

April, 2007

More parents stress the importance of education-- Hicks research cited in the Detroit News

Terence Hicks

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Parent interest in schools stressed

Mike Wilkinson / The Detroit News

Michigan parents are taking a keener interest in their children's education by making more contact with teachers and dedicating more time to homework, according to a new Detroit News/Channel 7 poll.

The time children spend with video games and television has gone down, compared with results from the same survey two years ago.

If parents continue that interest, experts say it can only help lead more students down the path toward college or other post-secondary education.

"I think the earlier the better," said Terence Hicks, an associate professor of research at Fayetteville State University in North Carolina who has studied the impact of parental involvement on college students. "Overall involvement – you can't go wrong."

The first in his family to get a degree, Hicks said his parents preached a steady diet of expectations. Their education was interrupted by the battles over desegregation in Virginia, and they wanted better for their children. "It was fed to me," he said. "You've got to get out of this situation."

That involvement now extends to preschool. Years ago, when Sue Cherry gave tours of her preschool, parents would inquire about the toys and activities.

Now, the focus has shifted. They want to know that their child will be ready for kindergarten.

"I think parents are more aware of the importance of preschool education. They are more aware of the importance of being prepared to learn," said Cherry, director of Maple Tree Montessori Academy in Brighton.

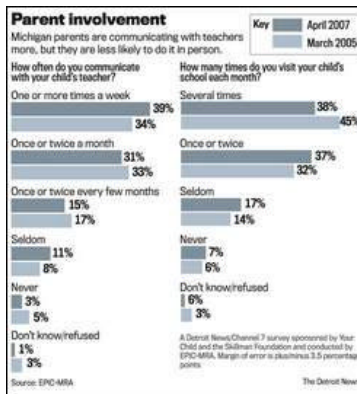
And those concerns extend into grade school, middle school and beyond. Paul Rogers, a former teacher who is now interim superintendent at the Madison Schools in Oakland County, said parents have initiated more contact, as well have teachers. Both know the result is positive, he said.

"It helps the educational process," he said.

You can reach Mike Wilkinson at (313) 222-2563 or mwilkinson@detnews.com.

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