

HELPING YOUR CHILD HAVE A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR

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Welcome back! I hope everyone had a wonderful summer and is ready to start another successful school year. As I reflected on my message for this school year, I thought about all the ways parents can support staff here at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School to ensure success for each and every child. A few things came to mind....

- Helping your child get off to a good start
- Making sure school attendance is a priority in your family
- Helping your child set goals for the school year.
- I also have a questions and answers section that I am starting this year. I will compile questions that I have received from parents, or ones that I have had as a parent myself.

Help your child get off to a good start. Help your child lay the foundation for a successful school year by getting off to a good start.

- **Read with your child every day.** Research clearly shows that children who are read to each day do better in school. This can be for 30 minutes or 5 minutes. Just touching base and reading is so rewarding for both you and your child!
- **Help your child finish assignments on time.** Help her make a chart and check off completed work, or if your child has an assignment book, use that as a guide.
- **Keep the same routine each day for doing homework** – same place, same time. Children crave daily structure.
- **Get to know your child's teacher.** Email is a great way to communicate issues and concerns you have, or to send along good news about your child.
- **Set a regular bedtime schedule for your child** so there is structure to each day. Also, this can ensure that your child gets enough sleep.

Make sure attending school is a top priority for you and your child. Your child's teachers will do their best to help your child learn and succeed in school. But there's one thing only you can do – that is to get your child to school every day. Children who don't attend school regularly fall behind and score lower on tests. They can have a hard time making and keeping friends. Show your child and his/her teachers that you know attendance counts:

- Tell your child how important school is.
- Make dental and other appointments during non-school hours if possible.
- Don't let your child skip school for reasons that wouldn't prevent you from going to work.
- Avoid taking your child out of school on exam days.
- Keep track of your child's absences. See if there are any patterns that need to be changed.

Help your child set attainable goals for this school year. If you want your child to be a self-motivated learner, then teach your child how to set and attain goals. Here are some steps to consider:

- **Explain what a goal is.** A goal is something your child aims for, like a football player trying for a touchdown. Goals often start as dreams or wishes. For dreams to come true, your child has to work hard.
- **Give your child a "Goal Notebook."** Your child can record his/her goals, progress and achievements.
- **Help your child make a "dream list."** These can be short term goals such as things he'd like to have, do, achieve or improve this day, next week or this month. Goals might be about friends, hobbies, sports, exercise, savings or new skills. Encourage him to also think of school – homework, behavior, reading, grades, etc.
- **Select one achievable goal at a time.** Write it down using this simple formula: I will (do) (what) + (when). For example, I will spell at least eight of the 10 words right on my next spelling test. I will learn all of the state capitals this month. Make sure the goal is achievable.
- **Celebrate successes.** Take pictures. Have a "victory dinner." Say "see, what you can accomplish when you try?"

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question: My son is in the fourth grade. This year, his three best friends have another teacher. He says he has no friends in his class and he hates school. Should I ask if he can be moved to the other class?

Answer: Kids learn a lot of lessons in school. One lesson your son will learn is that he won't always get to choose the people he works with. He may feel like it is the end of the world, but you can help ease his mind.

- **Talk about your own life.** Have you ever had to work with someone that you didn't like but you had to learn to deal with? Did you ever go into a situation where you didn't know anyone? Did your son go to camp this past summer with people he didn't know? Share these stories with your son. Let him know that learning to make friends with new people is a skill

he'll need to know when he goes to fifth grade and then off to middle school.

- **Talk with the teacher.** Maybe there are times when the two classes work together. She may also have some ideas on how your son can make friends in the class if she knows he is anxious.
- **Spend some time in the classroom volunteering if you can.** The teacher will be glad for your help and you can see how the kids in the class interact. Perhaps your son will find another student who loves the Washington Redskins as much as him or Mrs. Faerber!

I wish you all a successful, productive and fun school year! Please contact me if you have any concerns about your child. My email is listed in the school directory (Yolanda_faerber@mcpsmd.org) and you can contact me via phone by calling the main school number at 301-670-8282.