

Schools warn on sex, booze parties

Letter to the Editor

Congratulations on putting this story on the front cover of your paper and well done to the heads of the schools concerned for bringing this out in the open. Maybe now parents will see the reality of an epidemic of emotionally illiterate, spoiled, disrespectful teenagers who have been raised in our modern technology-consumer driven world. If we add to the scene the rapidly increasing numbers of 12-14 years olds who are self harming, depressed and/or increasingly violent and aggressive towards the innocents of our communities, MAYBE parents of younger children will decide to be better informed about how to raise children with more emotional, social and spiritual competency. One way would be to stop diminishing the role of children being children until at least 7, with endless TV, DVD's and computers that create virtual realities instead of real ones that would help. Preserving childhood would also mean ignoring padded kids' bras and high heels for our little girls regardless of how cute they may be. It would also mean that parents invest heavily in the building of the above competencies with loving guidance while they can still hold firm boundaries. The developing child's brain needs constant and frequent reinforcement of things like manners, social norms and respect for themselves, others and our world. This takes place in the first 5 years of a child's life and is not the responsibility of teachers or schools. They are able to reinforce the templates that have been built however are unable to build ones from scratch. The freedoms of today's 12-14 year olds is a product of the pressures of modern living only to a degree – effective positive parenting has always been the best way to ensure that the experimentation and boundary stretching of adolescence takes place as late as possible. The 12-14 year old teenage brain - cognitively, emotionally and socially- is so far behind that of 15-18 year old and the ability to make better decisions on how to preserve one's life, character and liver is also much lower. We must also make sure in this issue that the many teenagers who are not taking part in the binge culture are also recognised and celebrated.

Maggie Dent October 2006