



Know! To Encourage Parents To, “Step Away From The Helicopter”

TEACHERS: Chances are you have students in your classroom who have experienced “Helicopter Parenting.” If so, you may be reaping what some parents have sown.

What exactly is a “Helicopter Parent?” By definition, it is a style of parenting in which an overprotective mom or dad swoops in at any sign of challenge or discomfort, unintentionally discouraging a child’s independence by being too involved in the child’s life (dictionary.com).

Many well-intentioned parents have taken to their helicopters in an effort to protect their children from harm, shelter them from disappointment and save them from failure. Overprotective helicopter parents are known to regularly challenge you (their child’s teacher); they dispute grades and make excuses for their child’s mistakes; they inject themselves into their child’s school relationships with friends and with so-called “enemies” (though we’re not talking instances of bullying – in which case parents should inject themselves); and they are known to frequently (and quite obviously) step-in and do their child’s homework/class projects for them – all in the name of bettering their child’s chances for success.

But as child development experts have discovered, hovering helicopter parents actually do more harm than good, and children who have been parented in this manner are at elevated risk for making poor behavioral choices, being unhealthily dependent, fearful, vulnerable, self-conscious, anxious and impulsive, both in the short and long term – tendencies that may rear its head in your classroom.

The best thing you can do is to encourage parents to appropriately aid in their child’s safety, self-confidence and overall success, while avoiding the helicopter? Try these tips in your classroom and share them with parents you know:

Encourage youth to make their own choices: Take a step back and allow children to practice making decisions without your input. This will not only give them a better understanding of consequences, but it will teach them that their life is about the choices they make, not about the choices made for them.

Help them gain a sense of responsibility: Consider this an opportunity to fuel a child’s sense of, “I can.” Give them a task and let them go at it. Even if it is not done perfectly, refrain from trying to fix it (teachers – we’re not talking math problems).

Allow children to make mistakes, and then be okay with it: Mistakes are a natural part of learning and becoming more independent. If children feel your support even when mistakes are made, they will not only grow from the experience, but they are likely to have less fear of failure and will be better suited to make wiser choices next time.

Talking regularly with kids about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using.

Know! urges you to encourage other parents to join Know!.

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Know! is a program of:



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Link to the article on the Drug Free Action Alliance Facebook Page

Keep communication open and ongoing: Non-judgmental listening is one of the greatest gifts a child can receive. Show them you are tuned in and are genuinely interested in what they have to say. Without lecturing, help them become more aware of the big picture by discussing various scenarios, possible actions and potential consequences.

