

Is it Time We Stopped Viewing Schools as the Best Parent?

When it comes to school, educators always know best, right?

This assumption was [challenged by Jay Matthews](#) in *The Washington Post* over the weekend. After reporting on an incident at a high caliber high school where parents felt educators and administrators were not listening to their concerns, Matthews noted:

“Failure to tell parents what is going on is common in schools, both public and private. It stems from a professional tendency to resent advice from amateurs. Many of us instinctively defend the people we work with against complaints from outsiders, but parents are more than just customers and clients. They often know more about what is happening inside classrooms than school administrators do.”

Matthews has a point that parents should have more say in their child's education than they often seem to. But is the fact that parents often don't have this say the result of “the professional tendency to resent advice from amateurs,” or does it stem from a desire to distance children from the values and ideas their parents espouse?

Former New York teacher of the year John Taylor Gatto would argue the latter. According to Gatto, there are [nine assumptions](#) underlying today's education system. Four of these directly correspond to the relationship between parents and children:

1. “The certifiable expertise of official schoolteachers is superior to that of lay people including parents. The protection of children from the uncertified is a compelling public concern.”

2. "Children will inevitably grow apart from their parents in beliefs as they grow older and this process must be supported and encouraged. The best way to do this is by diluting parental influence and discouraging the children's attitudes that their own parents are sovereign in either mind or morality."
3. "The world is full of crazy parents who will ruin their children. An overriding concern of schooling is to protect children from bad parenting."
4. "It is not appropriate for any family to unduly concern itself with the education of its own children, but it may expend unlimited effort on behalf of the general education of everyone."

What do you think? Is the education system justified in trying to become a child's parent by disentangling him from his family, particularly given the number of "[bad parenting](#)" examples we see today?

Or would we actually see America have more mature student bodies if schools reinstated and encouraged the influence and presence of parents in their child's life?

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