

7 WAYS TO MAKE A SENSATIONAL START TO THE SCHOOL YEAR

BY MICHAEL GROSE

A new school year means a fresh start for students. Regardless of your child's performance last year, they start school with a clean slate. A break offers students the chance to begin new habits and adopt new behaviours. Here are seven ideas to help you make the most of the fresh start and make this year your child's best year ever year at school:

1. Commit to your child going to school every day on time

One of the most important things you can do to ensure your child has a bright future is to make sure he or she goes to school every day – and gets there on time. Kids spend more time asleep than at school, so we need to maximise every day to get full value.

2. Help kids start each day well

A good night's sleep, a healthy breakfast and some words of encouragement from you will help set a positive tone for a day of learning. This may mean that you adjust your morning routine so that kids have plenty of time to get up, eat and get ready for the day. Consider taking a leaf out of the book of a friend of mine who gets her children to make their beds each morning which sets the tone for a productive day ahead.

3. Establish work & study habits

The most successful students are those that develop regular study habits that suit their lifestyle, their study style and their school's expectations. Find out the work expectations from your child's or young person's school and help them establish a work routine that matches their personality, lifestyle and family style. Be flexible here as one size doesn't fit all when it comes to study routines.

4. Make sure your child gets enough sleep

I encourage you to make a big focus as this year as many children and young people are sleep-deprived, which impacts on their well-being and their learning. A good night's sleep consolidates learning, as well as assisting future learning. Children need between 10-12 hours of sleep each day, while teens need a minimum of nine hours. Help kids get sufficient sleep by having a regular bed-time and get-up time each day. Have 45 minute wind-down time each night, and remove screens and mobile phones from bedrooms.

5. Get your kids outside more for good physical and mental health

Kids today get less exercise than those of past generations, which is an impediment to learning and mental health. Health professionals recommend a minimum of 60 minutes of exercise per day for kids of all ages. Encourage kids to play sport; promote free and active play and look for ways to make moving part of their daily lives. Consider increasing your child's green time and decreasing screen time for good physical and mental health.

6. Focus on being friendly

Schools are very social places requiring kids to negotiate many different social situations each day. Encourage kids to be open and tolerant; to be friendly; to be involved in plenty of activities and to be social risk-takers. Some kids close down their friendship opportunities through self-centredness, poor attitude and unwillingness to take social risks.

7. Develop self-help skills

Successful students are often well-organised, self-directed and self-motivated. You can foster organisational skills and self-direction by developing simple, age-appropriate self-help skills related to their every day lives. Also use visual parenting techniques to aid organisation and encourage independence. Such skills as making lunches, packing school bags, and organising after school schedules can be great lessons that impact on how kids perform at school.

At the start of the school year kids are likely to adopt changes than at any other time. Make the most of the opportunity by focusing on two or three areas to really target and you'll find that the rest may well fall into place.