

Appropriately Engaged, or Playing Helicopter?

As you begin this new school year, I would like to challenge you to be an *engaged parent* in the Christian schooling of your student(s)—*engaged*, as in productively supporting the formal education process of your children. I was intrigued to discover online a number of humorous, not so humorous, and serious categories of parenting. Among this list, I discovered hyperparenting, lifelong parenting, parallel parenting, financial parenting, stealth parenting, and helicopter parenting. Perhaps the last, helicopter parenting, is simultaneously the most and the least humorous.

According to Wikipedia, the Web-based interactive encyclopedia, the following definition articulates this unique parenting style:

A **helicopter parent** is a term for a person who pays extremely close attention to their child or children, particularly at educational institutions. They rush to prevent any harm from befalling them or letting them learn from their own mistakes, sometimes even contrary to the children's wishes. They are so named because, like a helicopter, they hover closely overhead, rarely out of reach whether their children need them or not.

An extension of the term Black Hawks (for the combat helicopter of the same name) has been coined for those who cross the line from a mere excess of zeal to unethical behavior such as writing their children's college admission essays.

What then might an appropriately *engaged parent* consider? A great starting place would be to think about what you would like your child to look like after her formal education. Included in this consideration would be the reasons you have chosen Christian schooling for your family. Your Christian school desires your engagement, but it is less enthusiastic about your taking on the character of a helicopter!

As you consider appropriate engagement, I would urge you to pursue a partnership with your school. This institution is not in existence to take over the parenting role, but to provide a level of educational expertise that is beyond most parenting capability. It is never intended that the Christian school should function in isolation or apart from the family.

At the Association of Christian Schools International we have identified four crucial areas of learning in the Christian school: (1) academic/thinking, (2) worldview, (3) spiritual formation, and (4) skill development. In this edition of *Christian School Comment*, I will address the first of these four categories.

We believe that in the academic/thinking area, Christian school graduates should be well prepared in all academic disciplines; be skilled in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking; and be proficient in mathematics and science. They should appreciate literature and the arts and understand how these express and shape an individual's beliefs and values; have a knowledge and understanding of people, events, and movements in history (including church history) and the cultures of other peoples and places; value intellectual inquiry and have the ability to engage in the marketplace of ideas; and appreciate the natural environment and live as responsible stewards of God's creation.

Give thoughtful consideration to how you can assist your student in these academic/thinking areas. Does your home environment encourage productive study and homework activity? Do you encourage proactive learning through more reading, family discussions beyond the hottest movie or television show, or even family excursions or outings that include an aspect of the academic content your student is engaged in? Do you discuss your concerns about your child's development in these areas with her teacher?

Partner with your Christian school. It is not a heliport. It is a place where jointly you and your school can effectively "train a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6, NIV).



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