



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

University of Wollongong  
**Research Online**

---

Faculty of Social Sciences - Papers

Faculty of Social Sciences

---

2015

# What should be taught by teachers, and what by parents?

Pauline Lysaght

*University of Wollongong*, pauline@uow.edu.au

---

## Publication Details

Lysaght, P. (2015). What should be taught by teachers, and what by parents?. *The Conversation*, 27 January 1-3.

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library:  
research-pubs@uow.edu.au

---

# What should be taught by teachers, and what by parents?

## **Abstract**

Who taught you to tell the time, to tie your shoelaces or to write your name? I have memories of my parents and teachers taking a hand in helping me to learn these skills as a small child. But what about more challenging tasks - who taught you to analyse a poem or to solve equations? Mr Williamson, my favourite teacher, taught the principles of algebra to our class and patiently went over the information until it started to make some sense to me. I also remember my parents encouraging me to practise what I was learning in class and to try different approaches when the first solution didn't work. So, who was doing the teaching in this instance - Mr Williamson or my parents? I would say both. Mr Williamson had the knowledge and expertise that allowed him to present complex information in ways that matched my capacity for learning. My parents, on the other hand, knew that I would benefit from learning to persist in the face of difficult problems.

## **Keywords**

be, taught, should, teachers, parents

## **Disciplines**

Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

## **Publication Details**

Lysaght, P. (2015). What should be taught by teachers, and what by parents?. *The Conversation*, 27 January 1-3.

✉ Get our newsletter ✕

# THE CONVERSATION

## What should be taught by teachers, and what by parents?

January 27, 2015 6.28am AEDT

**Pauline Lysaght**

Associate Director Early Start , University of Wollongong



Telling the time, using a knife and fork, manners: what should be taught in the home and what in the school? Shutterstock

Who taught you to tell the time, to tie your shoelaces or to write your name? I have memories of my parents and teachers taking a hand in helping me to learn these skills as a small child. But what about more challenging tasks - who taught you to analyse a poem or to solve equations?

Mr Williamson, my favourite teacher, taught the principles of algebra to our class and patiently went over the information until it started to make some sense to me. I also remember my parents encouraging me to practise what I was learning in class and to try different approaches when the first solution didn't work. So, who was doing the teaching in this instance - Mr Williamson or my parents?

I would say both. Mr Williamson had the knowledge and expertise that allowed him to present complex information in ways that matched my capacity for learning. My parents, on the other hand, knew that I would benefit from learning to persist in the face of difficult problems.

### What lessons are the primary responsibility of the home?

Parents are typically a child's first teachers. Initially, their focus is on helping very young

children to communicate and, with age, to become increasingly independent, encouraging physical accomplishments such as walking and catching a ball, holding a cup and using cutlery.

Parents are also instrumental in teaching a range of social skills, including taking turns, greeting others and remembering to say “please” and “thank you”.

Information related to personal hygiene and sex education is also based in the home. Parents are regarded as important role models in terms of the ensuing behaviour of their children.

A stimulating home learning environment in which the value of education is reinforced by parents, and in which educational resources that support learning are available, is integral to the intellectual and social development of children.

While parents may be responsible for establishing a knowledge base in these and other areas, and encouraging related behaviours, teachers are influential in reinforcing and extending these behaviours within the school context.

With children spending six hours each day at school, teachers in the classroom actively encourage many behaviours that have been prompted within the home, such as expectations of fair play and respect for others.

In other instances, such as a knowledge of the body and an understanding of sexuality, the curriculum provides detailed information and opportunities for investigation and discussion that extend children’s understandings in the formal environment of the school.

## What should we expect our children to learn at school?

Instruction in the three Rs as well as teaching across areas specified by the national curriculum are key items for teachers: for example, learning to read and write, to develop skills in numeracy, to gain an appreciation of the arts and sciences, and to understand our place in the world from the perspectives of other people’s values and beliefs.

However, the expertise of teachers goes well beyond simply knowing which information to present to students. Good teachers understand how to pace their teaching to match the learning trajectory of their students and how to encourage their students to go beyond their current capacity and to fulfil their potential.

## Are there other settings in which teaching and learning takes place?

The answer is undoubtedly “yes”. We learn in many different locations in addition to the home and school and our teachers encompass a wide variety of people. Teaching and learning not only involve more players than we may typically imagine but, as individuals, we also contribute to what others learn.



Parents and community members contribute to the attitudes, expectations and aspirations of children. These factors frequently determine the extent to which students will engage in the learning opportunities that are provided in a classroom setting. But the expertise of teachers and their work in the classroom is pivotal in terms of children’s education and



Bunny ears: teachers or parents?

Woodleywonderworks, CC BY

Manners: teachers or parents? development.

Jodi Michelle, CC BY

In addition to academic achievement, formal education supports the development of capacities that include self-regulation, self-confidence, resilience, determination and aspirations for the future, essential skills that we all encourage for success in the 21st century.

While both parents and teachers are influential, albeit in different ways, as far as children's learning is concerned, education is a shared responsibility. Schools, friends, families and communities all play unique but complementary roles.



Parenting