

## Success in School

Well, it is back to school time! A new school year...new teachers...new supplies....and a new start. The possibilities are endless! If only that was the story for all! For others, the reality might be.... never-ending teacher conferences, daily phone calls, detention notices, and substandard report cards. It is not hopeless. Now, is the best time to be proactive and help your child to start off the year right. Here are some ideas that you can take to the school. After all, you are the expert of your child's needs and by far, the best advocate!

- Let teachers know interventions that work at home (and the ones that don't!).
- Ask teachers to hold students accountable and follow-through with consequences.
- Set up a communication system with the teacher whether through a notebook, e-mail, or phone contact.
- See if the school has a website. Many schools now have a web system where you can check your child's progress on grades and assignments daily instead of waiting for the report card.
- If your child has difficulty calming when upset or difficulty staying focused, ask the teacher to set up a "calm place" in the room where the child is allowed to go for a brief period of time and regroup.
- Develop a coping plan for the child at school and post-it in their desk. Make sure the teacher approves of the coping skills chosen.
- Ask teachers to set up a "buddy system" where your child has an older student assigned to read a book with them, sit with them on the bus, or have lunch with them. This can promote positive social skills and keep a child from acting out.
- Make sure your child has met the school counselor or other supportive staff should they need have a problem in school.
- Ask the teacher if your child who can't focus can hold a small non-distracting object to help meet that sensory need but still remain focused. One example is putting various fabrics (silk, velcro, suede, etc) selections on a key ring.
- Set up a reward or reinforcement plan for appropriate behaviors or academic steps. Motivating rewards for you child can be helping out as a volunteer in special education classes or with younger students, having lunch with the principal, or being an office helper. These kinds of rewards have many other benefits for the children as well.
- Help the teacher see your child's strength and progress; even if it is only small steps in the right direction!
- Ask the teacher to recognize any positives as many children do poorly because of their self-esteem. Helping the child feel successful will encourage the child to reach the end result.
- Make sure your child is a part of the planning for their school success. They will be most motivated if they had a say in what is expected, what the consequences will be, and what the rewards will be.
- Remind teachers that the child may test the new plan initially but to stick with it!

*Article written by Tracy Faber, MSW, LISW-S*