



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
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Supported By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



September 2, 2009 – Back to School

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As a new school year begins, it is important that we as parents consider the role we play in helping our children to experience success as learners and to prepare for lifelong learning in the 21st century. Make it a goal for yourselves as parents to help your child take advantage of learning experiences that occur both inside and outside of the classroom over the next nine months. Specifically, help your child to consider their personal interests and passions, learn how to handle setbacks, and understand “how to learn” as they grow as people and students.

As your child begins to have experiences outside of the classroom (e.g. – sports, music/drama activities, scouting, etc.), point out themes that seem to be revealing themselves in your child’s life. Do they enjoy team activities or are they more inclined to work and play as individuals? Do they tend to get excited about challenges involving people or objects? It’s never too early to start identifying your child’s interests and passions. Share these insights with them over time, and allow them to add their own insights and observations to your own. Over time, your child will benefit from analyzing their talents and passions, especially as they plan for post-secondary opportunities.

As part of their educational experiences, help your child learn to deal with setbacks. Remember, as much as we want our children to succeed 100 % of the time, no one goes through life undefeated! According to Samuel Smiles, “We learn wisdom from failure much more than from success. We often discover what will do, by finding out what will not do; and probably he who never made a mistake never made a discovery.” Whether your child views not making a sports team or underperforming on a test as a failure, encourage them to keep trying. A great way for you to be involved is not to prevent failure from occurring again, but by helping your child plan and strategize for success at the next opportunity.

Finally, make every effort to help your child become a lifelong learner. Learning throughout their lifetime is a necessary, critical skill for the children of today. It has been stated in several resources that we are “currently preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist using technologies that haven’t been invented in order to solve problems that we don’t even know are problems yet.” The best way to help prepare your child for such a dynamic work environment is to talk to them about the strategies they use to help them learn, and provide opportunities for them to apply these strategies in new situations. The ability to learn will help your child become successful in their future ventures.

The new school year is a time of hope and optimism. By helping your child learn about their interests and passions, deal with personal setbacks, and develop skills for lifelong learning, you will be helping them to experience success both now and in the future. Have a great school year!

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