

# Ask the Educator



JOSEPH HADDAD

## Education column will run 13 weeks

With this edition we begin 13 columns on problems in education by Joseph Haddad, 41, who is director of special education in a suburban school district.

Haddad's candid and hard-hitting columns are written from his background in mental health, special education, administration and consultation.

He will answer questions of general interest but cannot answer individual queries. Letters may be sent to him care of Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012.

Haddad says his goal is "to assist educators, parents and students in shaping public education into a more effective, responsive public institution."

A native of Detroit, he earned a BS degree with a teaching certificate at Wayne State University, where he later earned a master of social work degree specializing in psychiatric social work and school social work.

For three years he worked for the Oakland County Juvenile Court as a probation officer and counselor.

Haddad has been a general science teacher in a junior high school, a school social worker and, since 1969, director of special education in two suburban districts.

# Tummy ache time

Q. My seven-year-old first-grader often complains of tummy aches in the morning. He is also a whiner and just won't dress himself. It seems that we have a scene several mornings a week before I can get him dressed and out the door.

A. I have spent many hours reasoning with him and trying to help him with this problem. Our pediatrician says that he is perfectly healthy. My husband's solution would be to spank our son and send him on his way.

He is our youngest child and I won't agree to such harshness. Things are not getting any better.

What do you suggest? Mrs. L.L. A. Your son's morning complaints are more common than you know. Don't forget that this is his first year of a full day school.

For many children, the shift from half to full days reawakens their anxiety about being separated from the safety and protection of mother and home. Some youngsters resist growing up and becoming independent.

It really isn't all that much fun to be little. It is hard work to be brave and tackle new experiences almost daily. Some parents, likewise, feel badly about their innocent young ones leaving on that long journey which ends only with adulthood.

Sometimes we communicate our insecurities in these matters to our children in various ways. For example, do we need to sit and hold discussions

about getting dressed and going off to school?

By doing so we imply to the child that perhaps it is risky business or perhaps it is a debatable activity that one can opt out of if one wishes if one can just persuade mother.

I DISAGREE with your husband's approach. It is simply unnecessary and could be counter-productive. A spanking could generate feelings of failure, fear and anger.

His instincts, however, tell him to be firm in this matter. In this regard he is correct. Once you have assured yourself of your child's good health by consulting your physician, then you must be firm, kind, but not sympathetic to his morning complaints.

Dress him if you must, but don't discuss, debate, or agonize with him over going to school. Grit your teeth and push him out the door in silence if that is what must occur.

This problem is a temporary one in almost 100 per cent of the cases with which I am familiar. Actually, once the child arrives at school and enters into activities, all the aches and pains disappear.

If you need moral support in this project, ask for a meeting with your local school social worker. He can be contacted through your principal or local director of special education.



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