



Building parent-school partnerships

WORDS Michael Grose

Make this year your child's best ever at school

A new school year means a clean slate for students. Here are 7 ideas to help you make the most of the fresh start and make this year your child's best year ever at school

A new school year means a fresh start for students. Regardless of your child's performance last year, they start school with a clean slate. A break offers students the chance to begin new habits and adopt new behaviours. Here are five ideas to help you make the most of the fresh start and make this year your child's best year ever year at school:

1 Commit to your child going to school every day on time

One of the most important things you can do to ensure your child has a bright future is to make sure he or she goes to school every day – and gets there on time. Kids spend more time asleep than at school, so we need to maximise every day to get full value.

2 Help kids start each day well

A good night's sleep, a healthy breakfast and some words of encouragement from you will help set a positive tone for a day of learning. This may mean that you adjust your morning routine so that kids have plenty of time get up, eat and get ready for the day.

3 Establish work & study habits

The most successful students are those that develop regular study habits that suit their lifestyle, their study style and their school's expectations. Find out the work expectations from your child's or young person's school

and help them establish a work routine that matches.

4 Make sure your child gets enough sleep

Many children and young people are sleep-deprived, which impacts on their wellbeing and their learning. A good night's sleep consolidates learning, as well as assisting future learning. Children need between 10-12 hours of sleep each day, while teens need a minimum of nine hours. Help kids get sufficient sleep by having a regular bedtime and get-up time each day. Have a 45-minute wind-down time each night, and remove screens and mobile phones from bedrooms.

5 Insist kids exercise

The old saying about 'a healthy body and a healthy mind' is so true. Exercise releases the chemicals needed for learning and wellbeing. Yet kids today get less exercise than those of past generations, which is an impediment to learning and mental health. Health professionals recommend a minimum of 60 minutes of exercise per day for kids of all ages. Encourage your child to play sport; promote free and active play and look for ways to make moving part of their daily lives.

6 Focus on being friendly

Schools are very social places requiring kids to negotiate many different social situations

each day. Yet we often only focus on academic learning. There are strong links between social success, and academic success and wellbeing. Encourage kids to be open and tolerant; to be friendly; to be sensitive to others; to be involved in plenty of activities and to be social risk-takers. These are all characteristics of socially successful kids. At the same time discourage anti-social behaviours such as over-competitiveness, self-centredness and lack of sharing.

7 Develop self-help skills

Successful students are often well organised, self-directed and self-motivated. Personal organisation seems to come more naturally to girls than boys, however both genders benefit from coaching in this important area. You can foster organisational skills and self-direction by developing simple, age-appropriate self-help skills related to their every day lives. Such skills as making lunches, packing school bags, and organising after school schedules can be great lessons that impact on how kids perform at school.

At the start of the school year kids are likely to adopt changes than at any other time. Make the most of the opportunity by focusing on two or three areas to really focus on and you'll find that the rest will fall into place.



Want more ideas to help you raise confident kids and resilient young people? Subscribe to Happy Kids newsletter, my **FREE** weekly email parenting guide at parentingideas.com.au. You'll be so glad you did.

