

Expectations and Support

by Diane Trautman

March is the month for parent conferences and open houses, but you don't need to wait for an invitation to contact your child's teachers and ask for a status report. In fact, if you wait until the parent-teacher meeting, you might find yourself in a panic when the update is less than stellar. And though I encourage you to attend the open house night at your child's Hart District school, you'll find that you won't have much time for in-depth discussions with each teacher in that limited time.

Establishing a dialog with the faculty and maintaining it throughout the year is the ideal. It's not too late to make that connection so that you can guide your child through the remainder of the school year. But don't wait until two weeks before finals to step in and offer help. If a student hasn't learned the basics and mastered some fundamental study skills by that time, he'll be in trouble.

Beware the trap of lowered expectations. Teachers and parents may do the student a disservice by categorizing the student as "just average" and accepting minimal grades. This may become a self-fulfilling prophecy with the student internalizing that expectation and demanding less of himself in school and in life. In order for our children to reach their potential, we have to help them envision and reach for their personal best, ensure that they're getting what they need from their teachers, and give them any additional support either directly or through tutoring.

In his book "Nurturing Good Children Now" Child and Family Therapist Ron Taffel writes: "Your role as a parent is to discover your child's core, nurture it, and protect it from the chaos of everyday life and cultural distractions that can affect its growth." We parents are the first line of defense for our children. We have to be their guides and their advocates.

With that in mind, parents and educators of special needs students might wish to attend the upcoming Winter Academy on Friday, March 2. The Santa Clarita Valley Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) offers these workshops free to parents and local school staff, but all educators and service providers are invited to attend. Brochures are available through local school districts and registration is required. For more information, call SELPA at (661) 294-5398.