School tips:

(Start the school year off on the right foot. This article is a reprint of an article published in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on September 5, 2010.)

7 tips for a good school year
Kids need help, tools to succeed
By Gregory Ramey

The kids are getting ready for school by looking at computers, clothes and calculators. Here are the seven things that parents can do to help their children be successful this school year.

Make sure your kids get enough sleep. The lack of sleep has been linked to a variety of physical and emotional problems in both kids and adults. Sleep deprivation has been associated with childhood obesity, memory impairment and poor impulse control.

While individual needs may vary, here are the recommendations from the National Sleep Foundation on the number of hours needed by our kids: toddlers, 12 to 14 hours; preschoolers, 11 to 13 hours; school-age children, 10 to 11 hours; and adolescents, 9 to 10 hours.

Set limits on technology. Limit television and computer usage on school nights. Make certain that homework is completed accurately before the television is turned on. Texting with friends throughout the late evening can be a problem for some teens.

One dad told me that all cell phones in his household are powered down at 9 p.m., a rule that applies to both adults and teens.

Stay involved in your kids’ academic world, but don’t make it your responsibility. Homework, studying, navigating issues with teachers and solving peer problems are your children’s responsibilities, not yours. Act as a good coach, offering advice, giving encouragement, setting standards and applying consistent consequences. Your job is to teach responsibility and good problem-solving skills, not to create a dependency on you.

Put families first. Things get really busy for families during the school year, with numerous school-related activities. Learn to say no to some of these events. If you are not having meals together as a family at least three nights a week, you are doing something wrong.

Pay attention to your children’s friendships. Peers have an incredible influence on your children’s values and behavior. Get to know your
kids’ friends and their parents. Make your home kid-friendly so your child feels comfortable having his friends over at your house.

By the time your child is a preteen, it’s difficult to influence their friendships. Avoid criticizing your child’s choice of friends, but don’t be reluctant to compliment or condone values or behavior that is different from what you find acceptable.

**Help out at school.** This is a great way to give back to your community as well as stay connected with what is going on in your child’s life.

**Keep a balanced perspective.** All students are not academically gifted, and college is not a good choice for everyone. Grades matter, but they do not reflect your value as a person or the contribution you will make to society. Focus on helping your child develop a good work ethic, high moral standards, trusting relationships and a positive attitude.

With those attributes, your child will live a meaningful life even if he doesn’t get outstanding grades in school.

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