**3**

**Questions About How Grandparents Can Help Kids in School**

The pandemic spotlighted the role that grandparents and other families can play in helping students do better in school. When parents were stressed about whether they could combine their own work with their kids’ school needs, grandparents often proved to be the lifesavers.

Now that things are returning to something like normal, there are some important lessons we can learn. Here are 3 questions about the role grandparents can play in helping their grandchildren do better in school:

**What were some of the best ways grandparents supported their kids and grandkids when schools were closed?**

We now know that the pandemic was not good for most families. Suddenly everyone was trapped in the same space, with parents trying to juggle their Zoom meetings with log-ins for as many as four or five different classes a day . . . trying to help Kid 1 with long division . . . and reviewing the life cycle of a butterfly.

So one of the most important ways grandparents helped was just by relieving parents of some of that daily (and hourly, and minute-by-minute) responsibility for educating and entertaining a child. If they lived nearby, they took the kids (becoming part of a pod) so parents could work. Or they scheduled regular time on Zoom calls so they could read with their grandchild or just listen to them talk about their day.

For parents, just knowing that Nana was going to be in charge of their child at 3:00 meant they could safely schedule a work call. And for grandchildren, who often felt isolated during the shutdown, having someone besides their parents to talk to was a bright spot in what could otherwise be a bleak day

**How can we build on what we learned during COVID to keep grandparents involved with their grandchildren’s schooling?**

One of the biggest lessons from COVID is that you can build a close relationship even if you do not live nearby. Make yourself available on Zoom or Facetime at a regular time every day or every other day.

Create a book together. Write a first paragraph and send it to your grandchild. After they write the second paragraph, it comes back to you. Then encourage your child to illustrate the finished product. Look online for a photo-book company and publish your book with you and your grandchild as co-authors.

If you live nearby, make up for all those concerts and games you missed last year. There is nothing in the world as exciting for a child as knowing that Grandma or Grandpa are cheering them on from the sidelines.

Plan excursions that are just for you and your grandchildren. If you have the financial resources to travel, plan a trip. If your budget is a little tighter than that, schedule a visit to a nearby museum, get tickets to a ball game, or visit a state park. The gift of time is always the most valuable thing a grandparent can give a child.

**Can playing in the band really help our grandchild get into college?**

Playing in the band can absolutely help kids do better in school. (I actually thought about naming my book “How Band Can Get Your Kid Into Harvard and Other School Secrets Parents Need to know.”)

You can read the full explanation in **Question 43** in my book, but here’s the short version: There are actually two ways that playing in the band helps kids. One is academic and the second has to do with how schools are organized.

On the academic side, there’s plenty of evidence, dating back decades, that students who study music do better in school. Some studies show that students score about one year higher than their non-music peers in English, math, and science.

But there’s another reason why you should encourage your grandchild to play in the band. Band matters because when schools create their schedule, band drives almost everything else.

Because band is the largest class in the school, and tends to enroll the students who take advanced classes, it has to be scheduled first. And then the students in the band also find themselves in other advanced classes *together*.

It is, in other words, band is filled with exactly the kids you want in your grandchild’s class. If you are looking for a peer group filled with kids who say, “I can’t go out tonight. We have a chemistry test tomorrow,” then band is where you’ll find them.

So what does that mean for grandparents? You can be a key influence on getting . . . and keeping . . . your grandchild in the band. Look for band concerts to attend together (many are free). If you can afford to, purchase an instrument for your grandchild – it will make band a lot more fun and make the family budget a little easier.

And, of course, be a proud member of the audience. Even after hearing “Let’s Go Band” for the 47th time, there’s nothing quite as special as seeing your grandchild make music!