. A survey taken last year showed that teachers believe the most important issue in educational policy is strengthening the role of parents in children's schooling.

And data compiled by the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that three factors over which parents exercise authority — student absenteeism, variety of reading materials in the home and excessive television watching — explain nearly 90 percent of the variation in 8th-grade mathematics test scores among 37 states and the District of Columbia.

Successful family involvement is not a sporadic activity. It is a sustained commitment to instill the habits of learning and to set high

expectations. It is making connections to teachers and schools not only when trouble arises, but as part of the everyday process of children's schooling.

Parents are children's first and most influential teachers. By reading to children or having them read to us, by making sure homework is done, by monitoring television use, by knowing how children spend their time, parents can have a powerfully positive effect on their children's learning.

Parents can also help children by participating in local and state efforts to raise educational standards. And, we can urge schools to offer and enroll many more students in the challenging courses which prepare them for postsecondary education and/or a promising occupation.

At the same time, we know that the responsibility for expanding and deepening family involvement extends well beyond families. Schools, communities and businesses can all be part of a network of support for families and students.

Schools can reach out to families at convenient hours and promote family and community involvement in helping all students to reach high standards. Communities can help to make schools safe and drug-free, provide support services for parents and encourage volunteers to serve as mentors. Businesses can adopt "family-friendly" policies, such as child care or flexible leave, that would make it easier for parents to visit or volunteer in schools.

We have joined with more than 45 different organizations, and together, we are identifying successful approaches to strengthen family involvement in learning.

Working together, we can reinforce the central role of the family in education — and bring out the best in every child. We need your help.

Mr. Riley is U.S. Secretary of Education and former governor of South Carolina.

INSIDE EDUCATION

Parents urged to help fill gaps in education



JOSEPH GARCIA

U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley gave American parents some homework last week: Read aloud to children. Make sure students

are in class. Turn off the television.

Mr. Riley announced a partnership last week led by the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education. He hopes it will help reach one of the nation's eight education goals — getting more parents involved.

The National PTA, the National Alliance of Business, the U.S. Catholic Conference, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America are taking part in the effort.

"The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built," Mr. Riley said. "I have seen examples all over this nation where two-parent families, single parents, stepparents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are providing strong family support for their children to learn."

But parents won't succeed without help, the secretary warned. Without support from their schools, their employers and the community, they won't be much better off than children missing parental involvement.

Active role

The need for parents to take an active role in their children's education is clearly established, Mr. Riley said.

"Thirty years of research tells us that the starting point of American education is parent expectations and parental involvement with their children's education," he said. "This consistent finding applies to every family regardless of the parents' station in life, their income or their educational background."

A federal report released by Mr. Riley called *Strong Families, Strong Schools*, found that three things over which parents have control — school absences, TV watching and the variety of reading materials at home — have profound effect on school success.

These three things account for 90 percent of the difference in student scores between the highest-ranked states and the lowest-ranked on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

"I, for one, want to suggest that the teen-ager who is perpetually glued to the tube is well on the way to having a very dull mind and a very dull — and perhaps risky — future," the secretary said.

The secretary acknowledged "several significant obstacles that interfere with parents," including "the sheer drag of poverty."

But the greatest obstacle is time, he said.

Employers' help

Employers have to rethink inflexible work schedules to give parents more time to take part in their children's education, or provide schools and day care at job sites.

Schools also must create opportunities for parental involvement that recognize the time constraints parents face. Those changes would help address "the unsettling disconnection between educators and families," Mr. Riley said.

Despite educators' comments to the contrary, parents still do not feel welcome in their children's schools. They want to learn how they can help more.

"Many parents feel that their right to be involved in school policy, to be full participants in the learning process, is ignored, frustrated and sometimes even denied," Mr. Riley said. "They do not feel valued, and too often they find education jargon to be a putdown."

Joseph Garcia covers public education for The Dallas Morning News.

Indianapolis News (Evening)

9-11-94

1st page of "Local" section

Education secretary pushes parents' school involvement

Associated Press

Education Secretary Richard Riley is in Indianapolis to reach parental involvement in children's education.

"The American family is the rock upon which a solid education be built," Riley said before a gathering of parents, teachers and students at Eastbrook Elementary School.

Brenda Adajare didn't hear the secretary's words, but no matter. She's already a believer.

With a son in first grade at Eastbrook and a 12-year-old daughter attending a Pike Township middle school, Adajare is active in the parent-teacher organization, the school's human relations committee and in after-school activities.

Every school day, she teams up for one hour in social studies at her daughter's school, giving lessons in black history and watching for that moment when a child's face lights up with new understanding.

"To see the light turn on in that eye... there's not a price for that," she said.



Jim Young/The Indianapolis News

Richard Riley (left) listens at a workshop for parents Tuesday.

Riley visited the Pike Township elementary school, praising it as a model of parent involvement, to urge family participation in children's education.

"Eastbrook has already gotten the message," he said.

The secretary was promoting the Clinton administration's Education Goals 2000 program, urging parents to set aside time to join in their children's education.

See 6 SCHOOL B-1

School: They need to encourage parents

Continued from B-1

and set high standards of achievement. "If you don't expect more from children, they don't give you more," he said.

While parents should assume more responsibility in shepherding school careers, schools need to encourage parents who want to get involved, said Eastbrook principal Pat Brooks.

Adajare says that's not the case everywhere. "I've been in schools where it's like, 'What are you doing here?'" she said.

Eastbrook encourages parents to make even the smallest involvement at first, such as calling a voice mail number to hear their child's teacher give a brief recorded summary of what happened in class that day. Parents don't need to feel the school will overwhelm them with demands for service.

"What we find is when the parents feel comfortable they come back for more," she said.

That kind of parent-student-school partnership creates crucial links that lead to high-quality edu-

cation in a safe environment, Riley said.

He said the three most important things a parent can do are:

- Make sure the child goes to school every day, and gets there on time.

- Limit TV watching to no more than two hours on a school night.

- Read at home.

Riley toured Eastbrook with Gov. Evan Bayh and state Superintendent of Public Instruction Suresh Reddy.

Riley then went Downtown, meeting with parents and high school students at the Martin Luther King Multi-Service Center. The students are participants in the 21st Century Scholars program, a state-funded program for at-risk students who receive scholarships for staying free of alcohol, drugs and crime and maintaining a 2.0 grade average.

"It's so clear in this country... how the level of education you have is directly related to the level of earnings you'll have in a lifetime," Riley said.

Pike Township school has important guest

■ Education Secretary Riley, in town to promote family role, drops in on Eastbrook Elementary.

By Rebecca Buchanan
STAR STAFF WRITER

Students at Eastbrook Elementary School are used to having visitors when they work in their outdoor science lab, a bright courtyard where children can garden, identify rocks and learn about the weather.

But Tuesday, some students at the Pike Township school entertained an especially distinguished guest while tending their marigolds and digging up geological formations.

He was U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley, in town this week to promote his new theme of family involvement in schools.

And Eastbrook — where more than 200 parents a week show up to participate in school programs — seemed a perfect place to deliver his message.

"It's a great thing to see these children doing hands-on learning, to see the parental involvement and the grandparents' involvement," Riley told a small crowd of parents and reporters, who gathered under a tent in the science park to hear the secretary's remarks.

Riley, who was joined Tuesday by Gov. Evan Bayh and state Superintendent of Public Instruction Suellen Reed, called family participation the single most important factor in children's success at

Referring to a report released by his department last week called "Strong Families, Strong Schools," Riley urged parents to get their children to school on time each morning, limit the amount of television they watch on school nights and have appropriate and challenging reading material available at home.

According to the report, those three factors accounted for nearly 90 percent of the difference in eighth-grade math scores on recent national exam in 37 states and the District of Columbia.

Riley, a former governor of South Carolina, said families must take the lead in creating a "culture of learning," especially in promoting reading and writing skills at home. National test scores in those areas haven't improved as much as math and science achievement in recent years, he noted.

"There are some things that just dollars and governments alone cannot do," said Bayh, who soon will become chairman of the National Education Goals Panel, an outgrowth of the federal Goals 2000 reform plan.

Riley said he and President Clinton recognize that many families — including those headed by single parents — are struggling to spend time with their children because they're both working.



Associated Press

GARDEN SPOT: Education Secretary Richard Riley met fourth-graders Doug Kriech and Katy Montesano Tuesday at a garden project at Eastbrook Elementary School.

your lives, spend time with your children (and) watch them grow."

Before his remarks, Riley toured Eastbrook's science lab, which Principal Patricia Brooks said was built with parents' help.

The lab is just one of many parent projects at the school. Others include a Dads' Club for fathers, uncles, big brothers and other male role models, as well as a committee to

and the wider community, Brooks said.

Parents active at the school, including some who attended an earlier reception with Riley, said family involvement in education is crucial to children's success.

"Even if it's just having lunch with your child, that's still so important," said Cindy Benkert, a member of Eastbrook's parent-teacher association. "It shows

Cindy Benkert photo

Education chief correct to focus on parents' role

IT'S ENCOURAGING THAT Education Secretary Dick Riley is launching a crusade to get parents more involved in their children's education. It is well documented that this is one of the surest ways to help a child excel in school.

Trouble is, children are increasingly growing up in homes where both parents work and where demands of the workplace claim priority. That's why Riley is also emphasizing the need for corporations to give parents time off and flexible work schedules. Other considerations include setting up day care at job sites and allowing parents to work at home without stigma or financial loss.

"Whatever it takes, we need to use all of our ingenuity to find new ways to connect families to their children in these hectic times," Riley said. He's right. In this age where most parents are working, there is much value in giving families more time and flexibility to participate in their children's educational development.

But don't be alarmed. This doesn't involve any new legislation. No need to fear a Workplace Flexibility and Parental Involvement in Education Act. Riley's vision is of a voluntary broad-based partnership between businesses and education organizations such as the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education and the National Alliance of Business.

The value in Riley's initiative is that it steers the debate in the right direction. Parents must do more to help prepare their children. And businesses should be sensitive to the need for parents to work flexible schedules. After all, without a well-educated workforce, corporations will find it difficult to maintain competitiveness in the global marketplace. By working together, everybody wins.

Riley Launches Campaign To Spark Parent Involvement

By Mark Pitsch

Washington

Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley launched a parent-involvement initiative last week that he said will draw on the support of education, business, and church groups to enlist parents in the fight to improve schools.

He also released a new Education Department report on parental involvement in education.

Since February, when Mr. Riley declared in a "state of American education" speech that parent involvement would be a priority, department officials have convened 125 meetings here and around the country in an effort to bring diverse interests together in support of the issue.

The initiative is not legislatively driven and the Clinton Administration will not seek additional money for it. However, the Administration has sought to promote greater parent involvement in schools by requiring schools to address it in plans they will submit under the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and some grant programs in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Rather, said Mr. Riley, the initiative is a partnership with various organizations, with the department promoting and coordinating the effort.

"What we're primarily doing is engaging people to share and participate," he said at a news conference after announcing the initiative in a speech at the National Press Club. "We're listening and pulling people together."

The initiative, Mr. Riley continued, is "really no set thing. But it's important for us to set the net wide. It's important to say that it's zero politics. It's nonpartisan."

Goals 2000 Connection

One purpose of the effort, Mr. Riley acknowledged, will be to build support for the Administra-



Secretary Richard W. Riley describes the blueprint for his new parent-involvement initiative as "a challenge to adult America to reconnect with our children's education."

tion's Goals 2000 strategy and the standards-setting movement of which it has become a part.

Mr. Riley acknowledged that some grassroots opposition to Goals 2000 has emerged, but he contended that it has resulted from "incorrect information" about the new law. He said of parents who oppose it: "We want them involved; that's the best we can say."

In his speech, Mr. Riley issued a call for all parents to support public education. It is a theme he has emphasized several times this year.

"Parents, including those who have strong religious values, must be at the table when it comes to public education," the Secretary said. "But they must also be willing to build bridges and not see public education as the enemy."

Chief among the campaign's partners is the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, which comprises 45 educa-

more...

Riley Launches Campaign

tion-related organizations. Its chairwoman, Sue Ferguson, said the coalition's next step is to develop a long-range plan that includes creating a data base of successful parent programs and a dissemination mechanism.

Representatives of the National PTA, the National Alliance of Business, and the U.S. Catholic Conference also spoke in support of the initiative and pledged their organizations' help.

Mr. Riley spent much of the day touting the initiative, including appearances on the Cable News Network and C-SPAN. A department spokesman said parent involvement is a theme the Secretary will reiterate on the road over the next several months.

Research And Strategies

The report Secretary Riley released last week offers parent-involvement strategies and pulls together 30 years of research supporting his thesis that "the essential building block for learning is how the American family uses its strength and power to support and encourage young people to meet the high expectations now being demanded of them in the classroom."

In addition to advice for parents, the report, "Strong Families, Strong Schools," also calls on schools, communities, businesses, and state and federal governments to support families and make it easier for parents to show interest in their chil-

dren's education.

It suggests, for example, that schools "get rid of jargon to clarify communication," that businesses "adopt [such] family-friendly policies [as] child care and flexible-leave policies," and that communities "make health, library, and cultural services easily accessible to the school's neighborhood."

Mr. Riley first mentioned many of the ideas included in the report in his February speech, in which parent involvement topped the list of

four areas the Secretary deemed vital to American education.

Sounding a theme from that speech, Secretary Riley told members of the press club that the report "is both a call to arms against ignorance and low expectations and it is also a challenge to adult America to reconnect with our children's education."

Copies of "Strong Families, Strong Schools" are available by calling (800) USA-LEARN.

Family values need an ally in government

Former Vice President Dan Quayle is off on what seems to be the start of a run for the presidency in 1996. Not surprisingly, his theme is "family values." He deplores "deadbeat dads" who abandon their children. His mission is to make Americans understand that "fathers are not irrelevant."

There is not a thing in those assertions by Quayle that I can argue with. I have seen the huge advantages that go to a child who grows up with a mother and father—and especially one lucky enough to have an extended family with educated grandparents around. And I see on one sad occasion after another the troubles and pitfalls that surround youngsters who have grown up with just one parent, usually the mother, to give economic support and moral guidance.

Even as Quayle preaches his brand of virtue, I notice that a Democrat, Education Secretary Richard Riley, has issued a report titled "Strong Families, Strong Schools." In urging more parental involvement in their children's education, Riley says, "The American family is the rock on which a solid education can be built."

My major problem with Quayle, Riley and the other politicians who prescribe strong families with virtuous values as a cure for America's social woes is that they never tell us how to make strong again those families, those human clusters that are now hopelessly dysfunctional. Millions of American youngsters grow up thinking that fathers are irrelevant, not just because their mother got impregnated by some scoundrel who skipped town immediately, but because divorces—bitter divorces—are an American way of life. There were 1,187,000 divorces in 1993, and the odds are only 50-50 that a marriage taking place today will not end in divorce.

Many divorces occur because the father is a lousy breadwinner. He is not likely to become a prosperous supporter of his old family after divorce. If he does start making good money, it is very difficult to get a judge to force him to make child support payments.

Many politicians who scream for more prisons, for no parole for



Carl
Rowan

any offender, for no rehabilitation programs fail to see that the more young men they lock up for relatively minor offenses, the more situations they create where very young women will try to rear children without benefit of a father in the house. We now have 15.6 million children growing up in households headed by single females—these being the poorest, most traumatized households in America.

There are some supervirtuous politicians, mostly conservative women, who argue that our schools and most everything else would be better if women accepted again the idea that their place is in the home, not on some assembly line or in some corporate office.

We now have 56,714,000 women in the labor force and 3,642,000 more trying to become workers. They are not going to abandon the world of work, so anyone wanting "strong families" will have to find ways to accommodate the reality of working women.

Riley is trying to convince employers that they make for a healthier America if they give their workers "flex time," "release time," day care facilities at the work site and other areas of latitude that will free them to become involved in the schooling of their children.

Old virtue becomes its own reward only when bolstered by laws and programs that make virtue viable amidst the harsh realities of modern American life.

Education chief correct to focus on parents' role

IT'S ENCOURAGING THAT Education Secretary Dick Riley is launching a crusade to get parents more involved in their children's education. It is well documented that this is one of the surest ways to help a child excel in school.

Trouble is, children are increasingly growing up in homes where both parents work and where demands of the workplace claim priority. That's why Riley is also emphasizing the need for corporations to give parents time off and flexible work schedules. Other considerations include setting up day care at job sites and allowing parents to work at home without stigma or financial loss.

"Whatever it takes, we need to use all of our ingenuity to find new ways to connect families to their children in these hectic times," Riley said. He's right. In this age where most parents are working, there is much value in giving families more time and flexibility to participate in their children's educational development.

But don't be alarmed. This doesn't involve any new legislation. No need to fear a Workplace Flexibility and Parental Involvement in Education Act. Riley's vision is of a voluntary broad-based partnership between businesses and education organizations such as the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education and the National Alliance of Business.

The value in Riley's initiative is that it steers the debate in the right direction. Parents must do more to help prepare their children. And businesses should be sensitive to the need for parents to work flexible schedules. After all, without a well-educated workforce, corporations will find it difficult to maintain competitiveness in the global marketplace. By working together, everybody wins.

Schools stress parental involvement

COVINGTON

9-15-94

KENTUCKY POST

by Debra Ann Vance
Kentucky Post staff reporter

Thirty years of research show that strong families make strong schools. U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley said Tuesday in Covington.

"The American family is the rock on which a solid education begins," said Riley, who was in town to kick off a new campaign to get families more involved in their children's education.

Riley visited the Biggs Early Childhood Education Center on Scott Street.

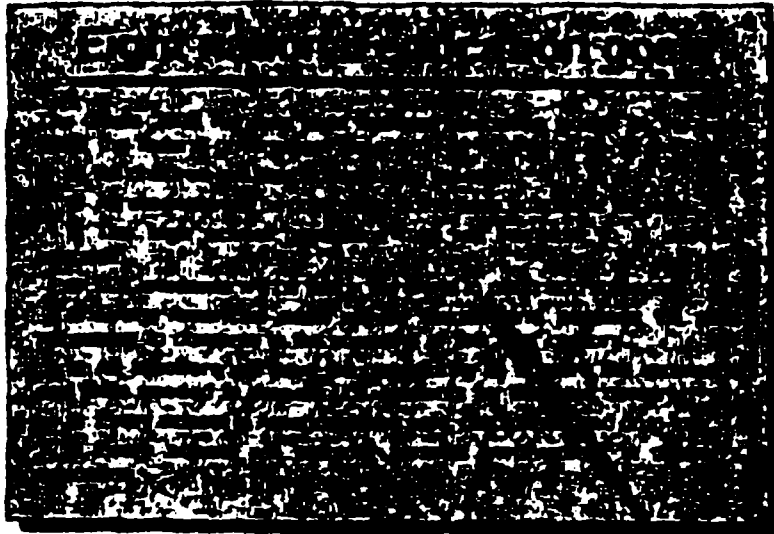
He called the center "a very good example of family and parental involvement."

Riley also noted that one of the objectives of the federal Goals 2000 program is to promote parental involvement.

The federal government not only is promoting the goals with words, but with money.

Riley announced Kentucky will receive a \$1.4 million grant from Goals 2000. So far, 29 states have received grants.

The federal government has set aside \$100 million for the



program. Riley said the grants program is a "bottoms-up effort" to improve education — it will be up to the states to determine how the money is used.

Most of Kentucky's grant money will support programs that call for more parental involvement, Kentucky Education Commissioner Tom Boyson said.

Local schools must develop

parental involvement programs and apply to the state department to fund those programs.

Boyson said the money will fill a void in the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990.

The reform act calls for a number of changes, but didn't include a provision for more parental involvement, Boyson said.

"Anything that strengthens

parents is going to strengthen KERA," Boyson said.

The grant also will be for training new teachers and for professional development, he said.

At the press conference, Riley also gave what he called 10 work for parents. The practical points also will help prepare children for life, he said.

Riley asked parents to:

1 Find the time to sit down together.

2 Set high expectations and encourage children.

3 Limit television time to no more than two hours a night.

4 Read together.

5 Make sure children take tough courses.

6 Make sure kids go to school every day and on time.

7 Talk to children, especially teenagers, about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the values parents want their children to have.

How to educate your child

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Joanna Jacobs

PARENT involvement is a top priority, Education Secretary Richard Riley said last week. Parent involvement is the most important factor in children's learning, said teachers in a Child Trends survey. Parent involvement is one of the goals of Goals 2000, the federal education reform bill. But what kind of parent involvement?

At many schools, the only role for involved parents is chaperoning on field trips and bringing brownies to the bake sale. Seeking a say in curriculum, textbooks or teacher selection is seen as parent interference not parent involvement.

Still, most schools aren't turning away hordes of in-

involved parents eager to serve on committees. They're begging parents to show up for back-to-school night, parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, Thanksgiving pageants and the Spring Sing. Many parents can't attend events during the work day. Others lack English fluency.

Parent involvement at school is desirable, but fortunately it's not essential. What's absolutely critical is for parents to be involved at home.

- Get your kids to school every day.

- Have books, newspapers and magazines around the house.

- Turn off the TV.

... and your children will do well in school.

- Let your kids miss a lot of school.

- Make your house a no-reading zone.

- Keep the TV on all day.

... and your children will do poorly in school.

It's just about that simple according to

"Strong Families, Strong Schools," a report by the U.S. Education Department.

"Three factors over which parents exercise authority — student absenteeism, variety of reading materials in the home, and excessive television watching — explain nearly 90 percent of the difference in performance between high- and low-achieving states."

I think the other 10 percent is under parental control, too, at least for parents who don't wait the kid is 16 to start exercising their

Riley urged parents to plan their day to create more family time, set high standards for their children, make sure their kids take challenging courses and do the homework, read together and model the kind of behavior they'd like their kids to follow.

(Don't give the no-drugs lecture while drunk, for

instance.) He also advocated limiting TV viewing on a school night to no more than two hours, which is about 1 1/4 hours too much.

I think the number one thing is for parents to talk to their kids about school, about their day, about everything. These conversations often raise ethical issues. If your daughter's third-best friend asks, "Am I your best friend?" what should she say? A classmate of your son's is being harassed. What should your son do?

Involved parents don't have to help with homework. They may not be able to. But they need to do their job as parents, socializing and civilizing their children, so teachers can do their job.

Parents who are too busy to do that should put their kids up for adoption.

As for getting parents involved with their children's schools, I've got an idea: Take Our Dads To School Day.

In his speech, Riley called for business to give working parents time to get involved in their children's schools, and announced the department will join a parent-school network to push parent involvement.

Sure, it's a gimmick, but let's ask businesses to give parent-workers a day off every school year to go to school, sit through every class, "sit up" in gym, chow down that cafeteria food and maybe learn what to do at home to help their kids do better at school.

Parents could participate in "cooperative learning" groups, and give teachers feedback on whether these are good training for workplace collaboration. They could experience the new new math, and see if it makes more sense than the old new math. They could start to distinguish good ideas from gimmicks.

Of course, it would have to be Take Our Dads, Moms, Grandparents, Surrogate Parents (and Folding Chairs) To School Day, but let's put fathers first, because they're usually considered last.

Many dads would be more involved in their children's lives if they weren't treated so frequently as though they were dispensable or defective.

I'm not a big fan of Take Our Daughters To Work Day. Our daughters (and sons) know all too well how hard their parents work outside the home, and most have been dragged to Mom's work on school holidays. Their "self-esteem" would be higher if parents stressed family more and (paid) work less.

Let's steal the idea and apply it where it's really needed. Give working parents a day to concentrate on the most important job they'll ever do.

Starting Right

(Best copy available)

A REPORT issued by the U.S. Education Department tells us nothing really new about the important role that parents play in their children's education.

But what it says about the relationship of home and school it spells out very clearly:

- Parents' reading aloud to small children is the single most important activity leading to a child's eventual success in reading.

- Family involvement in education, the report says, is more important to pupil success than either family income or the family's educational level.

- Reading scores can be improved by home learning activities.

- Parental control of the home — including making sure children get to school, making reading material available and limiting television time — has a direct correlation to test scores.

The common thread in this (and the report drew on 30 years of research) is that reading is fundamental.

Any parent, even one whose hours at home are busy, precious and limited, can find a little time to read to a child. Even families with limited resources can afford library books — either to read to the children or for the children to read. Surely most parents can exercise control over how many hours are spent watching television.

Educators are told, and most believe, that every child can learn. Parents need to believe it, too, and to care enough to lay the groundwork for a wide world of learning. Teachers can only polish the raw material they are sent from home. It cannot be repeated too often that parents' reading to children at ages 2, 3 and 4 is also fundamental.

EASIER SAID

Parents or parent key to children's education success

A major push spearheaded by the U.S. Department of Education to get families involved in their children's education is obviously welcome. But present-day circumstances make that cause easier declared than realized.

Ideally, all parents should be active participants in their children's education. As civil rights activist Jesse Jackson once said, "A school system without parents at its foundation is just like a bucket with a hole in it."

Today, the well of parents involved with their children's education is running too dry. In all too many situations the plural term "parents" does not apply. And sad is the case where children do have parents but the parents do not seem to care enough to be involved.

There are some quite real obstacles that

tend to work against parents trying to be active in their child's learning process, but those obstacles have become all-too convenient excuses for some.

Society is learning well today what author and social commentator W.E.B. Du Bois pointed out: "School is a desperate duel between new souls and old to pass on facts and methods and dreams from a dying world . . . without letting either teacher or taught lose for a moment faith and interest. It is hard work . . . It is never wholly a success without the painstaking help of the parent."

The parental-involvement effort between the Education Department and a coalition of church, business and community groups merits support. In the end, it is the family — be it a two-person or one person household — that is the key to a child's success in the classroom.

Renewing the family values debate

It may have been coincidence or the beginning of the 1996 presidential campaign, but the American people were hit recently with sermons by several politicians on an old theme: the crisis in family values.

President Clinton, former Vice President Dan Quayle and even Education Secretary Richard Riley delivered major addresses on the topic, and their stern moralizing upset some.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, for one, criticized Clinton, arguing that the focus should be on jobs and urban renewal, "not moral lessons on how to live."

Jackson is not alone in his skepticism of politicians treading on preachers' turf. But he's half-right at best.

Jobs and urban renewal are important, but every day more Americans sense that the social and moral fabric of the country is disintegrating and needs to be restored. More than that, they sense that individuals, taking personal responsibility, must make the difference.

But how? Family values, the preacher pols agreed. "It's the family that can rebuild America," Quayle said in his speech. "We must find ways to strengthen the family," Clinton declared in his.

That's easily enough said, but what really can be done? As Riley observed in his speech, more families are struggling just to make ends meet these days and the demands on parents' time are backbreaking.

Meantime, the number of out-of-wedlock births has soared, fathers are abandoning responsibility for their children and kids are killing kids. And as more than one commentator has observed in recent years,

the last quarter-century has seen the self-fulfillment of adults elevated to paramount status, with the well-being of children decidedly secondary.

Clinton issued the strongest call to action. "The future can be better..." he told the National Baptist Convention. "Each of us has a personal, moral responsibility to make it so." And he challenged: "What are we going to do about it, right now?"

There are no simple solutions, but Clinton proposed one essential step: Get involved in children's lives. More Americans, he urged, must care for their children, love and discipline them, show them right and wrong by example and counsel.

Riley was even more direct. Become involved in your kid's education, he said, and remain so even when they are increasingly independent teenagers in high school. Make sure they go to school, limit their television viewing and spend more time with them instead of "letting our children grow up at times, almost alone and disconnected."

Riley cautioned correctly that parents alone can't do the job, and he issued challenges to business executives, educators and others to do their part. Indeed, families aren't self-contained. They must be supported by employers, communities and government.

Any debate over America's "poverty of values" could easily turn into bipartisan blather. Perhaps the best thing about this new round of the values debate is the vast area of agreement among the participants—particularly on the need to give time and attention to the children.

School reform, at home

There's a 1-800 number for everything, but here's an important one: 1-800-USA-LEARN. Call and you'll get a free copy of the booklet *Strong Families, Strong Schools*. It's about how you can make the schools better.

The number is for Goals 2000, the standard-setting program of the U.S. Department of Education. You also can request other information about schools and education. The number is staffed 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

Now that you know, will you do it? Ah, that's the problem. Education Secretary Richard Riley has been on the stump, campaigning for community involvement in the schools, particularly involvement of parents in their own children's education.

If only children were born holding an instruction manual or, at the least, with a label on their foreheads that said, "Read to me!" That simple act — done often — would get more children ready

THE HOTTEST NUMBER
Education Secretary Riley invites everyone, but parents most of all, to come back to school.

for school than all of the programs that Washington or Tallahassee could ever devise. Mr. Riley, a coalition headed by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and other groups are spreading the message that parents are the

most important influences in a child's education.

That means reading to kids, keeping books available, turning off the television, and, yes, making sure that kids headed for school actually get there.

Mr. Riley wants business to help by adopting flexible schedules that let parents take time off from work to attend parent-teacher conferences or volunteer in the classroom. He also suggests that businesses open schools at the workplace, such as the ground-breaking school at American Bankers Insurance Group in South Dade, and use technology such as e-mail to help parents keep in touch with their children's schools.

Sound ideas, these. Is anyone listening? Is anyone calling?

Retrieved from DataTimes

HEADLINE 3 ways parents can help children, teachers
 Byline: JOANNE JACOBS
 Credit: Knight-Ridder News Service
 DATE 09/21/94
 SOURCE THE NEWS & OBSERVER of Raleigh, N.C. (RNOB)
 Edition: FINAL
 Section: EDITORIAL/OPINION
 Page: A15
 Day of Week: Wednesday
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* SAN JOSE, Calif. -- Parent involvement is a top priority, said Education Secretary Richard Riley earlier this month.

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Parent involvement is one of the goals of Goals 2000, the federal education reform bill.

But what kind of parent involvement?

At many schools, the only role for involved parents is chauffeuring on field trips and bringing brownies to the bake sale. Seeking a say in curriculum, textbooks or teacher selection is seen as parent interference not parent involvement.

Still, most schools aren't turning away hordes of involved parents eager to serve on committees. They're begging parents to show up for back-to-school night, parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, Thanksgiving pageants and the Spring Sing. Many parents can't attend events during the work day. Others lack English fluency.

Parent involvement at school is desirable, but fortunately it's not essential. What's absolutely critical is for parents to be involved at home.

Get your kids to school every day.

Have books, newspapers and magazines around the house.

Turn off the TV.

... and your children will do well in school.

Let your kids miss a lot of school.

Make your house a no-reading zone.

Keep the TV on all day.

... and your children will do poorly in school.

It's just about that simple, according to "Strong Families, Strong Schools," a report by the U.S. Education Department: "Three factors over which parents exercise authority -- student absenteeism, variety of reading materials in the home, and excessive television watching -- explain nearly 90 percent of the difference in performance between high- and low-achieving status."

I think the other 10 percent is under parental control, too, at least for parents who don't wait until the kid is 15 to start exercising their authority.

Riley urged parents to plan their day to create more family time, set high standards for their children, make sure their kids take challenging courses and do the homework, read together and model the kind of behavior they'd like their kids to follow. (Don't

More...

Cont'd

23

give the no-drugs lecture while drunk, for instance.) He also advocated limiting TV viewing on a school night to no more than two hours, which is about 1 1/2 hours too much.

I think the number one thing is for parents to talk to their kids about school, about their day, about everything. These conversations often raise ethical issues. If your daughter's third-best friend asks, "Am I your best friend?" what should she say? A classmate of your son's is being harassed. What should your son do?

Involved parents don't have to help with homework. They may not be able to. But they need to do their job as parents, socializing and civilizing their children, so teachers can do their job.

Parents who are too busy to do that should put their kids up for adoption.

As for getting parents involved with their children's schools, I've got an idea: Take Our Dads To School Day.

In his speech, Riley called for business to give working parents time to get involved in their children's schools, and announced the department will join a parent-school network to push parent involvement.

Sure, it's a gimmick, but let's ask businesses to give parent-workers a day off every school year to go to school, sit through every class, "suit up" in gym, chow down that cafeteria food and maybe learn what to do at home to help their kids do better at school.

Parents could participate in "cooperative learning" groups, and give teachers feedback on whether these are good training for workplace collaboration. They could experience the new new math, and see if it makes more sense than the old new math. They could start to distinguish good ideas from gimmicks.

Of course, it would have to be Take Our Dads, Moms, Grandparents, Surrogate Parents (and Folding Chairs) To School Day, but let's put fathers first, because they're usually considered last.

Many dads would be more involved in their children's lives if they weren't treated so frequently as though they were dispensable or defective.

I'm not a big fan of Take Our Daughters To Work Day. Our daughters (and sons) know all too well how hard their parents work outside the home, and most have been dragged to mom's work on school holidays. Their "self-esteem" would be higher if parents stressed family more and (paid) work less.

Let's steal the idea and apply it where it's really needed. Give working parents a day to concentrate on the most important job they'll ever do.

###Joanne Jacobs is a columnist for the San Jose Mercury News.

Homework for teachers and parents

Parental involvement in education has to mean more than working with the local parent-teacher association.

It is what every parent does from the moment a child is born. How a parent speaks to an infant, disciplines a child, speaks on the telephone in the presence of a teenage son or daughter — such things make up the primary value-setting education of America's next generation.

Education, like charity, begins at home.

The time has come for us all — schools, parents and the businesses that keep most of those parents entirely too busy — to work to close the teacher-parent gap.

U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley has been doggedly spreading that message this month. Parental involvement is one of two goals the Clinton administration added to the bipartisan national education goals for the year 2000 launched by President Bush and the 50 governors. (The other is academic enrichment for teachers.)

Riley argues persuasively that parental involvement helps children's academic performance. Riley's department pulled together 30 years of research showing that parents who

play an active role in their children's learning tend to boost those children's grades, as well as their delight in lifelong learning.

Another reason is political. Involved parents are more likely to make the national push for goals and standards a grass-roots reality — and Riley knows that American schools will not change without grass-roots agitation.

But how do schools draw in a single mother living in public housing with a hostile attitude toward an institution she perhaps dropped out of at age 16? Riley's answer: Teachers should consider visiting the home to try to understand the child's situation. A tough assignment, but before this age of specialization, teachers always did whatever it took to get through.

And what about parents whose religious conviction tends toward censorship and so-called Creation Science? Riley's answer is that these parents, too, need to be listened to. If a broad conversation takes place about how a school is governed, a carefully ripened consensus will hold marginal views in their proper place.

Schools need to help all teachers reach out to all parents so that they can work together on the one goal they certainly share: the success of the child.