GOOD BOOKS FOR PARENTS

Recommended by college counselors in PACIS (Philadelphia Association of Counselors in Independent Schools)
(With annotations from Amazon.Com and the faculty of the Harvard Institute on College Admission)

Smart Parents Guide to Colleges: The 20 Most Important Factors for Students and Parents When Choosing a College
Ernest L. Boyer, Paul Boyer
Petersons Inc., 1996

The book's subtitle refers to 10 important factors and they form the core of the book's 10 chapters: Getting Ready for College; Clear Writing, Clear Thinking; A Curriculum with Coherence; Finding the Best Teachers; The Creative Classroom; Resources for Learning; Extending the Campus; College Life; Services for Students; and Measuring the Outcomes. According to the cover's promotional copy, this book, "which involved a study of nearly 700 colleges, provides advice on how to evaluate schools, with specific examples of model programs on campuses nationwide, questions to ask, and things to look for as the all-important college selection process begins."

The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids
Madeline Levine; HarperCollin Publishers, 2006

A practicing psychologist in Marin County, Calif., Levine counsels troubled teens from affluent families, and finds it paradoxical that wealth—which can open the door to travel and other enriching opportunities—can produce such depressed, anxious, angry and bored teenagers. After comparing notes with colleagues, she concluded that consumerism too often substitutes for the sorts of struggles that produce thoughtful, happy people. If objects satisfy people, then they never get around to working on deeper issues. The teen years are supposed to be a time for character building. Avoiding this hard work with the distraction of consumer toys can produce "vacant," "evacuated" or "disconnected" teens, Levine believes. She is particularly useful when explaining common parenting dilemmas, like the difference between being intrusive and being involved, between laying down rules and encouraging autonomy. Alas, while Levine pitches to the educated moms, since they do much of the actual child-rearing, she may be preaching to the choir. Those who need her most may be too busy shopping to pick up such a dire-looking volume. Still, school guidance counselors should be happy to have this clear, sensitive volume on their bookshelves.

The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids
Alexandra Robbins; Hyperion, 8/06

In this engrossing anthropological study of the cult of overachieving that is prevalent in many middle- and upper-class schools, Robbins follows the lives of students from a Bethesda, Md., high school as they navigate the SAT and college application process. These students are obsessed with success, contending with illness, physical deterioration (senior Julie is losing hair over the pressure to get into Stanford), cheating (students sell a physics project to one another), obsessed parents (Frank's mother manages his time to the point of abuse) and emotional breakdowns. What matters to them is that all-important acceptance to the right name-brand school. "When teenagers inevitably look at themselves through the prism of our overachiever culture," Robbins writes, "they often come to the conclusion that no matter how much they achieve, it will never be enough." The portraits of the teens are compelling and make for an easy read. Robbins provides a series of critiques of the system, including college rankings, parental pressure, the meaninglessness of standardized testing and the push for A.P. classes. She ends with a call to action, giving suggestions on how to alleviate teens' stress and panic at how far behind they feel.

Too Much of a Good Thing: Raising Children of Character in an Indulgent Age
Daniel J. Kindlon; Miramax, 2001

Kindlon (coauthor of Raising Cain), a psychologist, has spent time surveying and speaking to parents and kids in an effort to understand teen rearing today. In addition to a scientific survey (Parenting Practices at the Millennium), which focuses on issues such as whether today's teens consider themselves spoiled, how many use drugs, how many do household chores, what families have dinner together regularly, whether all or only rich kids have cell phones, etc., Kindlon also draws on anecdotal data. As a psychologist at various schools, he has listened to parents protesting the suspension of a son accused of plagiarism the parents didn't find anything wrong with taking material off the Internet. Students have told Kindlon that their

parents are never home or, in some cases, when they expect a punishment, that their parents do nothing. Educators as well as parents and grandparents will effortlessly identify with many of the situations Kindlon describes. After all, particularly among the baby boomer generation with seemingly unlimited funds, as parents indulge themselves, it's fairly apparent that their children will do so as well. Kindlon offers sound, albeit brief, advice; in the chapter on life skills, for example, he urges parents to help their kids acquire interests that will hold their attention.

With Love and Prayers: A Headmaster Speaks to the Next Generation
F. Washington Jarvis, Peter J. Gomes; Godine, 2000

His social criticisms are sharp and opinionated, his expectations firm and unwavering, his hope unlimited. Jarvis adapts tidbits of his own life (embellished perhaps, yet always poignant and usually fun) into his broader discussions of social ennui and relaxing values--and how to avoid them. At the core of his ideology is the belief that there is more to human life than the self; people of all faiths and backgrounds can thus empathize with his demanding opinions about growing up (and living) in our time.

The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness: Five Steps to Help Kids Create and Sustain Lifelong Joy
Edward M., MD Hallowell, Ballantine Books, 2002

Hallowell, a psychiatrist, offers a five-step program to help parents increase the likelihood that their children will enjoy childhood and grow into productive and happy adults. Using interviews with parents, educators, pediatricians, psychiatrists, social workers, and children of all ages, Hallowell explores the "roots of joy." He asks basic questions of parents regarding their aspirations for their children and advises parents to look back on their own childhood, recalling positive and negative memories and taking lessons from them. Separate chapters address each of the five steps--each step leading into the next--of connection, play, practice, mastery, and recognition. Using case studies and vignettes, Hallowell emphasizes teaching children to deal with adversity and develop self-esteem and the ability to create and sustain joy, supplementing his advice with practical suggestions to implement the five-step plan in daily life. A useful resource for parents and educators.

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk
Adele Faber, Elaine Mazlish, Kimberly A. Coe; Avon Books, 1999

An excellent communication tool kit based on a series of workshops developed by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. Faber and Mazlish (coauthors of Siblings Without Rivalry) provide a step-by-step approach to improving relationships in your house. The "Reminder" pages, helpful cartoon illustrations, and excellent exercises will improve your ability as a parent to talk and problem-solve with your children.

Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation
Neil Howe, William Strauss; Vintage Books, 2000

Building on the concepts they first developed in *Generations* and *13th Gen*, Neil Howe and William Strauss now take on Generation Y, or, as they call them, the Millennials. Unlike their rather distressing portrait of the more reactive Generation X (the 13th Gen), or the negative stereotypes that abound about today's kids, this is all good news. According to Howe and Strauss, this group is poised to become the next great generation, one that will provide a more positive, group-oriented, can-do ethos. Huge in size as well as future impact, they're making a sharp break from Gen-X trends and a direct reversal of boomer youth behavior. Why? Because, as a nation, we've devoted more concern and attention their way than to any generation in, well, generations. Using their trademark paradigm, which places each generation as part of a larger historical cycle with four generations to a cycle, the authors not only describe these kids as they are now (as the first year sets off for college, the last yet to be born) but launch into projections for the future. A sampling of their potential influence in this decade: pop music will become more melodic and singable and sitcoms more melodramatic and wholesome; there will be a new emphasis on manners, modesty, and old-fashioned gender courtesies; and they'll resolve the long-standing debates about substance abuse. "They will rebel against the culture by cleaning it up, rebel against political cynicism by touting trust, rebel against individualism by stressing teamwork, rebel against adult pessimism by being upbeat, and rebel against social ennui by actually going out and getting a few things done." Scanning the future further, this hero generation will have to confront some major crises. But, for a group that has never known war or famine, will it be an opportunity or a calamity? Much of *Millennials Rising* is familiar territory rehashed, and the profiles and prophecies just too general. But it's hard to resist this hopeful vision for our children and the future.

Millennials Go To College: Strategies for a New Generation on Campus--Recruiting and Admissions, Student Life, and the Classroom.
William Strauss; AACRAO; 2003

The authors received many requests from college administrators asking them to help them anticipate how new Millennial generation is changing and will continue to change college life. What are the implications to curriculum, counseling, sports participation, community involvement, and parental interest? This 100-page handbook is designed to answer these questions and provide clear recommendations to help you transform a campus for Millennial students.

The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager,
Thomas Hine; Bard Books; 1999

Providing a historical perspective on a modern phenomenon is no easy task, but Thomas Hine has done an admirable job cataloging that ever-changing creature we know as the American teenager. Beginning with a look at colonial times and ending with the present-day burger-flipping menaces portrayed in the press, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* is a fascinating look at a culture that we take for granted in these times, yet is quite a recent development. Looking deeply at the economic and educational realities of people ages 10 through 20 over the last 300 years, Hine takes readers through a world where teens were expected to contribute greatly to their family's financial well-being; in fact, in the early years of the industrial revolution, employers would often refuse to hire the head of the household unless he had several sons to offer as part of a package deal. While the first few chapters cover 50 to 100 years in one shot, time moves less rapidly beginning with the 20th century, and each decade earns its own complete chapter. Using personal stories from revolutionary-era students, 19th-century millworkers and immigrants, and classic all-American cheerleaders from the 1950s, we're given an accurate picture of what life was really like for inexperienced kids. The evolution of modern education is closely examined and will provide a wealth of interesting insights for today's educators. What was once meant as a viable alternative to the college experience has now simply become a holding pen for teens, some who may go on to a university, some who are destined to join the ranks of the perpetually underemployed. The last chapter offers a few possible suggestions for bringing realistic change into the current system; the rest of the book is sure to provide plenty of inspiration for readers to invent their own set of educational possibilities. --

Raising Your Spirited Child: A Guide for Parents Whose Child Is More Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent, and Energetic
Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, Harper Perennial, 1992

Recently, temperament traits have come to the forefront of child development theory. In *Raising Your Spirited Child*, Mary Sheedy Kurcinka's first contribution is to redefine the "difficult child" as the "spirited" child, a child that is, as she says, MORE. Many people are leery about books that are too quick to "type" kids, but Kurcinka, a parent of a spirited child herself and a parent educator for 20 years, doesn't fall into that trap. Instead, she provides tools to understanding your own temperament as well as your child's. When you understand your temperamental matches--and your mismatches--you can better understand, work, live, socialize, and enjoy spirit in your child. By reframing challenging temperamental qualities in a positive way, and by giving readers specific tools to work with these qualities, Kurcinka has provided a book that will help all parents, especially the parents of spirited children, understand and better parent their children.

A Hope in the Unseen, An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League
Ron Suskind; Broadway Books, 1993

True story about a boy who leaves an inner city high school for Brown University. The difficulties of the transition are especially informative for all of us in the education world and those of us who are parenting college bound students.

The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values
Bowen and Schulman; Princeton University Press, 2002

Shulman and Bowen (respectively, coauthor of and collaborator on The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions) examine the relationship between college athletics and later achievement among male and female student athletes at 30 colleges and universities in this well-researched, impressively broad and thorough study. The schools are all academically selective, but compete athletically at widely varying levels, ranging from division 1A powerhouses to small conferences of liberal arts and women's colleges. Using the same database they created for their previous book, Shulman and Bowen look at college athletes who enrolled in 1951 ("thought of by

some as `the good old days' "), 1976 (after enrollment compositions changed because of the civil rights movement and increases in coeducation) and 1989 (the most recent year for which they could collect data tracing the students' college years through their early careers), identifying trends, noting changes and examining differences in the college and post-college experiences of male and female athletes. The authors identify a set of character traits common to most athletes no matter what sport they play, and present a great deal of data countering conventional myths about college sports. Additionally, Shulman and Bowen offer suggestions about how college athletics could be better run. The book presents a lot of interesting data that contradicts the conventional myths about college sports. (Athletes graduate at a higher rate than students at large; even at the big-time programs, college sports are likely to lose money for their schools.) Anyone connected to college athletics--from coaches and admissions officials to trustees--will find much of interest here. (Feb.)Forecast: Despite its textbook-like style and overwhelming detail, this volume is bound to reach large audiences, as it's been the subject of articles in the New Yorker and the New York Times, and featured on NPR.

The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College
Jacques Steinberg; Viking Press, 2002

Education reporter Steinberg presents a compelling tale in this account, told from the perspective of Ralph Figueroa, an admissions officer at Wesleyan University. Expanding on a series of articles in the New York Times, Steinberg provides an insider's look at how Figueroa and the school's admissions committee factored grades, test scores, essays, extracurricular activities and race into account as they winnowed 700 students for the class of 2004 from nearly 7,000 applicants. Using real names, applications and interviews, Steinberg follows six applicants of varying backgrounds from their first encounter with Figueroa to their final acceptance or rejection. Although not a how-to book per se, Steinberg's work does include helpful advice, such as "there's no way to outthink this process" and "if you've got something you want to write, then write it the way you want." Steinberg portrays Figueroa and the other admissions officers as doing the best they can to give each applicant a fair assessment, despite their responsibility for 1,500 of them. Wesleyan's high standards e.g., a 1350 combined score on the SAT may put some readers off, but the process that Steinberg describes is similar at most private colleges and universities.

Keeping School: Letters to Families from the Principals of Two Small Schools
Ted Sizer; Beacon Press; 2004

Education reformers Deborah Meier, Theodore Sizer, and Nancy Sizer have published books that are acknowledged classics of education writing—books that have literally helped shape a movement centered on small schools, community, and alternative visions of teaching and learning. But as school principals, all three have also done another kind of writing, as well. Every week as principles they wrote short essays in their schools' newsletters to families. Sharp and accessible but intellectually ambitious, these little essays talk about everything from homework to discipline, from academic expectations to reading for pleasure. Keeping School collects the best of these gems from the two schools the authors have most recently run: an urban public elementary school in Boston, and an exurban charter secondary school thirty miles west in Devens, Massachusetts. There could be no better portrait of the kind of small school that Meier and the Sizers advocate—and the values behind them—than these elegant, thoughtful, intimate letters. They are organized around the themes of Authority, Community, Learning, and Standards, and the writers, who have been friends and colleagues for years, frame them with new essays on those larger topics

In Schools We Trust: Creating Communities of Learning in an Era of Testing and Standardization
Deborah Meier; Beacon Press; 2002

While policy makers agree that big city public schools are failing to meet children's needs, their solutions usually involve shifting responsibility to distant figures chancellors, mayors and relying on abstract performance evaluation tools, like standardized tests. From her own experience designing and operating various alternative public schools, progressive educator Meier (The Power of Their Ideas) has a different assessment: schools must be smaller, more self-governed and places of choice, so kids and their families feel they are truly part of these communities of learning. Students need to spend more time around adults who are doing adult work, which builds familiarity, trust and respect, as well as exposure to new skills. Families also need to be brought into the mix, so they're comfortable with the school, the teachers and the educational agenda. Teachers need time and space to develop collegial relations with each other, both to improve educational practices and to model responsible critical behavior for students. According to Meier, the currently fashionable educational panacea increased standardized testing is either irrelevant to academic excellence or an actual deterrent, as teachers teach to the test and ignore everything that's not on it. Likewise, teaching children test-taking techniques trains them to distrust their own intuition about what's right or wrong. Reliance on test results (which are largely meaningless,

Meier says) denies parents' and teachers' ability to assess learning. This is a passionate, jargon-free plea for a rerouting of educational reform, sure to energize committed parents, progressive educators and maybe even a politician or two.

The Pressured Child: Helping Your Child Find Success in School and Life
Michael Thompson, Teresa Barker; Ballantine Books; 2003

Few questions have been uttered more frequently by parents than "How was school today?" And few questions have been met with more blank stares, shrugs, lies or unhappy truths. In this compelling follow-up to the now-classic *Mom, They're Teasing Me*, Thompson attempts to put parents "back in touch with the gritty reality of being a child in school," prompting them to recall their own school memories: was it boring, scary, exciting or painful? This, Thompson believes, will help them better comprehend their children's experiences and support them more effectively. Despite the title, Thompson says this book is for "the pressured parent, which is every loving parent, no matter what kind of student your child is." With the demands of standardized tests, the fear of failing school systems and baggage from their own academic pasts, Thompson says, parents' concern about their children's educational welfare is ballooning into panic. As Thompson shadows several students from diverse backgrounds through their school days, a rather mundane—but significant—reality emerges: school is a difficult, unavoidable part of life, but parents can help by being calm, empathic and engaged. Though short on practical strategies, the book sheds light on what goes on behind classroom doors and urges parents to "value the truth of a child's experiences."

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls (Ballantine Reader's Circle)
Mary Pipher, Ballantine Books; 1995

Why are more American adolescent girls prey to depression, eating disorders, addictions, and suicide attempts than ever before? According to Dr. Mary Pipher, a clinical psychologist who has treated girls for more than twenty years, we live in a look-obsessed, media-saturated, "girl-poisoning" culture. Despite the advances of feminism, escalating levels of sexism and violence--from undervalued intelligence to sexual harassment in elementary school--cause girls to stifle their creative spirit and natural impulses, which, ultimately, destroys their self-esteem. Yet girls often blame themselves or their families for this "problem with no name" instead of looking at the world around them. Here, for the first time, are girls' unmuted voices from the front lines of adolescence, personal and painfully honest. By laying bare their harsh day-to-day reality, **Reviving Ophelia** issues a call to arms and offers parents compassion, strength, and strategies with which to revive these Ophelias' lost sense of self.

Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys (Ballantine Reader's Circle)
Daniel J. Kindlon, Michael Thompson, Dan Kindlon, Teresa Barker; Ballantine Books; 2000

Dan Kindlon, Ph.D., and Michael Thompson, Ph.D., two of the country's leading child psychologists, share what they have learned in more then thirty-five years of combined experience working with boys and their families. They reveal a nation of boys who are hurting-sad, afraid, angry, and silent. Statistics point to an alarming number of young boys at high risk for suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, violence, and loneliness. Kindlon and Thompson set out to answer this basic, crucial question: What do boys need that they are not getting? They illuminate the forces that threaten our boys, teaching them to believe that "cool" equals macho strength and stoicism. Cutting through outdated theories of "mother blame," "boy biology," and "testosterone," Kindlon and Thompson shed light on the destructive emotional training our boys receive-the emotional miseducation of boys. Through moving case studies and cutting-edge research, **Raising Cain** paints a portrait of boys systematically steered away from their emotional lives by adults and the peer "culture of cruelty"-boys who receive little encouragement to develop qualities such as compassion, sensitivity, and warmth. The good news is that this doesn't have to happen. There is much we can do to prevent it. Powerfully written and deeply felt, **Raising Cain** will forever change the way we see our sons and will transform the way we help them to become happy fulfilled young men.

Colleges Unranked
Lloyd Thacker, Harvard University Press, 2005

In this book, edited by a veteran admissions counselor, a passionate advocate for students, the presidents and admission deans of leading colleges and universities--like Dartmouth, Vanderbilt, Harvard--remind readers that college choice and admission are a matter of fit, not of winning a prize, and that many colleges are "good" in different ways. They call for bold changes in admissions policies and application strategies, to help both colleges and applicants to rediscover what college is really for. It's not just a ticket to financial success, but a once-in-a-lifetime chance to explore new worlds of knowledge.

College Rankings Exposed: The Art of Getting a Quality Education in the 21st Century
Paul Boyer
Peterson's, Inc, July 2003

Driven by fears of a competitive job market, thousands of American families consult college-ranking publications such as the one introduced in 1983 by U.S. News and World Report for supposedly objective guidance in choosing the best college education. Yet most education professionals discredit these listings, even those who benefit from their position in these hierarchies of quality. Higher education consultant Boyer breaks the public silence around the college ranking system. Drawing upon the expertise of college presidents and admissions deans, he adroitly cuts through the hype of the college ranking game: the deceptive numbers, the distortions of truth and the misleading, often subjective information at their core. "Americans need not be prisoners of any survey," he believes, and he uses his considerable experience and insight to explain how to really identify a quality college education. Boyer provides useful strategies on how to sort through information on the hundreds of fine colleges and universities to find the right fit for a particular student. He articulates the "five criteria for a quality education," which include the importance of general education; a commitment to writing, speaking and critical thinking skills; a commitment to active learning; opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom; and the presence of a diverse, intellectually active and respectful community. In a no-frills manner, Boyer reminds readers there are many paths to success, noting that American education is large and diverse, as befits a large and diverse democratic society. *Publisher's Weekly*

Almost Grown: Launching Your Child from High School to College

Patricia Pasick, W. W. Norton & Company; 2nd edition (March 1, 1998)

A time of tumult, your children's transition from high school to college can also be a time of growth. This book shows you how. Almost Grown is a guide for parents to the final years of high school and first years of college, offering intelligent counsel not only in practical issues such as developing a college search plan or handling questions of money, sex, and substance abuse, but also in the psychological issues that arise during this family transition. Writing as both psychologist and parent, Patricia Pasick tackles the key question of how mothers and fathers can foster adolescents' growth and autonomy while maintaining family connections and stability. She also explores the unexpected: the impact of the changing family on younger siblings, the benefits and frustrations of college students' returning home, the challenges and opportunities that nontraditional families face, and more. Pasick delves into another critical yet underplayed aspect of the college transition: how parents' lives change. Almost Grown guides readers through this major step in adult development and new start to adult partnerships. Almost Grown contains advice from high school and college admissions counselors across the country and, at the heart of the book, stories of personal experience from parents and adolescents who are making, or have made, the transition.

Harvard Schmarvard: Getting Beyond the Ivy League to the College that is Best for You
Jay Mathews
Prima Lifestyles; 1st edition (February 25, 2003)

This book gives us a welcome and helpful way of looking at college and university rankings. Jay Mathews offers refreshing insights into the college admissions process and makes the important point that getting into the 'best' college is less important than choosing the college that *brings out the best* in every student. — Richard W. Riley, former U.S. Secretary of Education

A Parent's Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings
Kenneth R. Ginsburg; American Academy of Pediatrics, 10/06

Today's children face a great deal of stress — academic performance, heavy scheduling, high achievement standards, media messages, peer pressures, family tension. Without healthier solutions, they often cope by talking back, giving up, or indulging in unhealthy behaviors. Show your child how to bounce back — and THRIVE — with coping strategies from one of the nation's foremost experts in adolescent medicine.

Less Stress, More Success: A New Approach to Guiding Your Teen Through College Admissions and Beyond
Marilee Jones, Kenneth R. Ginsburg, American Academy of Pediatrics, 9/06

Is your teenager stressing over college admittance? Are you? Co-written by a top college admissions dean and a leading pediatrician, this first-of-its-kind book delivers strategies for surviving the admissions process while strengthening parent-child relationships, managing the stress of applying to college, and building resilience to meet challenges today and in the future. *Less Stress, More Success* is just what parents and teens need to thrive during this important rite of passage into adulthood.

The Cereal Murders
Diana Mott Davidson; Bantam Books; 1994

Denver caterer Goldy Bear (Catering to Nobody, 1990, etc.) is once again up to her oven-mitts in murder, this time when Elk Park Prep's valedictorian is found swinging from an extension cord after the College Advisory Dinner. In quick succession: Goldy's son Arch finds a rattlesnake strung up in his school locker; a poisonous spider nips Goldy; their front steps are vandalized (ditto the chimney); an anonymous caller zeroes in on them; and Elk Park's incorruptible French teacher is strangled. Furthermore, Julian, Goldy's boarder and Elk Park's salutatorian, is beginning to panic, while several other students and their overly competitive parents are angling for a better class ranking--and a better crack at the college of their choice. There'll be another murder, plus bookstore mayhem, before Goldy and her cop boyfriend Tom Schulz wrap things up and plot their own marriage. The Virginia Rich crowd will gobble it up, though they'll be asked to swallow a lot of romance, too. Not the best plotting, for sure, but the permanent cast--Goldy, Julian, Tom, and Goldy's ex- husband's other ex-wife--are extremely likable. (Eleven recipes included).

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