Dear Parents,

Thank you for returning the brief survey from the September counselor newsletter. I received some ideas for upcoming newsletters and am glad to see that so many people found the information helpful. Please continue to let me know what interests you so that these newsletters can be as helpful as possible.

In the month of September I facilitated a lesson with every class. Mostly I introduced myself and my role as counselor. I let the children know how to get in touch with me if they need to talk, and I encourage you to email me if I can support your child’s success at school in any way. After each lesson the students will come home with a follow-up activity that includes a brief note to parents. The note tells you the focus of the lesson and asks you to talk to your child(ren) about it. I hope this helps to keep you updated about what we are working on at school.

In this newsletter there will be information about teaching empathy, preparing for parent conferences, and application information for special programs within MCPS.

Happy Reading!

-Mrs. Yates
Lita M Yates@mcpsmd.org

Are you building a home-school team?

Research shows that when home and school form a strong team, kids learn more and do better in school. Answer the following questions yes or no to see if you’re doing your part to build a home-school team:

___1. Have you met your child’s classroom teacher at least once this year?

___2. Do you talk with your child about school each day? Do you talk about the importance of working hard & doing your best?

___3. Do you have a regular time for homework each day? Is the TV turned off during that time?

___4. Do you make sure your child gets to school on time each day?

___5. Do you read to or with your child every day?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you are building a strong home-school team.

For each no answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.
When Harvard University’s Making Caring Common Project released their report, “The Children We Mean to Raise: The Real Messages Adults Are Sending About Values,” many parents and educators — myself included — were surprised to learn that despite all our talk about instilling character and empathy, kids may value academic achievement and individual happiness over caring for others. In the report, the authors explained that the children’s values reflected what they believe adults value.

In the wake of these dispiriting study results, the Making Caring Common Project and the Ashoka Empathy Initiative created a set of recommendations for teaching empathy to children.

In order to be truly empathetic, children need to learn more than simple perspective-taking; they need to know how to value, respect and understand another person’s views, even when they don’t agree with them. Empathy, Mr. Weissbourd argues, is a function of both compassion and of seeing from another person’s perspective, and is the key to preventing bullying and other forms of cruelty.

To that end, the project offers these five suggestions for developing empathy in children:

1. Empathize with your child and model how to feel compassion for others.
2. Make caring for others a priority and set high ethical expectations.
3. Provide opportunities for children to practice.
4. Expand your child’s circle of concern.
5. Help children develop self-control and manage feelings effectively.

Even when kids feel empathy for others, societal pressures and prejudices can block their ability to express their concern. When kids are angry with each other over a perceived slight, for example, it can be a real challenge for them to engage their sense of empathy. Encourage kids to name those stereotypes and prejudices, and to talk about their anger, envy, shame and other negative emotions. Model conflict resolution and anger management in your own actions, and let your kids see you work through challenging feelings in your own life.

Educators will tell you that a classroom full of empathetic kids simply runs more smoothly than one filled with even the happiest group of self-serving children. Similarly, family life is more harmonious when siblings are able feel for each other and put the needs of others ahead of individual happiness. If a classroom or a family full of caring children makes for a more peaceful and cooperative learning environment, just imagine what we could accomplish in a world populated by such children.


Read more at: http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/09/04/teaching-children-empathy/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0
WASHINGTON - It turns out a child’s bedtime makes a big difference in how he performs in the classroom, according to a new study.

A study of 11,000 kids monitored at ages 3, 5 and 7 found that those who had irregular bedtimes scored lower on cognitive tests.

The effect was cumulative, researchers at the University College London found, according to a Yahoo! Health report.

The study found girls who didn’t go to bed at a consistent time scored lower in all tests. Boys reported lower scores when they had irregular sleep times during certain ages.

In the study, the kids had to read a series of words on cards, complete number-based tasks and replicate design patterns.

The amount of sleep each kid needs varies from child to child, the report says.

However, the National Sleep Foundation makes these recommendations:

- Newborn babies - 12 to 18 hours of sleep;
- 1- to 3-year-olds - 12 to 14 hours of sleep;
- Preschoolers - 11 to 13 hours of sleep;
- 5- to 10-year-olds - 10 to 11 hours of sleep;
- Teens - 8.5 to 9.25 hours of sleep.


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From: Helping Your Child Make New Friends

By Jessica Efird

“Friendships are very important when it comes to emotional health,” explains Julia Cook, a former teacher and school counselor who authored “Making Friends Is an ART!” Continues Cook, “To a child, even having just one good friend can make a huge difference.” While some children make friends with ease, others may need encouragement.

Here are some ways you can help your child make lasting friendships without putting too much pressure on them:

**Talk About It**
Talk about or brainstorm a list of “friend qualities” with your child. Cook suggests using concepts such as: being friendly, being honest, laughing and having fun, willingness to share, being kind, and learning how to place others’ needs ahead of their own.

**Connecting Through Conversations**
Since being able to share thoughts and ideas is so important to any friendship, you can help your child understand how to build and maintain a conversation. “Remind kids to look for connections between what was just said and what they will say next,” shares Barbara Boroson.

**Organize Play Dates or Activities**
If a child continues to struggle or feel less than confident in their friend-making skills, be proactive in organizing play dates for kids.

**Be Realistic**
At the same time, be sure to not have unrealistic expectations of your shy or socially reserved child. “Some children are more outgoing than others. It’s just their personality.

Lastly, Cook advises, “Remember to be patient. Teaching friendship skills will never be as easy as it sounds, and we are all at different levels of learning.”

In the end, children will continue to grow socially as they progress through school. With the support of parental love and coaching, children will better enjoy the journey toward meaningful!

Read more: http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/social/make-new-friends/
Information about Montgomery County Public Schools Special Programs for Instruction

A special note for parents of Grade 3 students:
The Elementary Center Programs for the Highly Gifted provide a learning environment for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students that enriches, accelerates, and extends the MCPS curriculum.
For additional information, got to:
http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/enrichedinnovative/events/elementary.aspx
Or contact the Division of Consortia Choice and Application Program Services at 301-592-2040.

A special note for parents of Grade 5 students interested in applying to these programs for students who have been identified as gifted and talented: (Note: admission requires application and testing completion, and acceptance.)

- Application forms will be posted here around September 18.
- Application deadline is November 6, 2015.
- Testing date is Saturday, December 5, 2015. (details will be listed in the application packet.)

Who is this information for?
The documents and information listed are for Grade 5 students applying to these programs

- Middle School Humanities and Communication Program (about this program)
- Middle School Mathematics, Science, Computer Science Program (about this program)
- Middle School Magnet Consortium (MSMC) (about this program)

More information: Contact Division of Consortia Choice and Application Program Services, at 301-592-2040.

For additional information go to:

- A special note for parents of Grade 5 students interested in applying to the Middle School Magnet Consortium programs; please read the following information from the Montgomery County Public Schools website: (Note: Admission is by lottery.)
The Middle School Magnet Consortium (MSMC) is made up of three schools — Argyle, Loiederman, and Parkland middle schools — each of which offers an innovative and challenging magnet curriculum:
- Argyle focuses on digital design and development
- Loiederman offers a creative and performing arts focus
- Parkland provides students the opportunity to explore math and science through aerospace technology and robotic engineering

More information go to:
Please complete and return this brief survey to Mrs. Yates ASAP:

I would like to offer you the option to receive my Counselor Corner Newsletter via email.

If you would like to receive the newsletter electronically, and have not yet sent in this form, please return this portion of the newsletter.

Dear Mrs. Yates,

Section 1:

☐ Please begin sending me an electronic copy of the Counselor Corner Newsletter via email at: ________________________________

Section 2:

I think the information in this newsletter was:

☐ very helpful    ☐ somewhat helpful    ☐ not helpful

Section 3:

I would like to see you include the following in one of your newsletters:

Signed _______________________ parent of _______________________ in grade ___