

Parental Tips for the New School Year

This week thousands of excited students returned to the classroom to begin nine months of academic learning. The most important individuals who will help students truly have a successful school year are parents. Teachers can only work with what parents are presenting to them. The right attitude, interest in learning, discipline, respect, determination, are qualities that are first and best taught in the home. Therefore, in this article, I will give a few parental tips to help students have a successful school year.

PREPARE THE EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Parents are responsible for providing an environment that will facilitate learning. A good home provides love, encouragement, stimulation, and emotional security. The absence of hostility, on-going emotional pain, rage, and addictive behavior (gambling, alcohol, illegal drugs) is key to producing a wholesome environment that stimulates learning.

More importantly, what a parent says to a child can influence behavior. Each morning before the child goes to school let the last words parents speak be positive and proactive. For example “Have a beautiful day,” or “I know you will do your best today,” or “I cannot wait until you come home to hear how exciting your day was.” These positive words will drive a positive behavior. It is called positive reinforcement. On the other hand, when the last words the child hears before going to school are negative, the chances of the child behaving badly in school are greater. For example: “Don’t embarrass me today.” Or “I don’t want to hear anything bad about you today,” or “Don’t do anything foolish today.” These last words most likely will drive negative behavior. This is negative reinforcement. Leave something positive on the child’s mind. Let your words express confidence in the child even if you are not happy with your child’s behavior. If the child constantly hears negative words from the significant others in her life, failure is almost assured. When the child fails, the parent then says: “See I told you so.” Parents usually refuse to admit that they actually set up their children to fail. Speak positively to your children each day. Proverbs 25:11 states: “A well-spoken word at just the right moment is like golden apples in settings of silver.”

PRAISE ANY IMPROVEMENT

One of the great things parents can do to stimulate interest in learning in a failing child or a child who is not making “As” and “Bs” is to remember to praise any growth, no matter how small the increment. For example, if the child was struggling with a “D” grade in mathematics during a school year and one day brings home a grade of “C”, praise the child. That is a great improvement. Some parents mistakenly do not praise this “small” improvement because they only consider improvement to be when the child makes an “A.” Hence the parent’s attitude discourages the child. It is really not all that important that your child be a straight “A” student. What is really important is for your child to do his or her best. I believe that all students, with the right stimulation and teaching techniques, can make good grades in school (C+ to A). This Bible text might provide insight. Ecclesiastes 11:4 “Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest.”

PROVIDE THE STUCTURE

Parents, it is imperative that you provide a home with the proper structure to make it conducive for learning. Establish sensible bed times. Research now tells us that teenagers need at least 9.2 hours of sleep a night but will thrive best on 10 to 12 hours. Therefore, allowing your children to stay up as long as they want to is not healthy. Watching a late moving after finishing homework at 10:00 p.m. is not wise. It impacts the immune system and makes the brain sluggish. Remember, do not ask your children whether they want to sleep as a way to get them to bed. Let your children understand that bed time and sleepiness are two different things. Set the time to go to bed without taking into consideration whether your children are sleepy.

Provide a nutritious breakfast. Focus on complex carbohydrates and protein. Avoid as far as possible your child buying \$1.99 breakfast (grits and egg) each morning. It is your responsibility to make sure your children have a great blast off for the day. Provide them with a solid breakfast every morning. For example choose from the following: potatoes, eggs, whole grain cereal, whole grain grits, oatmeal, almond milk, spinach, orange, melon, whole grain waffles or pancakes. Then make sure your children get a good vitamin and mineral supplement. Students need a good breakfast to do well in their classes. When students try to learn and have nothing in their stomach, they will have a lot of trouble succeeding.

Work along with your children to create a daily schedule. The schedule includes what they will do when they arrive home after school until bed time. Make sure after school time includes a short rest or chill-out time, daily chores, and homework. If your children have two to three hours slated for homework assignment, allow them to take a break every thirty to forty-five minutes.

Randomly check their school bags and school books. Look for neatness, complete or incomplete assignments, and how they maintain their textbooks. Look at test/exam scores, etc.

Parents, I encourage you to attend parents and teachers meetings and report card days. You are your children's primary caregivers. Your interest in these events also encourages them. Also, you need to dialogue with the teachers. The success of your children is a collaborative effort between parents and teachers. Get involved.

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