

family



JERRY CAMMARATA FATHERS DIARY

Poor grades: bad marks for folks

To define education is very difficult. The learning process is always be in a state of flux and reflective of the changing times. It seems, though, the academicians are always one step behind the times. The education arena is a bureaucratic monster that only rears its flexible head after an ill is perceived in the way it conducts its business. What parents want, I suspect, is an educational system that has very perceptive forecasting skills and can provide leadership and direction in its programs.

Last week I briefly mentioned that some kids just don't like school. Is it the school's fault, the parent's fault or is the kid a simple misfit? It is the school's fault in part, but primarily it is the parent's responsibility to provide enthusiasm about reading, writing, arithmetic and establishing meaningful bonds with relatives and neighbors. We seem to be failing at this as parents, and schools are not that successful either.

Consider a junior high school in San Diego, Calif. Its students were not going to class so the school decided to pay each student to go. Memorial Junior High School offered 25 cents a day for

attendance and another \$5 a month for perfect attendance. According to the principal, Bob Amparan, "I'm not paying kids for coming to school. I'm rewarding them for being in school. There's a subtle difference."

I wish the school luck in its efforts. But money can't buy an appreciation for science, the world hunger problem and the unjust behavior of people when it relates to civil rights.

Pray for help

Your child better not be caught praying to God for help in school. Praying in school is a no-no. Yes, we can invoke the name and force of God in court, on the floor of the Senate and the president can say, "With the help of God, we will be a strong nation." But our fragile and maturing kids can't gather and collectively seek God's help in school. Blame it on liberalism, the

left wing, radicals or even the devil at work. The blame is really on parents. Parents who don't understand the meaning of education and the need to have school's reflect the total fabric of the community and the breath and intent of our founding fathers.

Recently, Rev. William Howard, president of the National Council of Churches, said, "Prayer is too important, too sacred and too intimate to be scheduled or administered by government." There is truth to Rev. Howard's statement. However, it is not the administration of religion that is in question, rather, the need to have the bible or any other religious document available and read by the students and teachers during an assembly. If parents don't talk about God, the school doesn't talk about God, how will our kids ever figure out God had something to do with our being here in the first place?

Reinstate old values

Just one year ago this week the New York City Board of Education announced it was going to move from its more liberal policy of conducting education and return to stricter discipline, a dress code, and the three Rs. I remember reporting in a column several months ago that if a first or second grader has been provided with the three Rs, he or she will have enough basic education to find his or her way through life—unrealistic, however, theoretically possible.

Parents are saying to themselves these days, "I think we are losing our kids to new styles of parenting and education and, unfortunately, they don't seem to work." Parenting and teaching have not really changed since the time of Adam and Eve. The hardware and software of it all has, but the essence has not. It still and always will take one part parent, one part community, one part teacher, several parts student and a pinch of undefined ingredients we have been calling love, tenderness, understanding, compassion, fairness, values, morals and the like, to turn out a well-rounded and



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productive citizen of these United States.

President Reagan is not going to do it, Congress won't, the courts can't demand it, our schools are still trying to figure the correct formula out, and the student is too busy with baseball and worldly matters to really get involved in such a grown-up struggle. There are lots of lobbying groups and associations who think they have the answer. Some of them, in part, do have interesting ideas we should ponder.

But the bottom line is us—parents. We have to create the

Parents play a primary role in the education of their children.

interrelationship between the home, education, God, community, work and the meaning of tomorrow. Our schools do not seem to be doing it for us. Maybe if we show the initiative, the schools will get the idea and return to a more traditional approach to education. Get back to the basics and our kids will emerge the superkids we know them to be.