

Parents, Teachers Can Encourage Kids to Make School A Top Priority

by Jim Slempp

AS a new school year is about to begin, it is an opportune time for parents to talk to their children about making school their No. 1 job this year.

Educators need to place emphasis on the necessity to make school the top priority in each student's life. In order to do this, parents and educators must make a cooperative effort to assist children in prioritizing the demands on their time and attention.

Knowing that we all want the best for our children, educators ask for the support and cooperation of parents in placing emphasis on the job that needs to be done. School is the primary opportunity before our children. We need to work together to turn this opportunity into a year of achievement. Doing so requires we meet four goals:

First of all, schools and parents need to work together to ensure our expectations for our children are consistent with the job they are able to do. This does not mean we lower our standards. It means we expect the very best from each child—the best effort, the very best performance, the very best finished product—in keeping with the realistic goal for that individual child. In meeting this goal, it is helpful for parents not to focus on grades. Instead of waiting for a report card or test score, ask your children some of these questions at the dinner table:

- “What did you learn today?” Don't let them off the hook if they respond, “Oh, nothing much.”
- “Did you read or hear anything today that surprised you?”
- “Which of your beliefs or assumptions about the world changed today?”

Second, let's recognize that if school is to receive the child's full attention, some other things may have to be put aside. School must come before all other jobs, activities and the multitude of demands on the child's time. Clubs, sports, private life, vacations and television all have their place in the child's life; however, they must come after the demands of school. No doubt, every child requires help and wise counseling in making choices when it comes to priorities.

Schools and parents must work together to provide the child with the support to make wise choices. It is important to help our youngsters understand that not everything has to be done this year, and that as one thing takes priority, other things may be temporarily placed on hold.

The third goal of mutual interest is that we emphasize to our children the need to adopt a healthful lifestyle. Let's encourage our students to get sufficient sleep and rest. Some children stay up too late making them less able to concentrate on their tasks at school.

Also, as a part of healthful living, we hope our students are not among the many children who are suffering from lack of food. Together we can solve some of the problems of poor eating habits and lack of good nutrition.

It is also important to arrange for your child to have a regular physical examination. This is the only way to be certain there are no physical reasons a child cannot do the best possible work at all times.

The fourth and last goal requires parents and schools to encourage seriousness of purpose in our children. Punctuality, responsibility, pride and effort are part of success in the world of work and an essential ingredient in achievement in school.

Children can learn dependability, commitment to task, and respect for the efforts of others by observing the adults around them. Adults who go about their job with an attitude of seriousness and dedication provide positive role models.

Let your children know that their success in any field or endeavor is only achieved through diligence and hard work. School, the most important assignment your child will have this year, must be ranked first if the task is to be accomplished to the level it deserves. It is the job that challenges ability, demands commitment and offers opportunity second to none. It is your child's job for the year.

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's school to discuss these important matters in greater detail. By working together, educators and parents can make school each child's first priority.

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