

## Passage #3 – Parenting Education

### Extended Response Stimulus Materials:

#### Source Material #1

Guest Column: Parenting Education Should Be Mandatory

Kai Fernandez, APRN

The Freeport Times

As a nurse practitioner in a pediatric office, I had to complete extensive training and obtain a license before I could examine my first toddler. Many jobs, from barber to pilot, involve specific training. But for the most important job — raising children to be responsible adults —no training is required, and children and society suffer the results of this lack of knowledge. The time has come to correct this situation. Before they can be discharged from the hospital, first-time parents should be required to take parenting classes.

Just as we equip new drivers with a learner’s permit and instruction, we must also equip new parents with the skills they need. While some people might believe that this is the “nanny state” stepping on the rights of individuals, I am not suggesting that there is only one “correct” style of parenting. But there is basic information about infants and children that every parent should be required to know, including nutrition, health and safety, and stages of child development. Knowing how to safely bathe a baby, for example, would prevent many tragedies. Understanding that babies are crying to communicate, not to be “naughty,” helps parents adjust their expectations and their behavior.

And parent education works. According to the Centers for Disease Control, for example, the “Safe To Sleep” campaign has reduced the number of deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome by fifty percent since 1994 just by teaching parents to put babies to bed on their backs. Conversely, uninformed parenting hurts not only children, but the rest of us as well. A study by the Department of Education in England found that children whose parents use harsh or inconsistent discipline are more likely to have poor attention spans, low levels of literacy, and anti-social behavior.

In cultures where extended families are the rule, raising children is a group effort. But in the modern world, new parents are on their own. It is our obligation as a society to make sure they have the skills to do their best in this challenging job. Making parenting classes mandatory is a step towards this goal.

#### Source Material #2

Guest Column: Leave New Parents Alone

Sophie Thomas

The Freeport Times

I am writing in response to the op-ed essay by Kai Fernandez advocating mandatory parenting classes for new parents. As the mother of three, I speak with experience about raising children, and I strongly object to the idea that a random instructor knows

my family and my circumstances better than I do. Just like New York City's efforts to ban the sale of large sodas, a law requiring parents to take parenting classes is yet another example of some government bureaucrat determining what is best for the rest of us. Freedom of choice is a fundamental American value; forcing all parents to learn the same information about children conflicts with this basic right.

While it is true that there are many challenges facing new parents, there are also many ways to learn how to handle these challenges. There are shelves full of parenting books in every bookstore; enter the word "parenting" in the search box on any Web browser, and millions of resources will pop up. Then there are family members and friends to turn to for advice, as well as good old trial and error. Hospitals, community centers, and houses of worship also offer a variety of parenting classes — but the important point is that these are voluntary.

There are also the problems of funding and enforcing this proposal. Would parents have to pay for the classes themselves? This could pose a financial burden for many people. And what if parents refused to take the classes? Would they be fined? Arrested? Even if these practical aspects of mandatory parenting classes could be worked out, however, the issue of government intrusion into family lives makes it a non-starter. After all, parents have been raising children for millions of years without the government's help.

### Extended Response Prompt:

Analyze the arguments presented in the two guest columns.  
In your response, develop an argument in which you explain how one position is better supported than the other. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your argument.

Remember, the better-argued position is not necessarily the position with which you agree. This task should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.