



## DOUG ROSS: College life offers an education in parenting



APRIL 12, 2013 12:00 AM • [DOUG ROSS DOUG.ROSS@NWI.COM](mailto:DOUG.ROSS@NWI.COM), (219) 548-4360 OR (219) 933-3357

It's often said that parents should be more involved in their children's education. I agree. But at the college level?

Indiana State University President Dan Bradley told The Times Editorial Board late last year that ISU freshmen are now asked to sign privacy waivers to allow university officials to talk to parents about their students and their coursework.

Some parents even want to talk with professors, the way they met with grade school teachers. It's hard for many of us to

fathom.

The "Are We Too Close to Our Kids?" article in the January issue of AARP Magazine seemed to indicate that parents of young adults are extending the transition to adulthood, with young adults more likely to stay with their parents, more likely to communicate often with their parents, even more likely to have deep, meaningful discussions with their parents.

So when do kids grow up? And how should parents get them to that point?

I asked Laura Wynn, executive director and founder of the Gary-based Indiana Parenting Institute, to share her perspective.

"Parenting, first of all, is a lifelong experience," she said. "It is not something that ends because your kid goes to college or graduates from high school."

But parenting does change, transitioning from disciplinarian to consultant.

I told Wynn college can offer adulthood with training wheels. Residential colleges, especially, offer nurturing without smothering. Students have support systems in case they need them.

Being dumped on a large campus could be daunting without a tether to home, but today's cellphones help families stay more connected.

So how intrusive should parents of college students be? Isn't a parent's job to prepare children for adulthood?

Wynn suggests children should be eased across that threshold to adulthood, not shoved across.

"As freshmen, and you're releasing your child to strangers, I don't see anything wrong" with checking to make sure your children are adjusting well to college life. After that, though, parents should "respect that independence that their children have gained."

Wynn told of when her daughter was a college freshman. After the first semester, when Wynn found her daughter was adjusting well, "that's when you kind of step back and let go into that role you have taught them."

Want to learn more about parenting? You're in luck. The Indiana Parenting Institute is hosting its annual parenting fair 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 20 at The U.S. Steel Yard (the RailCats stadium). It's a good time for

parents and their children to learn more about childhood and parenting in a fun atmosphere.