



You can hear it at the end of any summer. The collective sigh of relief as parents everywhere rejoice that they can now send their children back to school - and once again return to a more "normal" schedule with a little more peace and quiet.

On the other hand, the fact that your kids are returning to the classroom can mean more work for Mom or Dad, too - but it's perhaps some of the greatest and most vital work you'll ever do.

If you want your children to succeed in school, school must be important to you - not just philosophically, but *tangibly*. The best parents take ownership of their responsibility to help their child prosper in the classroom. Your career, your ministry work, your entertainment - none are any more important than the time you spend every day spurring your children to learn and succeed in school.

Now that you're fired up and ready to go, let's equip you! Here are some handy tips that will help you be an A+ parent with your children as they begin the new school year.

1. **Get Them Prepared** - Take time to make sure your children are ready for each new school year or semester by doing a little "home schooling" during the summer or school vacation times. Give your children reading assignments. Practice math drills. Have your youngsters write a story. Your children may complain at first, but they'll be that much more ready when classes begin.

2. **Supplies In Demand** - Students need the right tools to do the job. Most teachers will provide a list of what school supplies their students will need. Try to get the exact supplies the teacher asks for, not just what your children like best. The teacher probably has a good reason for the specific items requested. If you are unable to purchase any of the items for any reason - whether they're unavailable or too expensive - talk to the teacher. He or she will be happy to discuss alternatives with you. If you don't prioritize something as simple as supplies, you'll send a message to your children that school isn't that important.
  
3. **Dress Them Accordingly** - Make sure your children dress for school success. Many schools now have uniform requirements, and though they may be hard to find, get all the items your children need. If your school does not mandate uniforms, make sure your children's clothes are clean and modest. Set some reasonable rules for attire, and stick to them. Children don't need a wardrobe of expensive designer clothes, but old or outdated clothes can make a child vulnerable to self-consciousness or teasing from other children, which can be disruptive to their social and educational experience at school. Logos or slogans printed on clothing should be tasteful and appropriate - or avoided.
  
4. **Be True To Your School** - Be an enthusiastic school supporter. Take the time and get to know your children's school. Carefully read the rules, letters and notices your kids bring home. Know your child's teacher and principal by name. Participate in school events. Most of all, support the rules and speak positively about the school in front of your children. Let them know you care about the school they attend.
  
5. **Support Your Local Teacher (all the time)** - Your child's teacher wants what is best for him or her, just like you do. One of the best things you can do for your children is let them know you support their teachers. And here's a tough one...if the teacher says your child is doing something wrong behaviorally or needs to improve academically, believe and support the teacher. Get the teacher's side of the story as well as the child's, and try to work out a solution

together. Also, it's very important to talk to the teacher directly if you have a question or concern. Only go to the principal if you have tried and are unable to resolve an issue with the teacher.

6. **Get Involved...but not too involved** - Prioritize volunteering in the classroom or attending field trips. Your children and their teachers will appreciate seeing you active in their school lives, but don't overdo it. Parents who spend too much time at school may undermine the teacher's authority and position. If your child is struggling with being separated from you, it may be appropriate to walk into the classroom together, but then it's important for you to leave. Your child will get used to being in school without Mom or Dad right there. It's important for parents to show respect for the teacher's authority regarding parental involvement. For example, if the teacher asks you not to bring food to school on your child's birthday and you bring cupcakes anyway, that sets an example of disregard for the rules and disrespect for the teacher, even if you meant to be nice.
  
7. **Really Help With Homework** - Make sure your children do their homework at a time when they will be productive. Establish a set time for homework (preferably before dinner), and help your children stick to it. Then, *really help*. Don't tell your children the answers or, worse, do the homework for them. Actually help them figure things out. They may whine a bit, but learning takes work and discipline and brings great rewards.
  
8. **Dinnertime Diving** - Eat dinner together as a family. During the meal, ask your children about their school day. Then **dive into their lives** - and *listen*. Stop thinking about work or your to-do list, and take a genuine interest in what is happening in their lives. Another good point: if your children say something about school you don't like, don't judge. Lovingly encourage or correct, but make sure your children know they can talk freely about both the good and bad of the school day.

9. **A Little Rest** - The best students are rested students. Set a specific, age-appropriate bedtime, then stay with it. Children aren't usually very good judges of how much rest they need - they will almost always want to stay up a little longer. Model this in your life as well.

10. **Accentuate The Spiritual** - Even if your children attend a private or Christian school, remember that you are still their primary source of spiritual training. God gave the responsibility to you...and your children *need you* to do it (Deut. 6:1-9; Prov. 22:6). Help them to understand how they honor God by obeying their teacher, staying loyal to their homework assignments, and treating their classmates with love and respect. When you pray with your children, talk to God about school - whether it's thanks for a great day, a need for help with learning a hard subject or blessings for the teacher or classmates - because God cares about your children and their school!

It's so exciting to watch your children learn and grow into the people God designed them to be! As you work as a team with the school, the teachers and your children, you'll give your children the best possible opportunity to develop to their full potential and succeed in school.