

MYCHAL WYNN

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*On Parenting:*

Ten Steps *to* Helping *your*  
Child Succeed *in* School

VOLUME I



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Mychal Wynn On Parenting:  
*Ten Steps to Helping your Child Succeed in School*  
*Volume I*

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# Acknowledgments

I would like to thank God, the ultimate comforter and counselor as I step and stumble through the challenges of being a husband to my wife and father to my children.

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I would like to thank Linda Richardson, of the Baltimore County Schools, whose parent book club put the ideas contained within this book into practice.

Thanks also to the many parents who have reviewed my thoughts, shared their input, and given of their time to ensure that this book is practical and do-able for all parents.

# Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife, Nina, an extraordinary wife and mother.

To my sons, Mychal-David and Jalani, who, like the thousands of children I see in our schools each year, are born into the world with divinely-given gifts and extraordinary potential. Never give up on your dreams.

And, to my parents, who, without the benefit of all of the research and thoughts outlined in this book, did the best they could with all they had, to prepare me to follow my dreams. Thank you.

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## About the Author

Mychal and his wife, Nina, have two sons, Mychal-David (17) and Jalani (12). They have firsthand experience with the many challenges and frustrations facing parents. While Mychal is traveling around the country speaking to parents, teachers, and students, and Nina is busy running a publishing company, the telephone rings:

“Jalani hit a little girl and bit a little boy.”

“Jalani would not go to sleep at nap time.”

“Mychal-David would not stop talking in class.”

“Jalani used bad words today.”

“Mychal-David has not been turning in his work.”

“Jalani would not be quiet at story time.”

“Mychal-David broke the pencil sharper.”

“Jalani kicked a hole in the wall.”

“Jalani would not sit in time-out, so he was sent to the office and you have to come and get him right now!”

If responding to the frequent notes, meeting with teachers, counselors, and the principal, and dealing with their children’s behaviors were not enough, Mychal and Nina must develop,



revise, develop, and revise again strategies to get their older son to do his class work (“I am not motivated in class”), turn in his homework, and bring home the many notices that he receives from school.

*“When our older son, Mychal-David, graduated from the fifth grade, Nina and I celebrated. This day marked the end of another school year. For eight years, dating back to his preschool days at the First Lutheran Church in Carson, California, we have prayed for solutions, researched everything that we could find about parenting and teaching, developed and implemented strategies, and prayed again for the wisdom and strength to help our children develop their potential and to become successful in school. Today marked the end of elementary school and was our day of celebration!”*

Their older son is now in his final year of high school and has already been admitted into Amherst College. Mychal and Nina believe the strategies they have used with their children can be replicated by other parents. Countless children who are underachieving in school, and others who have been diagnosed as Hyperactive, Emotional/Behavioral Disorder (EBD), Learning Disabled (LD), or with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) have special talents and abilities that can be channeled into long-term dreams and aspirations. All children can succeed in school as they journey along the road to richly rewarding lives and careers.



# Foreword

In Mychal Wynn's presentations to teachers, parents, and students, he brings a message of hope, of dreams, and of the potential and possibilities within each of our lives. This book is part of Mychal Wynn's school improvement/student achievement series of books which outline parenting, teaching, and school reform strategies from preschool through high school. Each book is designed to provide ideas and strategies to help parents help their children achieve success in school, teachers achieve success in the classroom, administrators achieve success in creating high-performing schools, and students achieve success in their journey from preschool into postsecondary education.

Mychal Wynn has shared his strategies with parents and teachers throughout the United States, Canada, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Bermuda—commonsense strategies which he and his wife have used with their own children. Throughout this book you will find examples of situations which he and his wife have experienced with their two sons. Although the situations and circumstances of your family might differ, the strategies outlined are



appropriate for the complete spectrum of today's families: two-parent households, single parents, foster parents, grandparents, teen parents, and working parents. This book is designed for all parents, in all situations, experiencing all types of circumstances.

There is no single approach or perfect solution to all of the day-to-day challenges facing parents, however, we believe the ideas and strategies presented in each book in the series will help any parent, teacher, mentor, coach, or counselor in developing an effective game plan for increasing a child's success from preschool through high school.

Other books in the school improvement/student achievement series:

- *Increasing Student Achievement: Volume I, Vision*
- *A Middle School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams*
- *A High School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams*
- *Follow Your Dreams: Lessons That I Learned in School*
- *The Eagles who Thought They were Chickens*
- *Empowering African-American Males: Teaching, Parenting, and Mentoring Successful Black Males*



# Introduction

My wife and I have learned that successful parenting is holistic, meaning that we must develop strategies for each piece of the parenting puzzle. What we do with our sons at home to prepare them to succeed in school, how we work with their respective schools, how we establish a system of rewards and consequences, and how we communicate their needs to, and collaborate with their teachers, are all pieces of the parenting puzzle.

The focus of this book is on those things that we, as parents, can do to shape what happens to our children when they are in school and to prepare the foundation for long-term school success. The books, *A Middle School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams*, and *A High School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams* supplement the information provided in this book by focusing on specific strategies for the middle and high school years. However, a successful journey through the seven-year middle-high school continuum requires a solid preschool through elementary school foundation.



My wife and I have just gone through another school year; one of joy and pain, of hope and frustration, of teacher conferences, and administrator meetings. While our children are far from perfect, my wife and I are their advocates. The school cannot take total credit for their successes, nor can it place total blame for any failures onto their shoulders. What and how much they learn is as much a function of their learning styles as it is each of their teachers' teaching styles. How they behave in class is influenced by how my wife and I "teach" them to behave at home, coupled with how their classroom teacher "allows" them to behave at school.

This, and each book in the school improvement/student achievement series, has been written for anyone who wants to become a child's advocate. You cannot become a child's advocate without accepting ownership for influencing school change. The best students can still fail when attending low-performing schools just as average students can excel when attending high-performing schools.

While my wife and I work diligently to ensure that our children leave home with dreams and aspirations which inspires them to learn, we must



work just as diligently with the teachers and staff in their respective schools to ensure that what happens in school does not destroy their dreams and aspirations once they get there.

We do not believe our children or any children should sit in classrooms for 180 days each year from kindergarten through the twelfth grade to just “get an education.” We believe they must get the education which *best* prepares them to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

We also believe that schools should foster a school climate and culture which inspires within children a passion and purpose for coming to school. We do not want our sons to become one the thousands of children who shuffle through the day; whose eyes reveal lost and abandoned souls; who spend most of their time in school clowning, socializing, disrupting classrooms, bullying or being bullied by other children, or in other ways are distracted from or tuned out to learning.

Instead of chapters, this book sets forth ten steps. Each step is designed to provide questions that you should ask and things that you should do on your child’s behalf to increase the possibilities of your child succeeding in his or her school. While you may prefer to read the



book all the way through, I would suggest that you take each step one at a time, and, by all means, keep a journal or notebook. Make notes and highlight the strategies which you intend to immediately use. Gather your information slowly and over an extended period of time. Throughout the school year, as you gain more insight into your child, pass helpful information on to your child's teacher. Keep in mind that your child's best opportunity to succeed lies in your ability to develop a positive relationship and an effective partnership with your child's teacher.

As a result of the interest demonstrated by teachers, many of whom are parents themselves, this book has been updated to include teacher-specific strategies. These have been set forth in boxes labeled, "Teacher Strategies." If you are a parent you may want to make copies of these pages and pass them on to your child's teacher to further develop the necessary parent-teacher partnership to ensure your child's school success.

According to the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." The ideas that follow provide ways of strengthening the village so that we may better enable our children to succeed.



## *Children We Care*

*Black, brown, red, yellow, and white  
children of all colors with eyes so bright  
Given us in innocence, no burdens to bear  
how can we say to you, "Children we care?"  
How can we convince you that the love we give  
is the most treasured possession of the life we live  
Toys, gifts, and trips to the zoo  
are a very small part of the things that we do  
We love, nurture, and guide you along  
laying the foundation from which to grow strong  
We teach you, protect you, and always demand  
that in learning you simply do the best that you can  
And often the expectations that we have of you  
are greater than you believe is the best you can do  
It's because in our lives we continue to see  
that we rarely become the best we can be  
Our love and our lives, we always will share  
forgive our mistakes, because "Children we care."*

— Mychal Wynn





# Step 1

## *Get to Know Your Child*

---

Getting to know your son or daughter is the first, and arguably, the most difficult step. As parents, we grew up in a different generation. We were taught different values than those constantly being directed at our children through today's music, movies, literature, and advertisements—not to mention the Internet. For many of us, family and church were the most important influences in our lives. For many of today's children, the influence of family is replaced by the powerful influences of peers and the media (i.e., television, radio, music, movies, videos, video games, and the Internet). The influence of church or spirituality in the lives of many children is no longer first or second, if on the list at all.

With parents operating from such a different belief system, coupled with the natural cross-gender (mothers to sons, fathers to daughters) and cross-generational (middle-age parents to



young children) communication problems, most parents will admit “I do not understand my son at all!” You have probably said on more than one occasion, “I just do not understand that boy. He is so hard headed!”; or, “What is wrong with these girls today, they have no self respect”; or, “Thirteen-year-olds are just crazy!”; or, “We did not do things like that when I was a kid.”

If we admittedly do not understand our sons or daughters it is not because we, as parents, are stupid, or that our children are insane (at least not all of the time). It is because we, as parents, were not taught how to understand our children. Our parents probably did not understand us. They simply told us what to do and expected us to do it. Remember your parents telling you to do something? You dared not question why. And besides, if you had, their answer would have been, “Because I said ‘Do it!’” They did not know (and probably did not care) anything about our learning styles, the teachers’ teaching styles, our personality types or anything else. They told us to go to school, pay attention, do what our teachers told us to do, and get a good education. We were to be seen and not heard. We were to sit still and be quiet.



Now we are parents. Most of us do not want to do to our children what our parents did to us (which was not all bad, but it was not all good). However, we do not know what else to do. We were not taught how to become parents by our parents. We were not taught how to be parents in school, so, many of us are making it up as we go; and with today's influences on our children, we are drowning. Our ships are sinking, we are bailing water, and we need someone to throw us a rope!

Multiple children, raised in the same home, by the same parents, with the same values are likely to grow into entirely different people. Which may cause you to question, "Is this really our child?"

Compounding all of this is that we simply do not understand our children. How could we? We "see" our children through our perceptions of ourselves and we "understand" our children only as well as we understand ourselves. But how well do we know ourselves? Of all the classes we have taken, of all the subjects we have studied, how many have helped us to better understand ourselves? Do you know what your personality type is? Do you know what your learning style is? Do you know the many ways in which you are smart or the many ways in which you can become smarter? How could you when you were



told, “Sit still and be quiet”; when you were told, “Shut up and pay attention”; when you were told, “Children should be seen and not heard?”

Our first step is not only getting to know our children, but getting to know ourselves.

*In our household we have made a conscious effort to better understand who we are and how each of us is different. It has helped our sons, two exact opposite personality types, to understand why they rarely want to do the same things. It has helped them to understand why certain things they say or do affects their mother one way and me another. And, it has helped my wife and me to teach our sons in the ways in which they best learn.*

*Understanding each other has reduced the conflicts in our household between our children, between ourselves and our children, and between my wife and me. Why we are different is far more than race, gender, values, and beliefs. While all of these are a part of our differences, how we learn, what our personalities are, and how we best express our unique gifts and abilities are all pieces to the puzzle of who we are.*

It is natural for us to project our values, beliefs, personality, and ways of understanding things onto our children. However, by doing this we fail to “see” our children in their own uniqueness, with their own values, beliefs, personality, and ways of understanding things. While they are our children, they are not born



with our values, beliefs, or sense of right and wrong. And, they certainly may not have our personality or understand things in the ways in which we do. While we may teach and cultivate our values and beliefs, our children's personality and the ways in which they understand things is uniquely theirs. As parents, we must learn *how* to best help our children *learn* the values and develop the character we want them to have. To successfully teach our children, we must better understand the uniqueness of their personality and the ways in which they best learn.

*Hello ... Is anybody home?*

---

Our then, seven-year-old, son, Jalani, often said, "Ding, dong, ding, dong. Hello, is anybody home?" Have you ever wondered, "Is anybody home?" when talking to your children?

Perhaps the most frustrating part of parenting is that oftentimes we talk and talk and talk, and our children just do not get it! Which of the following statements have you used in the past?

"I do not know what is wrong with this boy."

"She never does what I tell her to do!"

"Did you understand what I told you?"



“Why do you keep doing that when we have already discussed it?”

“Why do you keep asking me? I have already told you, ‘No.’ ”

“What is wrong with you? You know that you can do better.”

“I do not understand why you keep getting low grades in math; I never had problems with math.”

“What is wrong with you? Did you *hear* what I *said*?”

“I am tired of telling you to do the same thing over and over.”

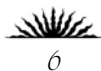
“If I have to *tell* you one more time ...”

“You are wearing on my last nerve!”

“Why did you do that? You know better. If I have told you once, I have told you a thousand times.”

“Have you lost your mind?”

Even after our parenting cup runneth over, there is no end to the many seemingly insane things that children do. Bill Cosby, in his



wonderful monologue on parenting, attributes our children's insanity to their having brain damage!

Despite our children's apparent insanity (or brain damage), we, as parents, make two critical mistakes in our efforts to understand our children.

### **Mistake #1**

**We project our childhood experiences onto our children to reason, rationalize, or explain their behaviors.**

*"No matter what my friends did, I knew that I had to focus first and foremost on getting my education."*

*"When I was your age, I never did that!"*

*"I would never have talked to my mother the way that you talk to me."*

*"When I was in school, I always turned in my homework."*

*"When I was in school, I would never have kicked a hole in the wall!"*



Although the statement, “Boys will be boys” is far too simplistic to explain male behavior, recognizing differences between male and female physical and emotional development must be considered in developing gender-appropriate parenting strategies.

## **Mistake #2**

**We try to rationalize our children’s behavior without getting to know our children.**

*“You know how children are today.”*

*“He is just going through a phase; he will grow out of it.”*

*“He is hyperactive; he just cannot sit still.”*

*“She has a learning disability.”*

*“His attention span is so short, he just cannot concentrate.”*

*“She is not very good at math. I was not very good at math either.”*

*“He is just like his daddy!”*

If you want to keep your ship from sinking do not make either of these mistakes. Get to know your child and share what you know with your child’s teachers. The best way to help your

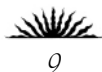


child is by establishing a relationship with your child's teachers and developing a parent-teacher partnership. When teachers tell us that our son is misbehaving or not doing his schoolwork or not following instructions, without offering suggestions as to what we can do to help him, they are just adding to our level of frustration. Developing a parent-teacher partnership requires that you share what you observe at home. In turn, teachers must share what they observe about your child at school. This goes far beyond "what is wrong" to looking for what is right!

### *Observing your child*

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Your child's teachers observe your child's behavior when he or she is away from you and the influences of your household. He or she may exhibit a different personality, may engage in different types of interactions with others, and may demonstrate interests that are very different than what he or she demonstrates at home. Equally important, he or she may respond best to written versus verbal instructions (learning style). He or she may learn best through stories and anecdotes versus lecturing (teaching style). He or she may work best in groups with quiet and soft-spoken children who take into account the



feelings of other group members (personality type). And, he or she may internalize what he or she has learned best when he or she can demonstrate, illustrate, write a rap, or give an oral presentation (Multiple Intelligences). On the other hand, his or her brother or sister may be slightly different or entirely different.

Despite whatever challenges you may have had in the past, you can better understand each of your children. While it does take some time, it can be done. Our two sons are exactly opposite in their personality types. They respond differently to verbal instructions. They have very different interests. Having grown up in the same household with the same parents, they have very different ways of doing and understanding things.

*Our older son, Mychal-David, is highly visual. Our younger son, Jalani, is highly verbal. Each of them has their respective morning responsibilities. With my wife running a publishing company, and my speaking and travel schedule, our house is fast-paced in the mornings. The only way that we all cope is through regular routines and clear responsibilities.*

*Mychal-David and Jalani have each had a list of morning and evening responsibilities during the school week that we adjusted for each level of schooling (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school).*



*Following was Jalani's morning list throughout elementary school:*

- 6:00 a.m. Say prayers and make-up bed*
- 6:10 a.m. Sit-ups and push-ups*
- 6:15 a.m. Wash up*
- 6:20 a.m. Eat breakfast*
- 6:35 a.m. Brush teeth*
- 6:45 a.m. Get dressed and brush hair*
- 7:00 a.m. Go to the bus stop*

*Our older son had a similar list throughout elementary and middle school. Now, a high school senior, he has graduated from his list, however my wife and I make a mental note of the time that we wake him so he and his younger brother do not get into each other's way.*

*During the time when each of our sons had lists, they were posted onto the refrigerator so they could check off each completed task. At the end of the week their weekly allowance was tied directly to their success at fulfilling their daily responsibilities. While some might consider this too regimented, we know that it substantially reduced the stress level in our household. Furthermore, our younger son learned to read and tell time as part of the process of fulfilling his daily responsibilities.*

Understanding our children's learning styles and intrinsic motivation, (i.e., auditory learner—playing with friends, visual learner—going to the skating rink), we gave them responsibilities and established a system of rewards and consequences that led them into developing the type of self-



directed behavior needed to become successful in school.

Getting to know our children has helped us to become better parents. Parenting is a marathon, not a sprint. Steady, diligent, consistent effort will get you to the finish line. Take your time and learn a little day by day. It is during the day-to-day trials and tribulations of teaching and raising your children that you have so many wonderful opportunities to try new approaches. It may be as simple as giving written instructions, creating visuals of daily responsibilities, making better connections between rewards and consequences, providing your children with more opportunities for independent decision-making, changing your tone of voice, phrasing what you say differently, or at times not saying anything at all.

*If your child is a visual learner and you give him all verbal instructions, no matter how much he wants to please you, and no matter how much you both want to be successful, he may not “understand” your instructions.*

*If your daughter has highly developed Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence, which is her primary means of processing what she learns, she may need to verbalize her thoughts and “tell” the story while reading. But if she is told, “Sit still and be quiet” or “Silently read to yourself” she may find reading difficult and frustrating.*



*If your son is a highly extraverted personality type and highly Verbal/Linguistic in his intelligence, he may find that working independently and in silence for long periods of time equally difficult and frustrating.*

*If your son is highly visual in his learning style and highly Bodily/Kinesthetic in his intelligence, he may find that doodling and frequent opportunities to move around provide the best opportunity for him to learn and to in fact enjoy the learning experience.*

### *Get a journal*

---

Get a journal or notebook and begin gathering information about each of your children. Just because you live in the same household and see your children every day does not mean that you know your children. Developing a better understanding of each of your children is a process, albeit painstaking, time-consuming, and frustrating.

Read the following questions. Using your journal, write down the answers to each of the questions as they pertain to your child:

1. Of the eight intelligences (identified by Dr. Howard Gardner), which are your child's dominant intelligences?



- *Verbal/Linguistic*
  - *Logical/Mathematical*
  - *Interpersonal*
  - *Intrapersonal*
  - *Visual/Spatial*
  - *Musical/Rhythmic*
  - *Bodily/Kinesthetic*
  - *Naturalist*
2. Of the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Preferences, is your child more Introverted or Extraverted; Sensitive or Intuitive; Thinking or Feeling; Judging or Perceiving?
  3. Is your child more Analytic or Global in his or her learning style?
  4. Does your child appear to best understand by hearing, seeing, or doing?
  5. What have been your child's best and worst learning situations in school?
  6. What are your child's strengths, weaknesses, and intrinsic motivations?
  7. How greatly is your child influenced by peer pressure?
  8. What are your child's favorite hobbies, interests, subjects, and books?



9. What are your child's proudest accomplishments and achievements?
10. What are your child's dreams and aspirations?

Right now, you may be wondering what “Multiple Intelligences” have to do with little Patrice throwing a temper tantrum in the grocery store? Or, what “Analytic and Global learning styles” have to do with Myles being sent to “time-out” at school each day? Or, what CJ’s “dreams and aspirations” have to do with the fact that he never does his homework, rarely completes his class work, and appears unconcerned by your taking away his television, computer, video games, and iPod?

Gathering and understanding the information needed to answer each of these questions will help you and your child’s teachers to better understand how your child processes and applies knowledge; how to more effectively communicate with your child; how your child best learns; how to help your child make the connection between what he or she is learning in school to what he or she wants to achieve in life; and how to tap into the many areas of your child’s intrinsic motivation. The more you learn about your child the more successful you will



become at navigating the inevitable storms of parenting.

*My wife and I have discovered that our older son is not only highly developed in his verbal, logical thinking, and illustrative abilities, but he is a highly visual learner. Whenever we gave him verbal instructions, he frequently forgot and was unsuccessful at following through. No matter how we disciplined him, took away privileges, or otherwise expressed our displeasure with his failure to be responsible, we were unsuccessful and he felt unsuccessful. In other words, "He just did not get it!"*

*When we began writing and listing all of his responsibilities step-by-step, together with consequences and expectations, he no longer had problems following instructions. When he could "see" the steps, when he could refer to the list to ensure that he had done all that he was expected to do, he was responsible and successful. We did not have to repeat ourselves. We simply said, "Look at the list." Whenever he asked to get together with his friends or to watch television we simply said, "Have you done everything on your list?"*

*We also helped his teachers to understand that verbal instructions were not nearly as effective as written instructions, and, they should not rely on him to tell us about important things. Instead, he needed a note to bring home; not every now and then, or when the situation had gotten out of control. We needed a note to be sent home every day. We accomplished this by having all of his teachers initial his student agenda each day after class. It was his responsibility to write down all assignments and test dates. His teachers simply initialed that he had fulfilled his responsibility of writing the information down.*



*On the other hand, our younger son is highly verbal. He learns best when we tell him what we want him to do and have him verbally reaffirm what we told him. "Jalani, go into your room, take your clothes off, put your clothes into the clothes hamper, and get into the bathtub. Jalani, what are you going to do?"*

*"I am going to go into my room, take my clothes off, put my clothes into the clothes hamper, and get into the bathtub. Then, I can have some ice cream. Right, Mom?"*

Make notes in your journal as you observe your children each day in different situations. As you purposefully observe your children you will begin to better understand them as divinely-unique individuals. You may need different strategies for each child based upon what you learn about each child. Do not teach them the same way unless they learn in the same way. Stop saying, "What is wrong with you?" and work harder to understand the unique personality which embodies who they are individually.

Do not attempt to gather all of this information at one time but over the scope of a lifetime! Or at least, during your child's years in school—from preschool until he or she graduates from high school.



Throughout a child's childhood, you are likely to witness changes in learning styles, personality types, and his or her dreams and aspirations. As he or she learns and grows and goes through adolescence, you will need to continually update your information. You will not only use this information at home to help your child become successful at doing his or her homework, fulfilling his or her household responsibilities, and following your instructions, but you will give this information to his or her principal and teachers.

Many of the areas you will be observing (i.e., personality, intelligences, learning styles, etc.) represent entire books in themselves. However, I believe the brief introductions and tables that follow will allow you to quickly begin the process of identifying the unique learning styles and personality types of each of your children which will prove helpful to your family and to each child's teachers.

### *Personality Types*

---

The most important factor in your daughter's succeeding in school will be her personal relationships—the relationship between you and her; the relationship between her and her



siblings; and, the relationships between her and the teachers, staff, and students in her school.

*My wife and I work hard at helping our sons to develop healthy relationships:*

- *We help them develop a spiritual foundation and relationship with God. Our values, beliefs, and approaches to problem-solving are based on our faith in God's Word.*
- *We help them to maintain a positive relationship with us, as parents, by teaching them to demonstrate respect in their tone of voice, mannerisms, body language, and behaviors when speaking or communicating to us.*
- *We help them to develop a positive relationship with each other. We do not tolerate put downs, sarcasm, fighting, or any disrespectful behavior toward each other.*
- *We help them to develop positive relationships with other adults. We reinforce the respect we believe they should demonstrate toward adults.*
- *We teach them integrity and to take responsibility for their actions. Any inappropriate behavior toward a teacher at school or while visiting someone's home is followed by both a written and verbal apology.*
- *We help them to develop positive relationships with other children by providing frequent opportunities to attend camps and participate in team sports and group activities.*



- *We help them learn how to resolve conflicts with their peers by developing a personal sense of right and wrong, and an understanding of choices and consequences.*

*Helping our sons to develop positive relationships requires conscious modeling on our part. How we believe, trust in, and speak about our relationship with God, how we speak to and deal with conflicts between each other, and how we speak about and deal with the many hurdles and obstacles in our lives all provide examples of the relationships, attitude, and behaviors that we want them to develop.*

My wife and I have learned that the relationship between us, as husband and wife; the relationship between each of us and each of our sons; the relationship between our sons and each other; the relationship between us and our sons' teachers; and the relationship between our sons and their teachers can be better understood, and possibly strengthened, through understanding personality types.

As you go through each of the Personality Type tables, you may discover that you and your children frequently fall somewhere in the middle. Think in terms of the most common traits seen in each of you. Also, keep in mind that we often demonstrate personality traits at our jobs or at school which may be very different from those we demonstrate at home or with friends.



For example, when I speak to parents, teachers, and students, I demonstrate highly extraverted personality traits (i.e., I talk a lot, I approach people and initiate conversations, and I initiate relationships). However, my natural personality is highly introverted (i.e., I generally do not initiate conversations with strangers, I am uncomfortable at social events and in large gatherings, and I offer personal opinions only when asked).

My wife, on the other hand, is highly extraverted in social situations (i.e., life of the party, easily talks to and gets to know others, and initiates conversations). In professional situations, she is much more introverted (i.e., offers opinions only when brought into the discussion and is uncomfortable speaking in front of large groups).

As you review the Personality Type tables consider the following:

- Identify the personality traits you demonstrate at work or in work-related situations as opposed to the personality traits you demonstrate around family and friends.



- Identify the personality traits your children demonstrate at home as opposed to the personality traits they demonstrate in their classrooms, in their special interest or extracurricular activities, and with friends.

Understanding the uniqueness of each of your children's personalities will help you strengthen the relationship and build the bridge of communication with and between each child. No longer will you be able to say, "I do not understand you!" Your challenge will now be, "Now that I understand you, what am I going to do to help us communicate better?"

Your children's personality types will affect the relationships they develop with teachers and how well they function within their classrooms. Consider the following:

*Your child is a highly-introverted personality type. She does not easily participate in classroom discussions unless she feels comfortable and supported by other students. She learns best when working independently in a quiet environment where discussions are held after an initial phase of quiet time.*

*However, in her classroom, the teacher is a highly-extraverted personality type who talks constantly. She believes that it is important for students to work in groups and talk a lot. Students frequently express their opinions*



*by shouting. Students ridicule opinions that differ from their own and frequently laugh at or put down other students. The teacher does not feel that this should hinder anyone from participating and, in fact, bases 30 percent of the grade on classroom participation. While your daughter does well on all of the written work, she fails miserably on group work and in classroom discussions. The highly-extraverted teacher feels there is something wrong with your highly-introverted daughter. By the end of the school year, your daughter's grades have dropped, her self-esteem has been lowered, and she feels inadequate and incapable. Her peers call her a "geek" and she, in fact, agrees with her teacher, "There is something wrong with me!"*

On the following Personality Type tables, adapted from the book, *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type*, by Isabel Briggs Myers and Peter B. Myers, check or circle those personality traits which best describe you. Do the same for each of your children.

*[Note: The term Extravert is commonly referred to as Extrovert in contemporary literature on temperament. I prefer to use the term Extravert as was originally used in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.]*

A child's personality type preferences are likely to change as he or she undergoes the many physical-emotional changes from infancy through adulthood.

Parenting strategies must take into account the differences in the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school child.

