

# Starting Off the School Year Right!



## *Getting to Know You*

We will have our Washington Academy Parent Orientation on Thursday, September 4. This is a great way to learn more about the curriculum for your child's new grade. It's also one of the first opportunities to start getting to know your child's teacher(s) and other school staff. The better you know the school and how it operates, the more likely your child will be to have a productive and positive school experience. As the year goes on, it is important to let the teacher know that you appreciate feedback on your child's progress—both positive and negative. Also, be sure to alert the teacher to anything out of the ordinary (a move, death in the family, divorce, etc.) that's going on with your child or family.

## *Ease Anxieties*

While some children are excited to begin a new school year, others dread the first day of school because they're reminded of homework, assignments and most importantly, tests. Starting a new grade or moving to a new school can be emotional. But, don't let emotions get the best of you or your child. As the parent, take the lead with a calm, encouraging attitude and provide a home environment where your child feels safe to share failures, fears and disappointment as well as their successes. The more prepared and competent your child feels, the easier the transition will be. Make sure your child has the materials they need, knows where their bus stop is, has reviewed their schedule, etc. Each day, remind your child where he will go after school, whether it's home, to an extracurricular activity, or to a babysitter.

## *Homework*

Every child needs a set place to study and complete homework. This area should be clutter free, well lit and quiet. It's important to keep a positive attitude about homework. Instead of focusing on what children "have to do", emphasize what they "get to learn". Your role is to support your child's efforts - not to do their homework for them. Make sure they have their assignments. Answer questions. Review completed homework. If your child becomes overwhelmed, help break down the work into easily accomplished tasks. And finally, praise them for a job well done!

## *Kids (and Parents) Love Routines*

Create a system for easy morning sendoffs. If you and the kids are frantic every morning, racing around finding homework, backpacks, and extra gym socks, everyone will be stressed. Work out a system for organizing books, homework, clothing, and even lunch the night before. Make sure everyone gets up in the morning in plenty of time to dress, eat, and gather their things for the day. Set aside a specific time for studying every night. Discuss with your child what time of day would work best. Right after school? Just before dinner? If homework has already been completed, have the child use study time for reading or reviewing problem areas. Make sure your child's bedtime affords them a good night's sleep. Depending on the individual, school-age children can need anywhere from 8-10 hours of sleep each night to be mentally and physically well-rested.

## *Paperwork*

Have an in/out box for all the important paperwork that you need to fill out and return to school--medical forms, emergency cards, book and supply order forms, volunteer sign-up sheets, etc. Deposit all the papers, artwork and other keepsakes that come home each day into a folder, binder or "treasure box."

*Have a great year!*

# Starting Off the School Year Right!

(Part 2)



## *Create High Expectations*

To learn, children must believe that they can learn. As the parent, you are the most important adult in your child's life. The feedback you give your child—what you say and do about his or her abilities—will have a lasting impact on your child's self-confidence. Be encouraging and praise your child for the amount of effort that he puts into a project. It is the child's effort and commitment to doing his best that ensures success.

## *Schools + Communities = Success*

To be effective, schools need the support of parents and the community. You can help in many ways. It could be as simple as talking with your child each day about what he's learned. Ask your child about the teacher and the class, discuss how you look forward to teacher-parent conferences, know when tests are scheduled and papers are due and then ask about outcomes. Just by asking and paying attention, you send a message that you think school is very important. Also, check our calendar to find out key dates during the year when there will be opportunities for you to participate in school events. Mark your family calendar now to hold those dates. But, there are many more ways you can support our school. Volunteer a few hours a week in the classroom. Offer to speak to your child's class (or others) about a special hobby or area of expertise. Join the PTO to ensure that you have a voice in the work of our school. Offer to help with a special school project. For academic achievement, nothing beats the three-way relationship of parent, teacher, and student.

## *Plan Healthy Meals*

Keep nutritious food on hand for breakfast. Students who eat breakfast focus better in class, perform better on tests, behave better, and are more likely to maintain a healthy weight. Make sure to get a copy of the school menu and pack lunch on days the school serves meals your child doesn't like. Limit sugary soft drinks, drink boxes and junk food with low nutritional value, such as potato chips. In addition to fruits and vegetables, nuts, whole-wheat crackers and low-fat cheese make healthy snacks.

## *Reading Can Be Contagious*

Make reading a habit in your home, for both you and your child. While they still enjoy it, read to your child each night. Even children who can read themselves, enjoy being read to. Ask your child to read to you. For older children, set 30 minutes aside each night for family reading time when everyone reads together silently. Keep plenty of reading materials available—books, magazines and newspapers.

## *Bullying*

Bullying is not tolerated at our school; but that does not mean that we can guarantee that your child will never have a problem. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends telling children to look the bully in the eye, stay calm, and stand tall. Teach children to respond to bullying by saying, "I don't like what you are doing," or "Please do not talk to me like that." Tell your child to walk away from a bully and immediately seek adult support.

## *Electronics*

Limit television and computer games. This is an old song you've heard before! No, they're not all bad. Still, it's important to set limits for these habits that may have grown lax over the summer. There's no reason to deprive the kids, but instead participate in family walks and outdoor games. Even a 15-minute bike ride with the kids or a short game of catch helps relax and de-stress everyone. Make sure the family sits down to supper every night - or as often as manageable. With the television off!