

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND REVIEW

October 20, 2004

ParentNet: Toward a New Kind of Adult-Teen Involvement

By Teri Jellad and Sarah Guthrie, Bainbridge High School ParentNet Chairs; Susan Wing and Amy Curran, Sakai Intermediate School ParentNet Chairs

As our children enter the middle and high school years, many of us become less involved in traditional parent volunteer activities at school and more isolated from other parents.

The challenge is to balance our kid's emergent quest for independence with our own need to keep them safe and encourage their growth and development.

Experts agree this is NOT the time for parents to be less involved. But what does parent involvement look like as our kids get older?

ParentNet, a program beginning at Bainbridge High School and Sakai Intermediate School this fall, helps refocus parent involvement from the traditional school volunteer to an emphasis on what parents can do at home to make a difference for our kids.

ParentNet meetings provide a way for parents of children at the same grade level to collaborate and learn from one another and a school liaison.

By sharing our experiences, strategies, and knowledge in a safe, positive, facilitated environment, we grow as parents and make better informed choices for our children.

On November 6, parents and school administrators will receive training in the ParentNet process; parent meetings will begin for 5th, 6th, and 9th grade parents before Thanksgiving.

Our plan is to expand ParentNet to other schools in the Bainbridge School District over the next few years. Although this is a particularly valuable process as our children enter adolescence, it is helpful in earlier years as well.

Other island schools, including Hyla Middle School and The Island School, are also launching ParentNet this fall.

We are excited with this new kind of parent involvement opportunity and are confident it will help build a more engaged parent-school community on Bainbridge.

For information on how you can become involved, please visit www.parentnetassociation.org or contact one of us.