

August 17th, 2023

Setting kids up for success

Ready or not, summer is drawing to a close. If you have students in your life, that means ensuring they have all their school supplies in order and helping them get back to their regular sleep routine. But as the kids prepare to begin another year of learning, there are steps you can take to prepare for the upcoming school year as well.

Back-to-school doesn't just mean stocking up on notebooks and freshly sharpened pencils (although it means that, too). It's also an opportunity to help set your kids or grandkids up for success. Here are two behaviors you can practice helping you do just that:

Praise effort, not smarts

This may sound counterproductive, but there's science behind it. According to Psychology Today, praising kids for their intelligence instead of their efforts sends the message that intelligence is an innate, fixed trait, effectively downplaying the importance of hard work. Research suggests that children who are praised for their intelligence become less likely to take intellectual risks and more likely to become discouraged when they experience challenges.

What does this mean for parents? Simply that it's important to celebrate children's hard work – not their natural-born smarts – when they earn good grades, expressing the importance of studying just as hard the next time around. And in cases when their scores are less than stellar, working together to think of ways to improve their grades in the next assignment.

Explain the real-world value of in-school lessons

At one time or another, most parents have tried bribing their kids to finish their schoolwork, whether with an ice cream sundae, extra TV time or another reward. But

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science suggests this may do more harm than good. That's because while kids have a natural desire to learn (consider the endless whys of toddlerhood), continuously rewarding them for doing their work can encourage them to go from learning because it feels good to learning only because they want a prize in exchange.

One way you can combat this is by helping your kids understand the real-world benefits of the skills they're developing in school. For instance, help them realize how necessary math is when it comes to deciding how to use their birthday money, or when it comes to dividing candy equally among friends. Seeing the real-world value of their in-school efforts will help instill in them the value of knowledge and keep them motivated to continue learning.

We hope you find these tips helpful, and that they help guide you as you support the students in your life through another school year of learning, exploring, and growing.

Please note that our offices, along with the financial markets, will be closed Monday, September 4th, for the Labor Day holiday.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Henderson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Janice L. Henderson, CFP®