

GRANDPARENTS AND EDUCATION RANK AS TWO IMPORTANT ISSUES

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Recent events this past week have made me acutely aware of how important two aspects of my life have become.

One was the Supreme Court ruling that parents may chose to deny grandparents visitation rights to their grandchildren. In my opinion, it's an onerous and unpopular decision, albeit a just one, and somewhat reminiscent in some respects of the Elian Gonzales fiasco.

Statistically speaking, it is all the more unpopular when you consider the role modern-day grandparents play in their grandchildren's upbringing. While politicians prattle on about family values they espouse policies that literally destroy families. Grandparents are instilling those values in meaningful ways.

Millions regularly serve as sitters to enable parents to work and provide a better way of life than would otherwise be possible. By so doing, they assure their grandchildren a more loving and secure experience than any government-sponsored or commercial day care facility.

My wife and I, as grandparents, enjoy not only the above service on a regular basis, but carry our role one step further. We have the pleasure and joy as serving as parents to one of our grandchildren, a part millions of other grandparents are playing in today's society. It is a labor of love, and one most grandparents are thankful to be able to provide.

Fortunately, the high court's ruling will have a minimal effect on those grandparents who imparted strong family values to their children. New York courts have been most lenient in granting grandparents extended rights in cases where possible child abuse can be substantiated.

The other aspect is education, which has been highlighted locally by the failure of the school budget to pass the first time around.

Education is undoubtedly one of the most important issues in New York and the rest of the nation. We are purported to be trailing the rest of the industrial nations in

preparing our children for competing in the real world. The fact that politicians on both sides of the aisle have seized on the issue tends to confirm it.

One group blames money or the lack thereof as the principal cause of the dilemma, while the other blames failed social experiments and flawed teaching methods and agendas that only serve to exacerbate the problem.

As parents, we try to review and critique our granddaughter's schoolwork. I can honestly and unshamefully say I am not much help in evaluating its accuracy or content. The world and technology have moved so far and fast since I completed high school that I am lost. We trust that the professionals entrusted with our grandchildren's education are doing a good job.

If the excellence of the music program is indicative of the rest of the agenda, it's a huge success. Its quality is obvious to even a stumblebum with a tin ear like myself.

It just recently dawned on me how much more the young people of today have to assimilate than their parents or grandparents. It amazes me that they have to be able to do it in the same time frame.

The curriculum, its contents and scope, has obviously changed and so, too, have the discipline and respect teachers once commanded. I well remember Principal John Leach discussing it with me in his office years ago.

He showed me stacks of books sent out from the State Education Department in Albany to be given to the students. They were titled, "Your Rights As Students." He told me of the problems he already faced with discipline, the most necessary component schools need to function, without giving students any new reinforcements to the problem.

"I plan to give them out," he told me, "just before I retire."

Traditional family values are all important to the success of this country's educational system. We can all do our part to insure that success by rejecting the blind ideology and moral poverty so prevalent in today's government and the people who preach it.