

Journalism Archive – Donna Gundle-Krieg

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ACT Versus SAT: Which College Exam Should You Take?

By Donna Gundle-Krieg March 16, 2009



Should a high school student take the ACT test, or is the SAT test better? How do the PSAT and the PLAN tests affect college admission?

The answer is that each situation is unique. It depends on the college that the student wants to attend, as well as the strengths and personality of the student.

You should ask yourself several questions before deciding whether to take the SAT or ACT, which are the two primary college admissions examinations.

The PSAT is the practice test for the SAT. The PLAN is the practice exam for the ACT.

Confused yet? Below is a chart outlining details of these four main college entrance exams. This chart also has links to register for the tests.

Students who are undecided about college should consider taking all four exams. Some colleges are partial to either the ACT or the SAT. However, many colleges will let students use either score for admission or scholarship purposes.

If the college of your choice gives you an option, the SAT may be a better test for you if you did well on the PSAT.

Also, the SAT is better for those with great vocabulary and grammar skills, according to Ned Johnson of NPR Radio. It is also best for those who find it easier to write essays that use illustrative examples rather than argument.

If you are quick-thinking and able to reason, you will find the SAT easier. "The hardest math questions on the SAT are not about advanced content or formulas that you may have forgotten," says Johnson.

The ACT may be a better test for you if you did great on the PLAN test, which is the "pre ACT" exam.

The ACT is also a better test for those who read well and quickly. It is tailored for those who are great at writing papers, but haven't had formal grammar instruction. The English portion of the ACT is less about grammar, and more about punctuation and structure.

"If you prefer to write essays that are argumentative, persuading with ideas even if you lack perfect recall of facts and figures," then the ACT is recommended for you," stated Johnson.

Most students take the SAT and ACT for the first time in 11th grade. The PSAT and PLAN are usually taken in 10th grade.



However it is possible to qualify to take the ACT or SAT as early as the 7th grade if a student is gifted and accepted by programs such as the [Northwest University Talent Identification](#).

Students can take either test a number of times.

The ACT allows students to control which set of scores are sent to colleges and scholarship programs.

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SAT has a new option, called "Score Choice," which gives you the option to choose which scores you send to colleges—in accordance with an institution's stated score-use practice. You can choose scores from one, several, or all SAT test dates.

"It has become so complicated with some colleges requiring that all scores be sent and others not, that I am advising my students to release all scores to all schools," said Julie A. Manhan, Educational Consultant and Seattle College Bound Examiner.

Will you improve your scores if you take the tests more than once? It seems to be worth a try, as research shows that of the students who took the ACT more than once:

- 55% increased their Composite score on the retest
- 22% had no change in their Composite score on the retest
- 23% decreased their Composite score on the retest

See the Chart of College Admissions Tests below.

See also:

[Should You Take the SAT or the ACT?](#)

[ACT Registration Information](#)

[SAT Registration Information](#)

[PSAT Registration Information](#)

[PLAN Registration Information](#)

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Thinking About Adopting in Michigan? Here's the Process

by Donna Gundle-Krieg as published in [Metro Parent Magazine](#)

"If you are even remotely thinking of adoption, I would highly recommend that you just do it. A lot of children out there need you."

Those words come from Marilyn Best, who had such an incredible experience with adopting her own child that she became a family mentor to support and assist others who are interested in adopting through Commonwealth Adoptions International.

Cathy Eisenberg agrees. "Adoption and helping others adopt is a joy and a dream come true for me," said the adoptive parent and co-founder of Child and Parent Services. "If you take the step, it will change your life forever."

If adoption is such a positive experience and 4/10 or 81.5 million Americans have considered adopting, then why are so many children still without homes?

"Many people are nervous about the adoption process and costs," said Raul Velez Velez, program director of Commonwealth Adoptions International. "Others may be afraid that the child they receive will not be a good match."

However, that fear is unfounded. "You have to feel comfortable with the child, and you do have the right to turn down a referral," according to Nancy Bortman, foster care coordinator and home study worker for Child and Parent Services.



"In 17 years, I have yet to meet anyone who regrets adopting," she added. "There are also many organizations able to assist people through the process"

In addition, financial assistance is available when adopting children out of the foster care system.

This tax credit combined with the aid available means that "all these children need is a leap of faith and courage from adults with love to share," according to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Both Dave Thomas (deceased founder of Wendy's) and Gerald Ford are among famous Americans who were adopted as older children.

The paperwork and costs are manageable and you have decided that it is a good time to start taking steps to lead you towards your goal of adopting a child. Where do you start?

The first steps towards adopting are described in more detail below.

According to experts, they basically involve: 1) obtaining a "Family Assessment;" 2) deciding which type of adoption you want: domestic, international, or foster care; and 3) choosing an agency, an attorney and an adoption medical expert.

STEP ONE: FAMILY ASSESSMENT

The first step in most adoptions is a "Family Assessment," which is also known as a home study. In Michigan, family assessments are conducted by a social worker within an adoption agency.

The family assessment includes an application, criminal background check, medical forms, personal references and several home visits.

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The home visits provide an opportunity for the family to learn more about adoption, and to seriously consider their motivations and expectations for adopting. During the home visits, the social worker tries to understand what type of child might best fit within a family.

“You do not have to be married to adopt a child,” according to the University of Michigan Work/Life Resource Center. “Being a single parent is perfectly acceptable.”

During the family assessment, you will also be asked to provide an income statement. While you do not have to be wealthy to adopt, you must have adequate resources to provide for your family. You don't have to own your own home, either, as long as there is adequate bedroom space per child.

The family assessment process usually takes anywhere from three to six months. “The home study can be done before the agency is chosen,” Bortman explained. Often the home study helps prospective parents choose the type of adoption as well as try out the adoption agency.

The average cost of a family assessment varies from \$750-\$1500. There is usually no fee when you are adopting a "special needs" child, or a permanent court or state ward.

STEP TWO: DECIDING WHICH TYPE OF ADOPTION IS BEST FOR YOU

Before, during or after the family assessment, the big question must be answered: what kind of a child is a good match for you? The three main categories of adoptions are domestic, international and foster adoptions.

When deciding which is best for your family, you should consider many factors such as your age, your lifestyle, your family situation and your motivation for adoption.

Another consideration is cost. The average domestic adoption costs \$12,000, while international adoptions cost \$13,000-\$20,000 plus travel expenses. These costs could be offset by the \$10,000 adoption tax credit. For foster adoptions, the need is so high that costs are minimal and the incentives are plentiful.

OPTION A: FOSTER ADOPTION

Foster adoption is an excellent choice for many people, including older, experienced parents. Adopting foster children is virtually free and available for families or singles with low or moderate income. Adoption assistance programs may provide medical assistance, social services, cash benefits and payment of adoption expenses.

Many foster children have special needs. According to the University of Michigan, "special needs" does not necessarily mean the child has any handicaps but that they are harder to place than a healthy infant. Special needs children may be over age five, part of a sibling group, of minority heritage, or have emotional, mental, learning, or physical impairments.

The median age of a waiting child is 8 years old. 45% of these children are African American, 34% Caucasian and 12% Hispanic.

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According to the National Adoption Attitudes Survey, there are 565,000 foster children in the nation with 131,000 of these children available for adoption. Only 17% of those available will find a family by the time they turn 18 and age out of the system. If only 1/500 Americans adopted out of foster care, all of these children could find homes.

OPTION B DOMESTIC ADOPTION

In Michigan, the "waiting for an infant list" currently runs between three and five years if you're interested in adopting a perfectly healthy Caucasian

child under the age of one, according to the University of Michigan. Across the nation, there are 25,000 such infants available for adoption -- and one million families waiting for those infants.

Many domestic adoptions involve a selection process where birth parents have a say in who gets their baby. If a family is lucky enough to be selected early, then their wait would be shorter.

There are also people who shorten the average wait time by trying independent adoptions. These people want domestic infants so badly that they will work independent of an agency, and spend a lot of money on advertising and networking to try and find an infant. One should work closely with an attorney when adopting independently, as a significant number of these adoptions fall through when the birth mother changes her mind.

Another decision to make if you adopt domestically is whether you want to engage in an open adoption, which means that the birth and adoptive parents have met each other. At least half of the domestic agency placements of infants each year are open adoptions, and this trend is growing. There are still many agencies in Michigan who deal with closed adoptions. Usually an adoption is closed at the request of the birth parents.

OPTION C INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

International adoption is on the rise, and appeals to people for many reasons. First of all, the option opens up another supply of healthy children, particularly infants. Second, many people like the idea of incorporating another culture into their household, particularly if they are able to adopt from a country of their own heritage.

Many countries participate in adopting infants through the United States. Velez Velez says his agency deals with children in Russia, Ukraine, India, Colombia, China and Viet Nam.

"Columbia has the best selection of healthy infants, with the average adoptee at age 7-10 weeks," he said. "We work with a single mothers' shelter where they receive excellent pre-natal care."

He also said the agency is working hard to place sibling groups and older children from Russia and Columbia. "We host recreational trips for prospective adoptive parents to evaluate a child before making a final decision, without the child knowing," he said. "If you will take older kids, the process takes only 3-4 months."

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International adoption tends to be more expensive, mainly due to the travel that is required. There is also a “dossier” required, which is additional paperwork. “A good international adoption organization will help you through the process,” says Velez Velez.

Another concern for those adopting internationally is the medical risk involved. However, agencies will supply or refer people to one of the many medical adoption doctors that are experienced in evaluating medical records before the adoption is complete.

Families that have adopted from other countries are usually very happy with their decision. They call the travel experiences exciting, and said that the adoption organization assisted them greatly during their visits abroad and during the process.

The need for international adoptive parents is huge. One parent described their visit to Russia’s baby house: “There were 100 babies who would all come up and look at you and call you mama and dada. We wanted to take them all home.”

STEP THREE: HIRE AN AGENCY

Which adoption agency should you choose? It depends on which type of adoption you wish to do, as well as your personal and religious preferences. Many of the agencies listed later in this article also provide pregnancy consultation as well as other services for both birth parents and adoptive parents.

Once you choose an agency, they will often help find you an attorney and medical expert. You can also find an attorney through www.adoptionattorneys.org.

START RESEARCHING NOW

General information on adoption can be found in many places.

The Annual Guide to Adoption is a valuable resource which includes a step by step overview of adoption process as well as helpful tips on laws, taxes, agencies, support groups, and attorneys. See www.adoptivefamilies.com or call 1-800-372-3300. Adoptive Families Magazine is published by the same organization.

Heart tugging pictures of special needs children who need homes is available at The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange at www.mare.org

Should you decide to take the plunge, you will have lots of company. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2000, 2.5 percent of children living with their parents in America were adopted into their families. This is a total of 1.6 million children under the age of 18 growing up adopted.

This data shows that “adoption in America is alive and well,” says Thomas Atwood, president and CEO of National Council for Adoption.

While adoption may be alive and well, there is a continuing high need for caring individuals to become adoptive parents. Once you get on the websites and see the faces of the kids who are waiting, your life will never be the same.

ADOPTION RESOURCES

Adoption Associates (248) 474-0990 <http://www.adoptassoc.com>

Adoption Network (800) 367-2367 <http://www.adoptionnetwork.com/>

Americans for International Aid and Adoption <http://www.aiaaadopt.org>

Bethany Christian Services (248) 414-4080 <http://www.bethany.org>

Catholic Social Services of Oakland County (248) 333-3700 www.cssoc.org

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Child & Parent Services, Inc. (800) 248-0106 www.childandparentservices.com

China Adoption Resources (604)785-6575 <http://www.chinaadoptionresources.com>

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (800)275-3832 www.davethomasfoundation.org

Hands Across the Water (734) 477-0135 www.hatw.org

Jewish Family Service Alliance for Adoption (248) 559-0117 www.jfsdetroit.org

Lutheran Adoption Service (248) 423-2770 www.lcfsmi.org

Muslim Adoptions www.muslimadoption.com

Spaulding for Children for special needs children (248) 443-7080 www.spaulding.org

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INDIAN AMERICANS

by Donna Gundle-Krieg and Padma Tadepalli

as published in Metro Parent Magazine

Indian Americans: Most Educated and Wealthy Class

INDIAN AMERICANS

Who are the best educated and wealthiest people in the tri-county area? Hint: they are also the fastest growing Asian American ethnic group in metropolitan Detroit. The answer is Indian Americans, also known as Asian Indians. They comprise 1% of the tri-county population, and they continue to shine in schools, workplaces and neighborhoods, especially in the technical areas.

INDIAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

Who are these Indian Americans and why did they come to the US? Following is a sample of the many local Asian Indians, their habits and customs.

Sunita Doddamani, an attorney who lives and works in Detroit, was born in America and is engaged to a man of European background. Her older brothers were born in India and will marry fellow Indian Americans. Ratna Ullagaddi, mother of three who lives in West Bloomfield, has been in the US for 15 years. She came with her husband when he was on a student visa for his PhD in Engineering. Raju Nadimpalli is a computer engineer and father of two who moved his family to Farmington Hills in 2000 to work for Sistel. Writer Padma Kuppa of Troy, mother of two, has been back and forth between India and the US. Kuppa was born in India, and started her schooling in New York when her parents moved here for graduate study. When Kuppa was a teen, her family moved back to India to be with family “and because they wanted to avoid raising a teenage girl in the US in the 80’s, and all the issues they found objectionable here at that time,” she explained.

MARRIAGE

Kuppa ended up returning to the US, where she met and was engaged to her husband. To finish the agreement, there were formalities completed by the heads of both families at the same time in India. “The marriage was sort of arranged---the way many Indian marriages are,” she said, explaining that the eligible parties meet, including the boy and girl and both sets of parents. “If everyone decides there's a possibility for an alliance between the families...and both the "boy" and the "girl" like each other, then an engagement date is set, and then a marriage date,” she explained.

The time between the engagement and the wedding varies, depending on the family’s background, region and socio-economic situation. Kuppa does not intend to arrange her children’s marriage, but thinks that arranged marriages are a good thing in the right situation. Ullagaddi agrees. “My arranged marriage has been a very positive experience,” she said.

“Children are a priority in Indian marriages. Also, women are the foundation of culture. Everything is based on a woman’s decisions and her sacrifices.” Kuppa added that “the expectation of marriage is somewhat different in India. The culture there is not ‘all about me,’ and people are more prepared to work at a marriage.” Ullagaddi feels that the low divorce rate among Indians is due to this high commitment and willingness of partners to compromise.

VISITS BACK TO INDIA

This same family commitment applies to the extended family, and most Indian Americans frequently return to their home country. Kuppa returns to India every few years to visit both sets of parents as well as cousins, uncles and aunts. They usually stay for at least four weeks. Ullagaddi’s family goes back

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during alternate years. “We return frequently to expose our children so that they don’t forget our traditions and culture,” she said. “Otherwise they will forget, as the US is a rich country with easy access to everything.” Ullagaddi also sent her daughter to India for two years during middle school, where she lived with her grandparents.

Second and third generation Indians also strive to keep their culture alive. Despite her American birth, Doddamani also visits family members in India every year or two.

Nadimpalli’s family is planning a visit back to India this summer. “I miss my family,” he admitted. Also, his ten year old daughter Navya “doesn’t really remember living in India.” The good news is that Navya, who has attended two schools since moving here, has adjusted well to life in America.

SCHOOLS

Navya’s adjustment is typical of that of most Indian students. “The younger they are when they come over, the better the adjustment,” explained Bridget Dean, bilingual coordinator of the Farmington school district. Farmington schools are home to a large number of Indian children. Dean runs a “Newcomer Center” for students new to the country. She estimates that 25 out of 100 newcomers to the district this year are Indians. “Indian children are mostly high achieving,” she said. “They are usually very resilient with a solid educational foundation.”

Education is extremely important to Indian Americans. According to the 2000 census, more than 67% of foreign-born Indian Americans hold advanced degrees. “Education is the foundation of everything,” explained Nadimpalli. “You have no social respect if you are not educated.” India’s school system is similar to the British system. Most all children receive two years of pre-college, and can get into college and graduate school based on their test scores.

The government highly subsidizes college. For example, education was free for Nadimpalli up to his Bachelor’s degree. Nadimpalli is a product of India’s government schools, otherwise known as “Centers of Excellence” “:Government institutions have produced many great people,” he said.

Ullagaddi says most students in the middle class and above go to the excellent private schools. “Education is a huge priority for all Indians,” she said. “Indian parents are very involved in education.” “Indians push their kids hard,” agreed Doddamani. “Education is the ticket out of poverty, and the only way to move ahead.” Her father was born and raised in a temple orphanage, but was able to overcome his poverty by becoming educated.

Kuppa feels that Indians have to take education more seriously than Americans because of the competition. “To succeed there, excelling in math and science are critical,” she said. “In the US, we are not on par with international standards for math and science. I was at the highest levels in math and science when I returned to India after 10th grade, but that was the norm for students there.” Nadimpalli notes that Indian parents don’t expect their children to work as long as they are still in school. “As long as they want to study,” he said, “Indian parents will support education.” Ullagaddi adds that while Americans expect their children to be immediately independent after high school, “Indians are more connected with extended family after graduation.”

CAREERS

Indian Americans are not only the best educated group in the US, they are also the wealthiest. According to the Indian American Center for Political Awareness Center, in 2000 Indian Americans had a median income of \$60,093, compared with \$41,110 for Caucasian families. Close to 20% of Indian American households have three or more workers.

The reason for the high income is simple. “It’s hard to get to America,” Doddamani explained. “Most of those who make it over here are cream of the crop in terms of the education, and they are in the upper

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middle class.” Ullagaddi agreed. “Coming to America is a selective process that is difficult and highly competitive,” she said. “It is a priority for us and our children to be highly educated and successful.” Nadimpalli is typical of many Indian Americans. He was allowed into America because of his advanced degree and specialty occupation in technology and software. While Indians tend towards careers which are math and science oriented, such as doctors or computer engineers, more second generation Indians such as Doddamani are venturing into careers in the social sector.

RELIGION

A large percentage of Indian Americans are Hindus of different sects, while there is also a small number of Muslims and Christians. Many Hindu sects, such as the one Doddamani belongs to, do not go to temple. However, they meditate and practice other religious customs.

Kuppa comes from a fairly religious background. “One doesn't belong to a temple as much as belong to a temple community,” she explained. “Hinduism is not just a religion - it's a way of life.” Ullagaddi agrees, and attends temple in Ann Arbor on Sundays, where her family learns about Indian culture.

Kuppa takes her children to the Bharatiya Temple in Troy, where her daughter learns dance from Mrs. Sudha Chandrasekhar, who's been teaching Bharata Natyam (India's oldest dance form) for over 30 years. “She's a legend and gives meaning to the word ‘guru,’” believes Kuppa. Her kids usually attend prayer services weekly. During holiday seasons, they are there more often. “Due to the pantheon of Hindu gods, there's always something going on,” she explained.

FRIENDS AND RECREATION

Kuppa says that because of her American upbringing, her family has friends from all different communities and backgrounds. “We are part of the Great American melting pot,” she said. Nadimpalli admits that most of his friends are Indians who work with him. His children have a mixture of friends at the public schools. Ullagaddi has lots of Indian friends, and says about half of her children's friends are Indian Americans. Dean says that the Indians have a very strong network among themselves, but they don't shut others out.

“They like to share their culture, but are less involved in sports and recreation,” she said. “The Indian American students in Farmington Hills value education much more than play time.”

Indians aren't all about work, though. Many Indians have taken a liking to the Gujarati tradition of “dandiya raas” or “raas garba” - a group dance sort of folk, with rhythmic movements. Nadimpalli's family enjoys Indian music, as well as karate and the movies. Many Indians share their love of movies. In fact, Kuppa says that she believes India makes the most movies of any country in the world, which is why they call Bombay “Bollywood.”

CLOTHES

How do Indian Americans dress? In India, most dress in a “salwar-kurtha,” which is a tunic and loose pants, or a “sari” which is Kuppa's “favorite outfit of all time.” She and her children wear Indian clothes to the temple and other activities where they want to represent their heritage. However, most of the time in America they wear jeans, sweatshirts or “normal” clothes.

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FOOD

Most Hindus do not eat beef, and some are vegetarian. However, those who were born in America or have been in America for a while, follow these guidelines less strictly. For example, Ullagaddi is a vegetarian, but her children are not.

Doddamani's eating habits are more Americanized, and she does eat beef. However, she and others have held onto foods from their country. "We eat out at the many Indian restaurants in the metropolitan area," she said. She also cooks Indian dishes, which include plenty of vegetables, rice, and flat unleavened breads as well as lots of spices, especially curry.

Kuppa's upbringing was strictly vegetarian, and is raising the kids to be lacto-ovo vegetarians, which means that dairy and eggs are ok. "I cook Indian food but also do a wide variety of other ethnic foods," she says. The family will eat out at any place with good vegetarian options.

LANGUAGE

What language do Indian Americans speak?

Dean, who speaks five languages herself, said that most Indian Americans know "British English," which means they speak differently, but the reading and writing is mostly the same as American English.

The official national language is Hindi, which is what they teach in school. College classes are taught in English. However, in the homes, people speak their state language, often complicated by regional variations.

There are 14 officially recognized languages, and Doddamani estimates that there are 200-300 dialects. "Often people from different areas can't understand each other," she laughed. Kuppa and her husband speak English and Telugu, and some Hindi. It's hard to teach the kids these two Indian languages since I am so comfortable in English," she says, "but we try hard to make sure that we keep this aspect of our heritage alive."

Nadimpalli finds it a challenge to keep his language alive in his household. "At home we speak our native language, but the kids reply in English," he laughed.

=====

OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT INDIANS

Five Obligations of all Hindus:

- 1) Worship, upasana: Young Hindus are taught daily worship in the family shrine room--rituals, disciplines, chants, yogas, meditation and religious study.
- 2) Holy days, utsava: Young Hindus are taught to participate in Hindu festivals and holy days in the home and temple by fasting and attending the temple.
- 3) Virtuous living, dharma: Young Hindus are taught to live a life of duty and good conduct. They learn to be selfless by thinking of others first, being respectful of parents, elders and swamis, following divine law, especially ahimsa, mental, emotional and physical noninjury to all beings.
- 4) Pilgrimage, tirthayatra: Young Hindus are taught the value of taking a pilgrimage. They learn to be detached by setting aside worldly affairs and making God, Gods and gurus life's singular focus during these journeys.
- 5) Rites of passage, samskara: Young Hindus are taught to observe the many sacraments which mark and sanctify their passages through life. They celebrate birth, name-giving, head-shaving, first feeding, ear-piercing, first learning, coming of age, marriage and death.

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AREA INDIAN POPULATIONS

49% of the Asian Indians in metropolitan Detroit live in Oakland County. Many are located in Troy, which has the highest population of Asian Americans in the state.

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Communities and Numbers of Asian Indians

Community	Number of Asian Indians (2000 Census)
MACOMB COUNTY:	
Sterling Heights	2442
Warren	1049
OAKLAND COUNTY:	
Bloomfield	1270
Farmington Hills	3384
Novi	1278
Rochester Hills	2107
Southfield	1096
Troy	4696
WAYNE COUNTY:	
Canton	3413
Detroit	2991
Hamtramck	1400
Westland	1081

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INDIAN HOLIDAYS	DESCRIPTION
Sankranti	Mid January harvest season festival celebrated by certain regions.
Holi	The festival of colors celebrated in March by most Hindu people of Indian origin.
Ganesh Chaturthi	A late August or September festival celebrating the Elephant headed god Ganesha, remover of all obstacles.
Dassara	The ten day festival in October is celebrated for different reasons in different regions of India. There are many different ways of celebrating.
Diwali	The November celebration of the homecoming of Rama, after defeating the evil Ravana. This is celebrated on a no-moon night with firecrackers, preparation and exchange of sweets and delicacies, gift giving, and visiting family.

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Choosing a College

Choosing the right college can be one of the most important decisions in your life.

There are so many factors to consider when choosing a college. Does it have the program that you want to study? How many students are in the school? Is it near a big city or in the boondocks? What kind of activities do they offer outside the classroom?

Of course cost is a huge factor for most students, as Michigan colleges range from \$1000 per year for a community college to \$40,000+ per year for many of the more elite private colleges.

Which college is best for you? Each student has to make their own decision based on the above factors and more.

The very best way to find out about a college is to visit it. All schools offer and recommend individual appointments. However, open houses are a great way to get an idea if the school is a good match for you.

This list also includes location, number of students, website address, phone number and whether the school is public, private, religious, etc.

Cost is not included in this chart because each school reports it differently. In addition, the posted cost of a school is most likely different from what a student will pay, depending on scholarships and financial aid.

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Daughter, Where Did You Come From?

by Donna Gundle-Krieg

When I was pregnant with my second child, I really wanted a girl. Our firstborn was a boy, and I felt a daughter would complete our family. I also wanted a daughter to share all of my interests so that I could teach her and be her friend.

When the doctor finally announced triumphantly, "It's a girl," we were elated. "Elizabeth Jean," I responded, and immediately Dennis and I forgot about everything else as we fell in love. She had beautiful, dark brown features and loved to cuddle.

At first, Liz did not resemble anyone in either family. I would stare at her for hours at a time, trying to figure out whose genes she had inherited. I noticed friends and relatives doing the same thing.

Within a year, however, Liz's looks changed considerably as her hair and skin lightened to match mine. More and more people remarked that she looked just like me. One day my mother produced a baby picture of me that confirmed it: I had a little clone of myself after all.

However, as Liz's personality developed, I began to suspect that her looks were the only thing she inherited from me. She had no interest in learning about anything that I wanted to teach her. In fact, her interests were as different from mine as they could possibly be.

Liz loves dolls of any kind. She has dozens of them, and stuffed animals too, every one of which is loved and attended to regularly. Newcomers are always welcomed into her ever-growing family, and she immediately knows if one of them is out of place.

I had no interest in dolls growing up. As the oldest of seven girls, my mother kept me plenty busy caring for real babies. Instead of dolls, I always chose to play sports and get involved in outdoor activities. I was sure that if I exposed her early enough, I could interest Liz in at least trying some of my pastimes.

These efforts were frustrating; she even turned up her nose at the shiny, expensive bike we bought her for her third birthday. And when her brother Steven and I could convince her to join us shooting hoops, she would lose interest quickly and go back to walking her stroller up and down the driveway, arranging and rearranging all of her kids and their stuff while she went about her day. She had an imagination that did not quit. We were amazed at the scenarios she played out at a very young age.

Liz didn't care at all that no one else in the house shared her interest in dolls; she played happily alone. Occasionally we would relent and join in her imaginative play. If Steven was really bored and dying for company, she would convince him to play house. Even Dennis has been known to join her for an afternoon tea party. I began to see that my way was not the only way. Gradually, we accepted her interest in dolls, and even encouraged it. We bought her a huge dollhouse to hold the smaller dolls; her grandparents refinished an antique baby crib for her to house the larger dolls; wall hangers filled with stuffed animals adorned her walls; various aunts purchased a dolly playground, kitchen set and baby doll car seat. Her bedroom resembled a doll store.

Although we accepted her love of dolls, I still wished she would get over it. As she neared preschool age, she retreated into her own little world more and more frequently. I became desperate to form a

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common bond with her. Why couldn't we connect? Why didn't she like riding bikes or playing ball like the rest of the family? Why didn't she like anything that I liked? Where did this little girl come from?

Once in a while, I would find some middle ground so that we could enjoy an activity together. Liz would join me for hours in the garden, admiring the flowers and picking some to give to each of her dolls. She would then take whichever were her favorite dolls of the week around the yard, explaining the flowers to them just as I had done to her.

Books provided another area of common ground. Of course, they had to be books about dolls or princesses, and she often insisted on reading by herself in her own way. A big breakthrough came when she was introduced to a series of dolls that had corresponding historical books. She would cuddle next to me for hours as I read the exciting stories about the characters that matched the dolls on her lap. She even had Dennis and Steven interested in what might happen in the next chapter of the book.

One day she caught me watching her as she had her doll cook Thanksgiving dinner for twenty-five, just days after I had done the same thing. "You can come to Thanksgiving dinner if you want," she said shyly. "You can even choose which dolls you want to be." I knew I had no choice but to join in the preparation of the big feast. After dinner there was a holiday concert and party, and Liz and I had to bathe and clothe each of the kids and pets that wanted to attend. For hours she drew me into a world of make-believe that I had never experienced as a child. If my daughter had been just like me, I would have been deprived of experiencing this fantasy world in which we had so much fun!

The best part was that once I agreed to enter her world, she was more excited about trying out mine. The day after the big Thanksgiving bash, she actually agreed to try her bike, with her baby dolls stuffed in the basket, of course.

Donna Gundle-Krieg and daughter Liz (four) continue to find common ground together, with husband/dad Dennis and son/brother Steven (almost seven). Donna enjoys tennis, gardening and birdwatching.

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Should You Teach Your Children About Diversity?

as published in Metro Parent Magazine

By Donna Gundle-Krieg

Does fostering an appreciation of diversity matter to you and your family? Or do you roll your eyes when you hear what some call "the D word"?

As a parent, do you believe you should actively teach your children about diversity? Or do you feel you should let integration happen naturally, assuming people will mix to a healthy degree?

Parents across the metropolitan Detroit area are definitely divided on these matters. Denise Derocher of Milford, a mother of two daughters in middle-school, had a negative reaction to the word "diversity."

"I believe that if a person learns to look at others and love them for what they are on the inside, and not for what they look like, they will not need any diversity training," she said. "Diversity training is like a band-aid for not learning to love."

But Shirley Stancato, president of New Detroit, a coalition of leaders dedicated to improving race relations, disagreed.

"To tell me you are color-blind is an insult. You are not acknowledging me (as an African American) if you are not seeing color," she said. "If we don't embrace and understand other others' cultures, then we become extinct."

Mary Burck of Farmington Hills, an artist and mother of a son in middle school, also believes that diversity training matters. "I was raised in an all-white town in the upper peninsula," she said. "We were always starved for cultural experiences. As a result, I feel there's racism and insensitivity up there because most people haven't ever been exposed to diversity."

Burck argues that the earlier you expose children to different cultures, the better. "You have to make it a positive experience and reinforce how much people are the same," she said.

Indeed, "We are more alike than unlike," writes Maya Angelou, renowned poet and national spokesperson for the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ). The NCCJ provides diversity training and experiences to businesses, churches and schools, including about 50 schools in the metropolitan Detroit area.

Daniel Krichbaum, NCCJ-Detroit's executive director, expanded on Angelou's quote. "Regardless of our similarities, in order to understand and respect our uniqueness, we need to know what makes us different," he said. "It is our differences that make us unique and give us value."

Krichbaum added that this knowledge must be a two-way street. "For example," he pointed out, "we have stereotypes and prejudgments against Yoopers from the upper peninsula, too."

Deanne Orlando, a Livonia elementary school teacher and mother of four teens, believes that even if we live in homogenous communities, we're staring at diversity every day.

"Is my classroom diverse because it's a pleasant mix of cultures, or because I have cognitively impaired kids, gifted kids and resource room kids all in the same class?" she wondered.

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And what about different religions?

Stancato agreed with Orlando that people are diverse in many ways. "However, race is the toughest issue to deal with," she insisted. "The metropolitan Detroit area continues to be the most segregated area in the nation in terms of race, and this is costing us in many ways."

Why are we segregated?

Demographic trends show that minority population growth and white flight is expanding in a ring pattern away from Detroit. Stancato maintains that this ring is caused because "white people flee from other cultures, which creates segregation."

Doug Wilson of Oxford believes that segregation often exists simply because people naturally drift toward those who are like them. "People often find homes where they believe they will fit in, as well as, what they can afford," he said.

James Jones a Pontiac factory worker and father of five agreed. "I'd love to move my black family into a multi-cultural neighborhood, but I simply can't afford it."

Kim Small of Highland, a mother of three teens puts a different spin on the issue. "Shared immigration experience, culture and language cause people to huddle together," she said. "This is not at all a negative experience. A non-diverse group helps give a family a support system. As many people are pulled away from extended family for employment reasons, the attachment to homogeneous groups is support for what was lost."

Small added that those of similar backgrounds have always been drawn together for positive support systems, and notes that this initial assimilation was seen with the Poles in Hamtramck, the blacks in Paradise Valley, the Germans in Frankenmuth, and the Dutch in the city of Holland.

Burck agreed that we tend to huddle together, and so has tried to get her son to invite people of other backgrounds over to play. "However, it seems like he always gravitates back to being friends with those who are the same Caucasian race he is," she said. "People just seem to be more comfortable being with others who look and act like them."

However, she said she still believes "we need to get out of our comfort zones and stretch ourselves enough to have conversations and find common ground with people of other races. Sometimes schools, neighborhoods or workplaces may be plenty diverse, but each cultural group sticks to their own."

As Krichbaum sees it, "Inclusion is as important as diversity itself. This means there is the sense that everyone has equal value, equal opportunity and equal say < regardless of their background." The NCCJ defines an inclusive school culture as "one that works to affirm, not just tolerate, differences."

Stancato added that to be inclusive, "We need to have race conversations. But people don't want to talk about race issues. You must have the tough conversations to move on."

Language barriers

Burck suggested the biggest barrier to having these tough conversations is the fact that different races and cultures don't speak English very well. "I don't speak a second language, so it's awkward to start a conversation with someone from another country," she said.

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The number of Michigan residents who speak a language other than English at home *increased by nearly 40 percent* over the past decade, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The languages most commonly spoken in Michigan, other than English, are Spanish, Arabic and German. Of 9.3 million Michiganders age 5 and older, 8.5 million speak only English.

Should we be learning other languages and teaching them to our children? Or should we simply insist that immigrants learn our language? Groups such as U.S. English, which advocates making English the official U.S. language, say outreach efforts should be curtailed. The organization believes that unless we're going to put things out in 300 languages, we should put our money and efforts towards teaching people English.

But postal worker Jon Benk of Detroit, a father of two young adults disagreed. "I think it's increasingly important for people to understand the language of the global community," he said. "We must know other cultures and be able to speak their languages."

History and geography lessons

In addition to teaching more about languages in our elementary schools, should we also teach our students more about the diversity of races and religions? Or should this be taught in the home? Can parents assume that the schools and the culture outside their homes will do it?

"If you value diversity, you will teach it," said Stancato. "Parents don't let others teach their children the basics of living, so why should they let others teach their children about diversity? It absolutely has to go on in the home."

Wilson of Oxford agreed. "Diversity can be learned outside the home, but it takes an awfully insightful individual to form values different from the ones he was raised with," he said. "Accepting others comes more naturally to kids because they have no previously aligned judgment."

Pauline Saroki, a public defender in Detroit of Chaldean origin, had these thoughts, "Those who live in all-white suburbs and raise their kids to believe that people who are not like them are not worthy of their consideration, make me sad. Perhaps it's not too late for their children. Unfortunately, these parents aren't going to be the messengers."

Bonnie Lynch of Milford, a mother of two young children had a different opinion. She lived in diverse areas while growing up, and worked in Detroit her entire career. "I'm totally against teaching diversity to anyone, especially in our schools," she said. "Instead, let's teach how we're all God's children and that inside we are all *alike!* Let's celebrate what we have *in common.*"

But if parents don't address diversity issues, can tolerance and understanding be gleaned from outside sources?

Krichbaum said there are many influences that determine how tolerant a person will be. "The NCCJ and other groups such as New Detroit have programs to help teach these values. The media also plays a big part. But just watching other cultures on television is not enough. People learn best face-to-face," he said.

Denise Gundle-White, a Farmington Hills teacher, agreed that face-to-face contact is the best way to get people connected, and says that sharing experiences and relationships with those who are different from ourselves is the best way to learn diversity.

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"The mere opportunity my students have to know various other students is such a gift," she said. "Diversity is much more valuable when it just happens, rather than the typical idea of 'teaching' diversity lessons to a homogenous group."

Seek out cultural experiences

If sharing experiences is the key to learning about differences, how can parents teach their children about diversity if they live in a segregated town and go to segregated schools? Benk suggested that people "go to events and festivals to learn others' cultures. "The metropolitan area is full of such festivals where you can learn about the food and music," she said.

Stancato added that there are certain metro-Detroit destinations that are very diverse. "When I go to the Detroit Zoo and see the mix of people there, I think this is how it should be everywhere." she said. She recommends parents bring their children to places that celebrate culture, such as the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Museum of African American History.

Krichbaum agreed. "There is more to education than academics," he said. "We must teach our children about the world."

He believes that students who attend schools with one ethnic group are disadvantaged when going on to college and the workplace. "While there has been progress in workplace diversity, most of our neighborhoods and schools are still not diverse," he said.

Diversity in business

Krichbaum went on to point out that, "companies are attracted to communities where cultures can assimilate and people can get along. To increase business growth in this area, Michigan should be attractive to those from across the world. There are reasons businesses and people choose communities such as Farmington and Ann Arbor. These towns are considered desirable places to live because of their rich cultural diversity."

Stancato said that the lack of diversity and inclusion in most neighborhoods has caused a Michigan Brain Drain. "We're losing young people at an alarming rate," she said. "One reason is segregation. Young people want diverse communities."

Wilson noted that in metro Detroit, the younger crowd definitely has a leg up on the older crowd in regard to diversity.

"As borders break down in our already well-developed push to globalize, diversity has taught many large international players of its importance in lost profits and mistakes," he said. "In business, it's a dog-eat-dog world. If you're not culturally sensitive, it can hurt you in too many ways to count."

Even in non-business jobs, diversity matters. Explained Saroki, "I am an American born Chaldean who has the privilege of living a very diverse life. My job as public defender gives me the opportunity to empathize with others of different cultures. It also requires that I do so."

Other costs of segregation

Krichbaum believes that in addition to impacting business and jobs, diversity impacts our region in other important ways, too.

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"The further out we build, the more expensive it becomes, which creates a host of social infrastructure needs," he said. "If we spread out urban culture, we lose our urban core." He cited sprawl problems such as higher taxes to afford new schools, roads, businesses and communities.

Stancato agreed. "The cost of segregation is that people pay," she said. "They pay more economically for houses, taxes and transportation, in addition to sacrificing the diversity experience."

Those who live in segregated areas are not always happy about it. Milford's Derocher does not live in a multi-cultural area, and wishes her area had a greater variety of races. "I hope and pray that some day our world will look a lot more integrated," she said. "Until then, I think the best response is to teach love, not diversity."

Farmington's Burck concluded, "the fact that many of us live in a segregated community is not really bad, just sad. People who choose to live somewhere because that place is all one race seem like they are missing out on one of the greatest joys of living."

Donna Gundle-Krieg of Milford a freelance writer and mother of two, recently wrote and published *From Desert to Detroit*, a children's book about an Iraqi family who moves to Detroit to face many big city problems, including prejudice after 911.

"I wrote the book to help educate older children and others on some of the complex international issues we face today," she said. "Readers are drawn into the world of this family from another culture, and hopefully gain a better idea what it's like to be in their shoes."

Geographic Area	2000 Census one race only				
	Non- Hispanic				Hispanic
	White	Black or African American	American Ind. and Alaskan Native	Asian	
Livingston County	97.6	0.4	0.2	0.6	1.2
Macomb County	93.5	2.7	0.2	2.1	1.5
Oakland County	83.5	10.1	0.2	4.0	2.2
Wayne County	53.0	41.6	0.3	1.6	3.5

Geographic Area	2000 Census once race only				
	Non- Hispanic				Hispanic
	White	Black or African American	American Ind. and Alaskan	Asian	

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Geographic Area	2000 Census once race only				
			Native		

LIVINGSTON COUNTY					
Livingston County ALL	97.6	0.4	0.2	0.6	1.2
Brighton city	95.7	0.3	0.4	1.3	1.5
Brighton township	96.5	0.4	0.3	0.9	1.2
Cohoctah township	97.2	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.9
Conway township	95.2	0.3	1.4	0.1	1.3
Deerfield township	97.2	0.0	0.4	0.1	1.2
Genoa township	96.6	0.2	0.4	0.7	1.0
Green Oak township	95.0	1.6	0.4	0.5	1.3
Hamburg township	96.5	1.0	0.3	0.5	1.1
Handy township	96.2	0.2	1.0	0.4	1.1
Hartland township	97.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	1.1
Howell city	94.7	0.3	0.5	1.4	2.2
Howell township	97.0	0.2	0.3	0.2	1.1
Iosco township	94.2	0.1	0.4	0.6	3.7
Marion township	97.0	0.0	0.4	0.3	1.0
Oceola township	96.4	0.1	0.4	0.7	1.1
Putnam township	97.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.9
Tyrone township	97.1	0.1	0.4	0.6	1.0

MACOMB COUNTY					
Macomb County: ALL	93.5	2.7	0.2	2.1	1.5
Armada township	97.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	1.5
Bruce township	94.6	1.8	0.3	0.5	1.8

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Center Line city	92.8	3.0	0.2	1.0	1.5
Chesterfield township	92.0	2.9	0.4	0.8	2.5
Clinton township	90.0	4.6	0.2	1.7	1.7
Eastpointe city	91.2	4.7	0.4	0.9	1.3
Fraser city	95.6	0.9	0.2	0.9	1.3
Harrison township	93.6	2.4	0.4	0.6	1.5
Lake township	88.8	1.3	2.5	7.5	0.0
Lenox township	77.4	16.4	0.7	0.2	2.8
Macomb township	95.0	0.8	0.2	1.4	1.5
Memphis city	97.5	0.1	0.4	0.7	0.5
Mount Clemens city	74.5	19.5	0.7	0.5	2.3
New Baltimore city	96.0	0.5	0.4	0.5	1.3
Ray township	97.0	0.2	0.3	0.4	1.2
Richmond city	92.7	0.2	0.3	1.0	4.7
Richmond township	96.3	1.0	0.3	0.2	1.1
Roseville city	92.4	2.6	0.4	1.7	1.5
St. Clair Shores city	96.0	0.7	0.2	0.9	1.2
Shelby charter township	93.8	0.8	0.2	2.1	1.7
Sterling Heights city	89.8	1.3	0.2	4.9	1.3
Utica city	92.5	0.9	0.3	2.6	2.1
Warren city	90.4	2.7	0.3	3.1	1.4

OAKLAND COUNTY					
Oakland County: ALL	83.5	10.1	0.2	4.0	2.2
Whiteford township	94.5	1.9	0.1	0.2	2.5
Addison township	95.7	0.9	0.3	0.2	1.9
Auburn Hills city	73.5	13.1	0.3	6.3	4.5
Berkley city	95.2	0.7	0.2	1.0	1.3

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Birmingham city	95.3	0.9	0.1	1.5	1.2
Bloomfield township	86.6	4.3	0.1	6.5	1.4
Bloomfield Hills city	89.8	1.6	0.1	6.6	1.1
Brandon township	96.6	0.4	0.2	0.4	1.6
Clawson city	95.2	0.8	0.3	1.3	1.1
Commerce township	95.9	0.5	0.2	1.3	1.2
Farmington city	84.8	2.7	0.2	10.1	1.2
Farmington Hills city	81.9	6.9	0.2	7.5	1.5
Ferndale city	90.3	3.4	0.5	1.3	1.8
Groveland township	95.5	0.8	0.3	0.5	1.7
Hazel Park city	90.4	1.6	0.8	1.8	2.1
Highland township	96.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	1.3
Holly township	92.8	2.1	0.4	0.5	2.9
Huntington Woods city	96.3	0.7	0.0	1.4	0.9
Independence township	94.2	0.8	0.2	1.2	2.5
Keego Harbor city	91.2	0.6	1.1	1.0	4.4
Lake Angelus city	95.1	0.9	0.0	2.8	1.2
Lathrup Village city	46.3	49.7	0.1	0.6	0.9
Lyon township	96.1	0.4	0.3	0.6	1.5
Madison Heights city	88.5	1.8	0.4	5.0	1.6
Milford township	96.6	0.4	0.2	0.5	1.2
Northville city	94.5	0.4	0.1	2.6	1.6
Novi city	86.1	1.9	0.2	8.7	1.8
Novi township	94.8	0.0	0.5	3.6	0.0
Oakland charter township	93.3	2.0	0.1	2.6	1.2
Oak Park city	46.4	45.7	0.2	2.2	1.3
Orchard Lake Village city	91.2	3.8	0.1	2.6	0.9
Orion township	93.7	1.2	0.2	1.2	2.6

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Oxford charter township	95.5	0.4	0.2	0.5	2.2
Pleasant Ridge city	95.3	0.8	0.4	0.9	1.8
Pontiac city	34.5	47.4	0.4	2.4	12.8
Rochester city	91.1	2.2	0.2	3.7	1.7
Rochester Hills city	87.1	2.4	0.2	6.8	2.3
Rose township	95.5	0.9	0.2	0.3	2.2
Royal Oak city	93.9	1.5	0.2	1.6	1.3
Royal Oak charter township	22.6	71.1	0.2	1.2	1.2
Southfield city	38.3	54.0	0.2	3.1	1.2
Southfield township	91.5	3.6	0.1	2.2	1.2
South Lyon city	95.6	0.4	0.2	1.1	1.6
Springfield township	95.2	1.0	0.4	0.5	2.0
Sylvan Lake city	94.5	1.1	0.4	0.8	1.1
Troy city	81.3	2.1	0.1	13.3	1.5
Village of Clarkston city	96.3	0.3	0.1	0.5	1.0
Walled Lake city	94.3	0.7	0.3	1.7	1.7
Waterford township	90.3	2.8	0.3	1.3	3.9
West Bloomfield township	83.2	5.1	0.1	7.8	1.4
White Lake township	95.4	0.8	0.4	0.6	1.8

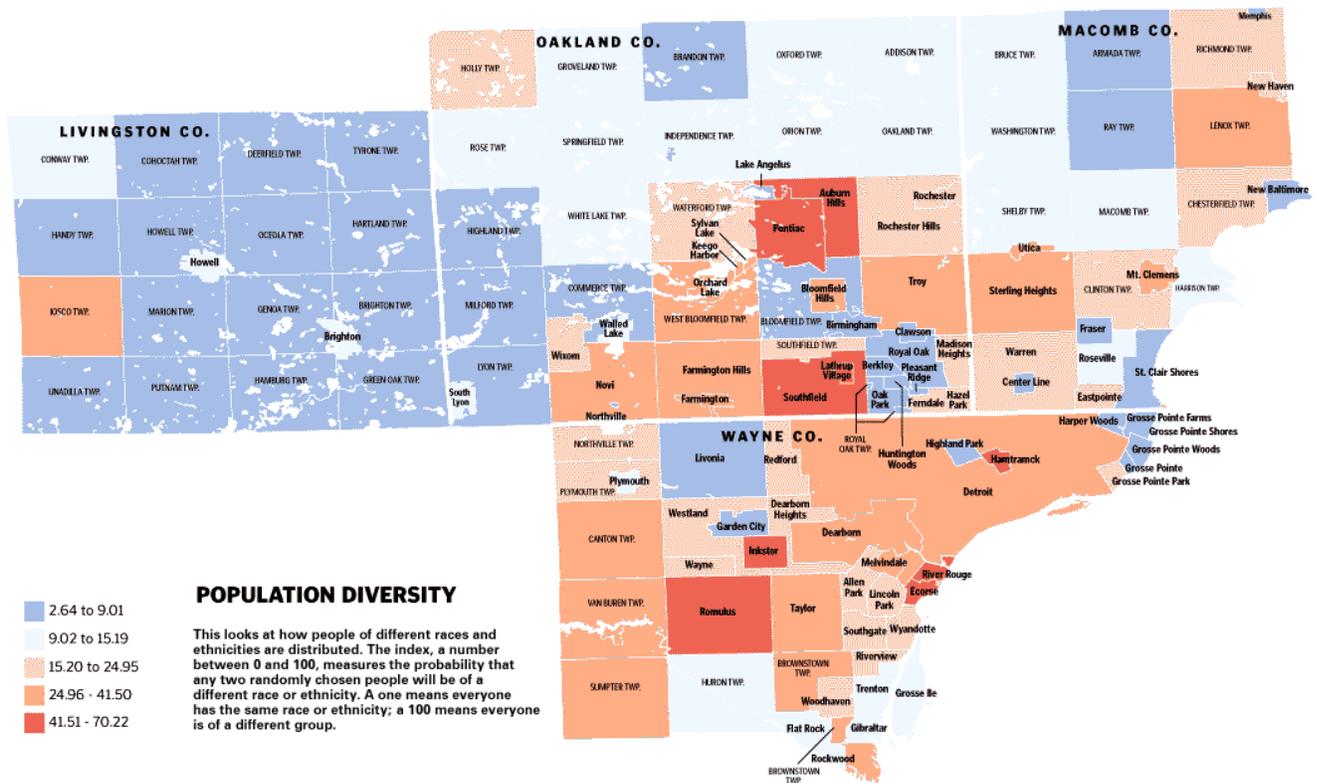
WAYNE COUNTY					
Wayne County: ALL	53.0	41.6	0.3	1.6	3.5
Allen Park city	92.5	0.7	0.3	0.8	4.7
Belleville city	86.3	7.9	0.3	1.1	2.5
Brownstown township	86.6	3.8	0.4	3.8	3.6
Canton township	82.3	4.5	0.3	8.7	2.3
Dearborn city	84.8	1.3	0.2	1.5	3.0
Dearborn Heights city	89.3	2.1	0.3	2.2	3.4

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Detroit city	10.5	81.2	0.3	1.0	5.0
Ecorse city	47.3	40.4	0.5	0.2	8.9
Flat Rock city	93.4	1.4	0.4	0.5	2.7
Garden City city	94.6	1.1	0.4	0.7	2.0
Gibraltar city	95.6	0.5	0.3	0.4	1.8
Grosse Ile township	94.0	0.4	0.3	2.7	1.6
Grosse Pointe city	96.1	0.8	0.1	1.1	1.5
Grosse Pointe township	92.5	0.6	0.2	4.0	1.8
Grosse Pointe Farms city	96.6	0.6	0.1	1.1	1.1
Grosse Pointe Park city	91.2	2.9	0.3	1.8	1.7
Grosse Pointe Woods city	95.5	0.6	0.1	2.1	1.0
Hamtramck city	60.4	14.9	0.4	10.4	1.3
Harper Woods city	84.9	10.2	0.3	1.7	1.6
Highland Park city	4.0	93.1	0.2	0.3	0.6
Huron charter township	94.3	1.0	0.6	0.3	2.5
Inkster city	24.5	67.3	0.4	3.4	1.6
Lincoln Park city	89.2	2.0	0.4	0.5	6.4
Livonia city	94.1	0.9	0.2	1.9	1.7
Melvindale city	81.7	5.2	0.6	1.3	8.9
Northville city	95.8	0.3	0.1	1.2	1.7
Northville township	88.1	4.3	0.2	4.3	1.8
Plymouth city	95.5	0.6	0.3	1.1	1.3
Plymouth township	91.2	2.9	0.3	2.7	1.6
Redford township	86.7	8.5	0.4	0.8	2.0
River Rouge city	49.9	41.8	0.6	0.2	5.0
Riverview city	92.1	2.1	0.4	1.9	2.5
Rockwood city	93.9	0.6	1.0	0.6	2.5
Romulus city	64.3	29.8	0.5	0.7	2.0

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Southgate city	90.9	2.1	0.4	1.7	4.0
Sumpter township	83.5	12.3	0.5	0.2	1.8
Taylor city	84.0	8.7	0.6	1.6	3.2
Trenton city	95.4	0.4	0.4	0.8	2.0
Van Buren township	81.2	12.0	0.5	1.9	2.2
Wayne city	83.0	11.3	0.6	1.5	1.9
Westland city	85.6	6.7	0.4	2.8	2.5
Woodhaven city	90.8	2.3	0.5	1.6	3.5
Wyandotte city	94.3	0.5	0.4	0.3	2.9
Ypsilanti township	66.1	25.3	0.5	2.0	2.8



Journalism Archive – Donna Gundle-Krieg

How Does Divorce Affect Homeschooling?

by Donna Gundle-Krieg March 29, 2009

Homeschooling is a wonderful option if both parents agree and support the effort.

However, when one parent doesn't agree or help with homeschooling, it can cause family problems. A divorce makes the issue even stickier.



In a recent North Carolina case, Judge Ned Mangum ordered three children back to public school despite four years of successful homeschooling, according to [WorldNetDaily](#).

The judge, who was handling a divorce proceeding for Thomas and Venessa Mills, explained that his goal in ordering the children to register and attend a public school was to make sure that they have a "more well-rounded education."

He also said that public school would "prepare these kids for the real world and college," and allow them "socialization."

What century is this judge from?



His legal ruling was despite the fact that the three children, ages 10-12, have been successfully homeschooled for four years after their mother felt that they were not thriving in the public schools.

The children tested up to two years above their grade level, according to Adam Cothes, a spokesman for the mother. He also said that the children were involved in sports and events outside the home, and had leadership roles in a history club.

According to the [Homeschool Injustice Website](#), the judge rewarded the children's father, a confessed adultery.

"He was given freedom to stay at the family home indefinitely while playing tennis with his mistress," said Robyn Williams, a homeschooler and certified teacher.

This living arrangement caused major stress to the mother, according to Williams, and it burdened the children with a visitation schedule that created an unworkable and disruptive environment.

"I have never seen such injustice and such a direct attack against homeschool," she stated.

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The father's lawyer conceded that the reason for the divorce was the father's "adultery."

Yet the father refused to pay for homeschooling expenses for his children, even though he admitted that his ex-wife was a nurturing, loving mother who did a good job homeschooling.

"He does not believe that continued homeschooling is in the best interest of the children," according to his attorney.

What a shame that the children will be the losers in this messy case.

Despite its huge success, homeschooling is constantly being challenged in the courts.

However, homeschooling advocates are strong, united, and aggressive when it comes to protecting their constitutional rights to make the best decisions for their children.

For example, recently many homeschoolers from North Carolina recently met and talked to the mother in this case, Venessa Mills, at the Raleigh for Capital Fest 2009 sponsored by North Carolinians for Home Education (NCHE).

This event is held for homeschoolers in North Carolina to show support for homeschool laws, and to educate legislators on the success of homeschooling

It's important that homeschoolers continue to fight.

In California, a court panel recently tried to take away parents' right to homeschool when they ruled that only "credentialed teachers could properly educate children."

Thank goodness this outraged homeschool advocates, according to WorldNetDaily.

The conclusion was reversed after the California court was faced with many briefs and objections from individuals and groups, including Congress members.

It was finally decided that parents, not the state of California, have the constitution right to decide how to educate their children.

"Thousands of California families have educated their children successfully through homeschooling," according to Senior Counsel Gary McCaleb from the [Alliance Defense Fund](#).

"We're pleased with the court's decision, which protects the rights of families and protects an avenue of education that has proven to benefit children time and time again."

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How to Win Five Big Battles You Will Have With Your Kids

Is your teenager sweet and compliant, or does he constantly question what you tell him to do? Do you win the everyday battles against your toddler, or do you finally “give up and give in?”

According to experts, a parent who wins all battles is rare. Equally unusual is a child of any age who never questions her parents’ authority.

“Although we mostly hear about teenage fireworks, conflict is especially common in the early years of parenting,” says Scott Brown, author of “[How to Negotiate with Kids.](#)” He notes that 65% of our interactions with toddlers involve conflict. This percentage goes down during the elementary years, but rises again when adolescence begins.



So how should you handle these constant challenges? Following is a list of the five most common battles parents have with their children, with suggestions from various experts on how to win each of them. These battles include issues over bedtime, homework, clothing, food and chores.

Bedtime

Bedtime battles are common because most active children do not want to end a busy day. In their minds, bedtime does just

that.

To combat this, parents should teach that bedtime is a positive experience, a time to relax and get comfortable, according to Sal Severe, PhD and author of “[How to Behave So Your Children Will Too!](#)” He adds that “bedtime should never be used as a punishment” but instead parents should have a positive bedtime routine: “bath, snack, story, hug and kiss.”

Severe also says that parents should get to the bottom of why the child is procrastinating about bedtime. For example, bedtime fears would be handled differently than power and control issues. For these, he suggests to “consistently put the child in timeouts, check with him in five minute segments, and eventually he’ll get tired of being alone and go to bed.”

Maybe your child is arguing about bedtime because she really isn’t tired. However, you need a break! In this case, Brown suggests that “you let them read, sing, listen to music, or talk in bed as long as they don’t disturb you.” He adds that “as your children grow older, they realize that they know more than you if they are tired. There is nothing wrong with older children changing their bedtime according to how they feel.”

Homework

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There are some parents lucky enough to have children who love school and do homework without any problems. However, for many children from elementary to high school level, homework assignments can create constant battles.

How do you win these homework battles?

According to Larry Koenig, PhD and author of "[Smart Discipline](#)," it's important to establish a clear time and a place for homework, and insist that children complete homework on their own. "A good rule of thumb is to set homework time as early as possible, while allowing for a break after school," says Koenig. He suggests having children participate in determining the time, so that they will more willingly comply. He also suggests postponing all other activities, such as phone calls and television, until homework time is over.

Koenig believes that it's also important to have a set place for homework which is conducive to learning. "Ideally, it will be a place where your children can work private, without distraction," he states.

Last but not least, it is vital that homework be completed by the child and not the parent. Parents can occasionally check homework and answer questions, but many tend to actually do the homework themselves. According to Koenig, this is sending the message that "you don't have what it takes to be successful in school without my help." Students who hear this message usually become or remain mediocre.

Clothing

Clothing has always been a battle for those in the pre-teen and teenage years, but often these conflicts start when a child is very young. Some toddlers willingly wear what their parents lay out for them, while others will argue about clothes from the time they start talking.

Experts agree that children of all ages who want to choose their own clothing are usually trying to gain independence and control. In addition, sometimes a child has strong preferences, wants to be his own person, make a statement with his clothing, and/or fit in with friends.

"It's important to carefully choose your clothing battles," says Jean Andrews, PhD, psychologist from Detroit. "It's a battle worth fighting if you feel that the clothing your child wants to wear violates decency standards you have set."

It's vital to explain modesty to your children, as well as any other reasons you have for setting certain clothing standards. "Just to say 'because I said so' will cause a child to rebel, and they will change clothes as soon as they're down the street," she theorizes.

Fitting in with friends is important to children. For example, right now, it's considered cool for area girls to wear funky baggy pajama bottoms to school. "Is it really going to matter to your child's future if let them wear these pajama bottoms?" Andrews wonders. She suggests giving choices to younger children each day, and involving all children on shopping trips so they can help choose outfits that are mutually acceptable.

Food

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Food battles are common during childhood. It is estimated that about half of all children are considered by their parents to be picky eaters.

“Don’t let your child’s eating habits induce a power struggle,” implore Jerry Wyckoff, PhD and Barbara Unell, authors of [“Getting Your Child From No to Yes.”](#) “Forcing a child to eat after he’s had enough can lead to overeating and obesity.” They suggest not threatening or using guilt at the table, “as that will increase their anger and defiance.” Instead, encourage your child to try new foods, or be creative by hiding fruits and vegetables in certain recipes.

As soon as children are old enough, involve them in the planning, shopping and cooking. Teach them about the food groups, the minimum daily requirements and how to read food labels. Then, let them make some of their own choices. After all, adults have food preferences and dislikes, so why shouldn’t children? What if you were forced to eat some of your children’s favorite food on a constant basis?

However, there has to be limits on how much you will accommodate your children’s finicky tastes. “The last thing you want to do is become a short order cook” jokes Andrews. “Many parents will compromise by asking their child to sample what the adults are eating. If they don’t like it, allow them a simple healthy alternative such as cereal or yogurt.”

Chores

Most parents struggle with how to teach children responsibility. In this age of modern conveniences and housekeeping services, many young adults leave home without ever learning how to keep house or make meals.

Experts agree that it’s important to start teaching children how to help while they are small. For example, even toddlers are capable of picking up toys or bringing plates to the sink.

“The problem is that many parents take the easy way out and clean up the messes themselves,” says Andrews. “It’s important to take the extra time to teach them while they’re young.”

Severe believes that it’s vital for parents to give positive feedback to children who have done chores, and to communicate their expectations through simple checklists, which teach children accountability. “As children grow older, they want more privileges...and parents should link more responsibilities with privileges,” he opines.

Adults must also model appropriate attitudes about work, and not complain or procrastinate. In addition, they should accept lack of perfection when children are learning chores.

After all, concludes Severe, “a good attitude is more important than a perfectly made bed.”

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Geocaching: Teach Your Kids Geography While Treasure Hunting in Michigan

by Donna Gundle-Krieg January 11, 2009 (originally published in [the Milford Times](#))

Why have visitors from all around the world been snooping around Michigan searching for hidden treasures?

Probably because there are over 1000 hidden treasures, or “caches,” hidden in various areas around the Detroit metropolitan area. These caches are part of the “geocaching” game, which is one of the fastest growing hobbies in America.

Geocaching is a great way to teach your children a variety of skills: research, organization, how to read maps and GPS systems, and how to enjoy the great outdoors.

“The basic idea of geocaching is to have people set up caches all over the world, and then share the locations of these caches on the internet,” according to information on the geocaching website, <http://www.geocaching.com>. The website states that geocaching is “the sport where you are the search engine.”



Those who hide the caches rate them 1-5 for difficulty and terrain. Once a cache is hidden and then posted, others can go to the website and obtain the coordinates as well as other clues as to where the cache is hidden.

Then the real fun begins. Driving, hiking and biking are involved, and many people incorporate their geocache searches with day or week long outings to the parks. When a cache is found, a notebook is signed and cachers exchange an item from the cache for a new item of their own. When they return home, they log

onto the website and note details of their search and find. They can also elect to receive updates from others who visit the cache.

Doug Vandenberg of Milford says that geocaching allows him to visit new parks and areas he never knew existed. “It is excellent exercise,” he said, “and a mix of science, computer, mapping, planning and hunting skills.”

David Brown of Davisburg agrees. “Geocaching is the perfect combination of high tech and the outdoors,” he said. Since 2002, Brown has found about 550 geocaches in four countries and at least 20 states. “I was geeked then and I still thoroughly enjoy it,” he said. “It allows me to include my grandchildren in my activities....and gives me an activity to enjoy while I travel.”

The only equipment necessary for this hobby is a Global Positioning System (GPS), which detects the N/S and E/W coordinates of the cache location. GPS handheld systems can be purchased for around \$100 at

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Radio Shack and similar stores. The basic unit is perfect for beginners, and should perform all the functions necessary to participate in the hobby.

What items might be found in a cache?

First, each cache has a logbook so that visitors can leave their names and the dates. This logbook may also contain other information such as clues to finding other caches, jokes or historical information about the area. In addition, caches usually contain items such as trinkets, maps, books, cards, CD's, videos, pictures, jewelry, tickets, tools or games. There are also "virtual caches," which can lead the treasure hunters to points of interest such as historical monuments, scenery, or other existing signs or landscapes.

"As a kid, I was always taught that history was in faraway places," said Ken Browne of Brownston. Browne started geocaching three years ago when the sport was new. Once he was introduced to geocaching, he realized that Michigan is full of history too. "I remember the first geocache that I did, I couldn't even sleep the night before because I was so excited," he said.

The game is made even more interesting and educational with "travel bugs," which can be purchased on the geocaching website for \$5.99. A travel bug is a little figure with an id tag which lists a number and destination. Cachers move travel bugs from cache to cache to get them closer to their destinations. Those who move a travel bug can also elect to receive updates when that travel bug is moved or reaches its destination.

State parks and metro parks are very popular places to hide geocaches, which is why there are so many in the Huron Valley area. Kensington was the choice for Brighton's Rick Wasalaski to hide his first cache. Wasalaski has been geocaching with his wife Barb and son Matt since 2002.

"Geocaching is a great activity that can be enjoyed by the entire family," said Wasalaski. "It combines high-tech equipment and (sometimes) 'wild' surroundings with one's desires of exploration and discovery."

John Hendricks of Redford agrees. "We like the park and how the birds eat out of your hands," he said. "We camp around a lot and always find caches where we go."

Today there are over 200,000 caches in over 200 countries. The game started in Oregon in 2000

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How to tell if your child is gifted

Is your child gifted, or just exceptionally bright?

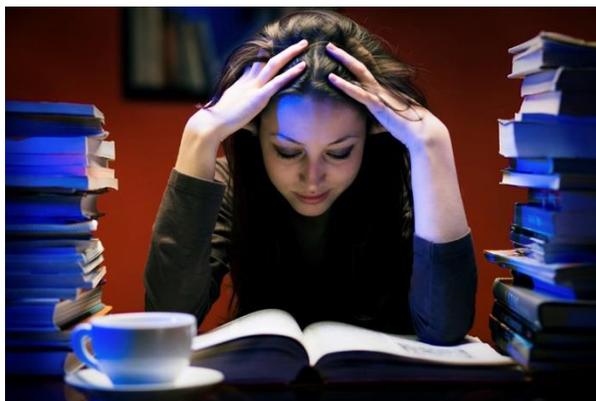
Most people roll their eyes when parents worry about their child is gifted or not. However, parents of gifted children will tell you that it is more difficult to raise a gifted child than an average child. Gifted children have higher rates of depression and suicide, and are often lacking in social skills.

However, if gifted children are properly guided, they can become our future leaders rather than being depressed. In addition, if they are not challenged, there will be a shortage of leadership talent in the future.

Is your child's school doing enough to challenge your child academically? Due to sheer numbers, most public schools are forced to teach to the "middle" of the pack. They also tend to give considerable extra attention to those who struggle. They figure that those who are gifted do just fine, and most of the programs for these future leaders are the first areas that are cut during budget crises.

Experts have broken highly-capable students down into three groups: the High Achiever, the Gifted Learner and the Creative Thinker, according to Deidre Brady, Talent Development Coordinator for Huron Valley Schools.

The high achiever learns easily, works hard to get all A's, and consistently performs at the top of the class.



The creative thinker is able to complete higher level work, but often gets caught up in dreams and ideas that are not carried out.

A gifted learner, on the other hand, is beyond his or her peers. They only need to hear something once or twice before knowing it. On the down side, a gifted learner may not seem to fit in with the other kids.

Brady suggests that parents with concerns discuss them with their child's teacher, and then set up a meeting with the district's talent development coordinator.

=====

1) A Creative Thinker...

- Sees exceptions
- Wonders
- Daydreams; may seem off task

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- Overflows with ideas, many of which will never be developed
- Is in own group
- Questions: What if...
- Questions the need for mastery
- Prefers the company of creative peers but often works alone
- Initiates more projects that will ever be completed
- Enjoys creating
- Is intuitive
- Is never finished with possibilities
- May not be motivated

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School bake sales can teach poor business skills

School bake sales have always bothered me for many reasons.

First of all, they usually do not teach students math or business skills. In fact, they often teach students how to lose money and claim a profit. For example, if you bake cupcakes for a bake sale and it cost \$10 to buy all the ingredients, the school will often sell the cupcakes for 25 cents each and take in a total of \$3. Then the school will brag that they "raised" \$3, when actually the baker is out \$10. So there is a net loss. This doesn't even count the labor and headache!



This is doing the students a great disservice because they are learning that you should only count incoming money and not cost. No wonder our country is in such a mess!

My sister is a teacher and tells me I am a pessimist. "Bake sales promote community," she tells me. That may be, but I think that the reason she likes bake sales is because she is the buyer. She gets a great deal on the cupcake. The baker is the one who loses. And the kids really lose because they never get it.

A second reason that I do not like bake sales is that I don't know who baked the goods. Who knows what is really in the baked goods that are for sale? In fact, there used to be a cookie exchange at my daughter's school. Each PTO mom would bake cookies and the teachers would come in and choose their favorites. I stopped baking cookies for this exchange when one of the teachers told me she never eats the cookies. "For all I know, some angry parent has spit in them, or worse," she explained.

Last but not least, we are trying to teach our kids to be healthy. Then we sell sugar filled goodies and moan about our obese nation. See an interesting article on this topic: [Should Bake Sales Be Banned?](#)

This issue is fresh in my mind because today someone called me asking me to bake something for a last minute bake sale. I tried to explain this logic to her, but she obviously thought that I was just making excuses.

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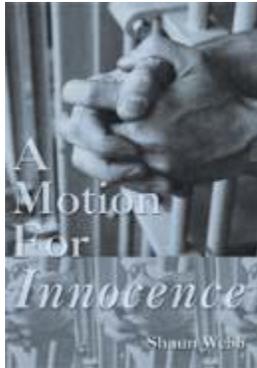
Sex offender? Former Catholic school employee tells his story

By Donna Gundle-Krieg

Are school employees always guilty when children tell stories of sexual abuse?

Take the case of Shaun Webb. A few years ago, Webb was accused of sexually abusing a young teenage girl at St. Patrick's Catholic school in White Lake, Michigan, where he was employed as a trusted and respected building custodian.

Webb has now written a compelling book called [A Motion for Innocence](#), attempting to convince readers of his claim that the teenage girl who accused him had an overactive imagination and parents with a motive to influence her story.



Why do I care about this particular story?

The book really hit home for my family and many of our friends.

We knew Webb, as my daughter was attending St. Patrick's school while Webb worked there and at the time he went through his trial.

In addition, Webb's wife was (and still is) an elementary teacher at St. Pat's. She was my daughter's drama coach, and Webb often helped his wife with the after-school drama duties.

Also, at the time of the incident, I was working out daily at the Highland Curves with Webb's first wife. During our workouts, I found out that she was his childhood sweetheart and on good terms with him, and that they shared parenting their adolescent daughter.

Webb's former wife told me that despite the charges, she would absolutely still allow her daughter to see Webb regularly.

Because of my concern for the school, the family, and for the truth, I did an investigation of this case for a local newspaper. In fact, the newspaper story that I wrote about the case is referenced in [Webb's book](#).

What did my investigation reveal?

After examining hundreds of pages of court records and talking to the many people that were involved, my conclusion is that only two people really know what happened.

However, while I don't know for sure, I am very convinced that the system failed Webb, causing him jail time and the requirement to be labeled as a sex offender for the rest of his life.

Researching the trial's documents shed a lot of light on issues that were not presented in court. Reading [the book](#) made me feel even more passionate about Webb's innocence.

While written as a fictional work, the book mirrors the true story in many ways. In fact, anyone from the Detroit metropolitan area who follows local news will remember some of the stories and relate to many

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of the characters.

Judge rudely rushed trial and did not allow witnesses

One of the key characters who determined Webb's fate was [Judge Deborah Tyner, who was ousted from the bench shortly after Webb's trial.](#)

Tyner resigned after a television camera crew caught her spending her afternoons shopping, getting facials, dining and working out while attorneys and their clients waited for her. In fact, she usually started late and left at noon, even though the court was open for business between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

According to [Webb's book](#), Judge Tyner, as usual, was late for Webb's trial and rudely rushed his case.

Therefore, many of Webb's witnesses were not allowed to testify. In fact, his wife was made to stand in the hallway during the trial since she was supposed to be a witness. Yet because of the rushed trial, she and others never testified on Webb's behalf.

Tyner also pressured the jury to hurry and make a decision on Webb's fate. They found him innocent of the two major charges, but guilty of a third charge.

In addition, many of the documents that were not allowed to be presented in Webb's trial suggest that the case may have had a different outcome if the time would have been taken to give him a complete and fair trial.

Book raises issues related to our system of justice

[The book](#) raises many issues related to our system of justice.

The book also sheds light on the many problems related to the Michigan Sex Offender laws. Being a sex offender in Michigan is a lifetime label with many stigmas attached, including where one lives and works. Some of these sex offenders are teenagers who had sex with their underage girlfriends.

More importantly, the book raises the difficult question of how often we assume that a school employee or other person is guilty of something that a child accuses him of, when often there is no evidence beyond the child's word.

It is a disturbing dilemma, as a child's concerns should be taken seriously. On the other hand, after reading [A Motion for Innocence](#), it is obvious that we as a society must also be careful not to judge when we do not know all of the facts.

For more information, see:

[A Motion for Innocence: About the Book](#)
[Efforts to Oust Judge Deborah Tyner Successful](#)
[Michigan Public Sex Offender Registry](#)

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Are You the "Hyper-Parent" of an Overscheduled Child?

As published in [Metro Parent Magazine](#)

By Donna Gundle-Krieg

"I'm sure glad the new YMCA doesn't open for another year!" Hannah Lynch of Milford told her mother with relief. "I couldn't fit another thing into my busy schedule this year."

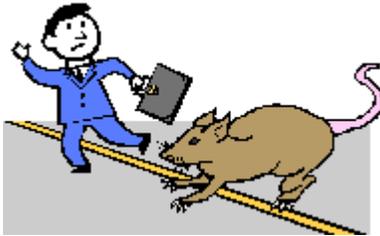
Hannah's mother Bonnie explains that at the time, Hannah was six years old.

In addition to a full day of school, she was enrolled in two types of dance, Brownies and religious education. This schedule seemed in line with schedules of other children in the area.

Does your child feel that her schedule is over-booked? Does your family life revolve around your children's extra-curricular activities? Has your family's schedule become so complicated that it takes a juggling act to make sure that everyone is where they need to be?

If so, you are not alone.

"Hyper-parenting has become the prescribed way to raise children in middle and upper class families," according to Alvin Rosenfeld, M.D. and Nicole Wise, authors of "The Over-Scheduled Child: Avoiding the Hyper-Parenting Trap."



"Hyper-parenting" is defined as the obsessive need to plan, enrich, and raise your child the exact right way, and the belief that planning the perfect blend of activities will create the perfect child.

While there is nothing wrong with parents wanting their kids to keep up with peers in sports and social activities, it can definitely get out of hand. Below are some questions to ask yourself to determine if you are a hyper-parent:

- Does your family have regular and frequent family time? Do you as the parents have your own lives?
- Does your child have plenty of down time?
- Do extra activities affect your child's grades? Is she able to complete her homework?
- Does your child ask to quit his activities, or fight you about going?
- Does your child get enough sleep? Is she unhappy and moody, or upbeat most of the time? Does he get sick often?
- Does your family have expensive toys but no time to use them?

FAMILY TIME

"We invest our time and money on enriching activities and entertainment, but we often fail to provide what children want and need most to thrive: a strong sense of connection with mom and dad," says Vickie Falcone, author of "Buddha Never Raised Kids and Jesus Didn't Drive Carpool."

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“As parents, we may love our children, make sure they eat healthy, enroll them in the finest schools, and yet never know their souls,” Falcone continues. “Study after study has concluded that a feeling of ‘connectedness’ is the single most important factor in a child’s success and happiness.”

Over-scheduling takes away from the unplanned time it takes to develop quality family relationships.

“Family time should be as important as education, athletics, social activities and other outside commitments,” say Rosenfeld and Wise.

Kids also need to see their parents enjoying time together. “I have friends who never get a night out because they’re too busy with their kids’ schedules,” said Deanne Orlando, Livonia parent and teacher. “A kid is over-scheduled if the parents have no lives of their own because of the running and money it costs to have an involved child.”

DOWN TIME AND CREATIVITY

According to Rosenfeld and Wise, in hurrying and over-scheduling kids, we are grooming them to be over-achieving workaholics who believe that down time is wasted time.

“Often they go along achieving for years, get accepted into the best college and even graduate, and then break down,” say the authors. “The problem: for years they ignored the stress and left no time to relax or enjoy themselves.”

Everyone needs unscheduled time. It is healthy to be unproductive for part of your life, to just “be” and not necessarily “do.” Your child and your life are meant to be enjoyed, and the unhurried family activities are often the most enjoyable.

Spontaneous family activities that build relationships include playing board games, playing catch, hiking or watching movies. The sky is the limit once you unlock the family’s collective imagination.

“Hobbies and passions are great, but they are supposed to enrich lives, not cause stress,” say Rosenfeld and Wise. “Empty hours teach children how to create their own happiness - and that is an important skill.”



Elaine Peterson, Ann Arbor mother, agrees. “Self-esteem and confidence can come from skill building in music lessons, dance, karate or sports,” she said. “Social skills are important, but so are creative and imaginative thoughts from unscheduled time.”

In addition to alone time, kids also need time with friends when no adults are micromanaging their activities. If an adult is always coaching or organizing, the child is unable to fully practice and learn the skills necessary for friendship and relationship building.

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EDUCATION

Education is another area that often gets short-changed if a child is over-scheduled. “As a teacher, I think it’s really important that education comes first, before extra activities,” Orlando said. “It’s the parents’ responsibility to recognize over-scheduling, but often it’s the parent who creates it.”

Orlando gives the example of kids who wake up at 5:00 am to get ice time for hockey or skating. After school, these same children take religious education on top of two or more other activities simultaneously.

“The kids with those schedules are usually the kids that struggle to complete homework,” she said.

Many parents make the mistake of prioritizing sports before education. Coaches will convince parents that if their child practices enough, they might be part of the 1% that receives college scholarships for sports, even though almost none of that select group ever makes the pros.

“Their lives will depend on education, yet they spend so much time practicing sports that in college, they often have to choose between education and sports,” say Rosenfeld and Wise.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recently warned parents and doctors about the dangers of kids competing in demanding, competitive sports. They strongly advised that children play multiple sports, and specialize in only one sport after puberty.

Instead of putting so much emphasis on sports or other activities, it’s important for parents to realize that childhood is a preparation for adulthood, not a performance.

“Somewhere along the parenting ride, I realized that my long-range job was to 'catch' the moments from life in which my child's eyes light up and head spins around,” said Kate Anderson, Highland mother, grandmother and teacher.

“When I noticed this attraction, I could encourage them to recognize and pursue their interests.” When teaching, Anderson uses the same tactics, and believes that these magical moments help children determine the purpose for their lives.

QUITTING

What if your child fights about going to a class or activity? Should children be allowed to quit?

“When I was growing up, the rules were black and white. Whatever you started, you stuck with,” said Carrie St. Michel in Good Housekeeping Magazine. “Most parents tend to be more flexible now.”

It’s important to teach a child to fulfill his commitments. For example, she should stick to a team she has committed to for the season, but there’s no reason to force him to take piano lessons indefinitely.

“Parents need to give children a chance to experiment, to find out what they like and don’t like,” says David Elkind, Ph.D. author of “The Hurried Child.”

“Sometimes a child wants to quit an activity because she has too much to do. “If that’s the case, dropping out can be a good thing.”

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Mary Burck, a Farmington Hills mother, agrees. "I think two planned activities a week are plenty," she said. "I make sure that these are things my son really enjoys doing. If I notice that's it is becoming just another obligation, I don't hesitate to have him quit."

MOODS, HEALTH AND SLEEP

The fact is most children do not get enough sleep. Growing bodies need 9-10 hours of sleep per night, according to doctors on www.webmd.com. Yet the total average sleep time for school-aged children is around 7-8 hours.

"This is a much bigger problem than people think," says Richard Simon, M.D., of the Kathryn Severyns Dement Sleep Disorder Center. "They underestimate the problems of being sleepy in the daytime and how it impairs mood and affects performance."

In addition to affecting mood and performance, sleep deprivation is not healthy. If your child gets sick more than twice per year, it's possible more sleep is needed.

To combat this sleep deprivation, many high schools now offer later starting times. However, this may not solve the problem.

"The overall culture -- including the student's home life -- has to change," says Amy Wolfson, Ph.D. of the National Sleep Foundation.

"We live in a very fast-paced society...when we have expectations about the homework teenagers do and the activities they participate in, we need to take into account the fact that they need time to take care of their bodies."



MATERIALISM

Don't all good parents want to raise their children to be productive and successful? The problem is that we keep raising our expectations on how much money it will take to make us happy.

"The materialism of our generation has led us to believe that expensive educational toys and high priced extra-curricular activities will help us to better raise our children," Feldman and Wise explain.

Burck disagrees with this materialism. "What do kids have to look forward to if they've already been in a limo at age 7? To me, these parents project onto their kids what they wish they

had when they were young."

WHY DO WE HYPER PARENT?

In addition to trying to live our dreams through our children, we are the oldest, most educated generation of parents ever. However, according to Feldman and Wise, we have yet to realize that "raising children is not like writing a dissertation, or putting together a marketing plan...Childhood needn't be an endless treadmill of productivity and self-improvement."

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Some people may hyper-parent because they came from large or busy families and felt insignificant. Therefore, they make up for this by giving their own children every possible “opportunity.”

Technology also plays an important role in the parental desire to over-schedule. We plan and follow our pregnancy in detail. We check our children’s progress charts and compare them to others to predict their success in life. We then measure our success as parents based on our children's successes.

TRUST YOURSELF

Of course there is no one right way to parent. Every family is unique and has its own characters, priorities, traditions and interests.

Orlando believes that “Kids, like adults, are all obviously different. Some thrive on busy schedules, other stress over them. My two girls are a good example. If the two traded schedules, neither would be pleased.”

When it comes to your family, you are the expert. In the words of Dr. Benjamin Spock, "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you know.”

In other words, don’t listen to others’ ideas about how many activities your children should have. Instead, when weighing the benefits of participation in a new activity against the costs, include not only money but also time, energy, effort and stress.

“Essentially it all boils down to the fact that all the parts of your life have to mesh,” Anderson philosophizes. She also believes in advance planning.

Orlando agrees that planning and communication are essential. “Every Sunday night, our family sits down with our planners,” she explained. “We put each others’ plans on our own schedules so we know everyone’s whereabouts and how we can support each other.

“We have done this for the past few years and it does work well,” she concluded. “The few weeks we skipped our family meeting were more disorganized and stressful for all of us.”

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Why public schools are better than home schools

by Donna Gundle-Krieg

I do not know the author of the controversial memo below, but if anyone can identify it, please let me know. This has circulated among the home schooling community many times over the years and always causes heated debates.

I have heard different stories about who wrote it. Some say that this was written as a serious piece by someone from the National Education Association. Others claim that the author was a homeschooler writing a sarcastic piece to try to sarcastically combat the constant and undeserved criticism that home schoolers receive.

Memo: Top 10 Reasons to Criminalize Homeschooling

In an effort to increase the public drumbeat for criminalizing homeschooling, a memo has been distributed containing the top 10 reasons why public schooling is better than homeschooling. Here is an excerpt from that memo:

Why Public Schooling Is Better Than Homeschooling

Most parents were educated in the under funded public school system, and so are not smart enough to homeschool their own children.

Children who receive one-on-one homeschooling will learn more than others, giving them an unfair advantage in the marketplace. This is undemocratic.

How can children learn to defend themselves unless they have to fight off bullies on a daily basis?

Ridicule from other children is important to the socialization process.



Children in public schools can get more practice "Just Saying No" to drugs, cigarettes and alcohol.

Fluorescent lighting may have significant health benefits.

Publicly asking permission to go to the bathroom teaches young people their place in society.

The fashion industry depends upon the peer pressure that only public schools can generate.

Public schools foster cultural literacy, passing on important traditions like the singing of "Jingle Bells, Batman smells, Robin laid an egg..."

Robin laid an egg..."

Homeschooled children may not learn important office career skills, like how to sit still for six hours straight.

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Will Your High School Athlete Play in College?

By [Donna Gundle-Krieg](#) January 19, 2009 Note: to comment on this story or other stories about education in Michigan, please go to [Examiner.com](#)

Will your high school athlete play sports in college? How much college scholarship money is available for college student athletes?

The answers to these questions are complex. They depend on the college, the sport, and the individual.

Many high school students and their parents are spending thousands of hours and thousands of dollars each year, hoping that the efforts will pay off once the student is ready to attend college.



My own family is guilty to an extent. My son Steven, a high school senior, is a sports nut. Throughout his high school years, he played AAA baseball, which is considered “college prep.” For many years, our family has sacrificed our summers and our vacation budgets to encourage him in his sport.

When my son was younger, I couldn’t understand parents who

did what we are now doing. I thought that they were crazy.

However, when Steven turned 13, we found that the only way to continue with sports is to get serious about them. The only options, even at age 13, seemed to be the “college prep” teams. These teams involve practice year round, and many weekend tournaments with game times and places unknown until the day before.

We justified all this partly because his coach was a wonderful role model who expected his players to do community service and mission work. Coach Joe DeLisle of the Metro Detroit Stars wanted the players to realize what a privilege it was for them to be able to travel and play sports.

So it was wonderful character building, and we don't regret it.

However, when it came down to college searches, we realized that there are many more academic scholarships than there are athletic scholarships. Steven has found out that his future has more to do with his Math brain and his computer science interest than it does with his ability to steal bases.

Recently, due to his grades, he was offered four-year full tuition academic scholarships at both Saginaw Valley and Oakland University. These are two of Michigan's best kept secrets.

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Steven may want to play baseball in college, and we haven't ruled that out yet. However, he found out that most freshmen and sophomores have to practice at 6:00 a.m. every day for two years before they get any playing time as upperclassmen. He is the type of kid who loves to play, and does not love to sit on the bench.

He is also very well rounded. He is academic and social in addition to being athletic, and found out that he can't work a job if he plays a varsity sport.

Last but not least, even though Steven is an all star player at the top level possible, the college baseball coaches have yet to return our correspondence, much less offer him any money.

Yet the admissions officers at Saginaw Valley recently invited all the top scholars to a Scholarship Recognition Day, complete with lunch and star treatment.

So as of now, Steven plans to snatch up one of these wonderful academic opportunities, and play sports for fun.

Mike Kostoff, a long time high school and college coach, has written a book addressing some of these issues. "Win All Four" helps high school athletes and their parents prepare for the reality of their opportunities. Kostiff stresses that athletes must be balanced, and focus on academics. The purpose of his book is "to give every high school athlete the understanding and a plan to become a college student-athlete.

"My hope is for the athletes to use the information to increase their chances of making their dreams a reality," he said.

For more info:

[Total Student Athlete](#)

Journalism Archive – Donna Gundle-Krieg

Would you allow a military recruiter to contact your teenager?

December 15, 2008

During this holiday season, those in the armed forces and their families should be in our thoughts and prayers. We should be so grateful for their incredible sacrifice.

Many military families have empty places at the holiday dinner table. I can not imagine the pain that these people feel this time of year.

Would you be happy if your son or daughter decided to go into the military?

I have to be honest and tell you that the military life is not one that I have encouraged for my two teens. My selfish preference is for them to go to college and learn a career that involves helping people while staying safe themselves.

According to a recent article in the Spinal Column, I am not alone. In the two high schools in my own school district of Huron Valley, many students opt out of having their names being placed on a contact list for new military recruits.



For example, during the 2008-2009 school year, 1,106 out of 1,687 students at Milford High School opted to keep their contact information from being accessed by military recruiters. At Lakeland High School, the numbers were 1,002 out of 1,730 students.

If a school receives federal funding, it must allow military recruiters to access student directories, according to Section 9528 of the federal “No Child Left Behind Act.”

However, the act also mandates that parents and students be informed as to how to prevent their contact information from being given to military recruiters.

My family has not been confronted with this decision since my teenagers attend private schools. If they were at public schools, I am not sure if we would opt to have their names removed from the military recruitment list.

Until I met my husband, I was pretty clueless about (and removed from) the military life. My dad was in the service before I was born, and I came from a family of all girls. Back then, military careers were not something that females seriously considered.

My husband barely missed the draft during the Vietnam era, and went to college instead.

However, my brother-in-law Larry Krieg has been in the United States Army for many years. His service has included a lot of time away from his family, including a stint at “Camp Gitmo.” I also have many cousins who have signed up to defend our country at one time or another.

These families have all given up so much for the United States. For example, a few years ago, my brother-in-law stunned us when he announced at his wedding that he would be leaving his new bride and family and going overseas.

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The willingness of these fine people to sacrifice is what keeps Americans safe, free, and luckier than people in other countries.

Thank you to all of our military, and happy holidays! We are grateful and proud!

For more information, see [Some area students opt to keep info from military recruiters](#)