

## Getting Off to a Great Start!

September is an exciting time for children, families and school staff. As the new school year begins, it's a good time to think about what you as families can do to get off to a positive start and help make this a fun and successful asset-building school year for your children. (Remember, the 40 assets are simply the positive experiences, opportunities, relationships, values and skills that help young people make smart choices and grow-up ready to be responsible, healthy, successful members of the community.)

### The Basics

*Getting off to a good start begins at home with some real basics.* All children need a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast. Although you can't "make" children eat or sleep, it's your job to create the environment and set the boundaries that encourage getting enough sleep and healthy eating.

- Breakfast foods loaded with sugar will not get children through their morning.
- If you have a picky eater, get creative – any healthy food is good for breakfast!
- On average, elementary school children need 8-10 hours of sleep. It's your job to make sure they are in bed at a regular time.
- Try to make sure your children get enough sleep so that they can wake up early enough in the morning to avoid the "rushing, yelling, scrambling-to-get-ready" syndrome – a real bad way to start anyone's day!

### Successful Partnerships With Teachers

*Although, their jobs are different, parents and teachers are partners in helping children be successful learners.* This partnership works best when both partners approach each other with respect and understanding.

- If you have a concern, communicate with your child's teacher and share your different thoughts and perspectives. Start with a note, or an e-mail or a phone call.
- Remember there are two sides to every story, make sure you hear both!

### Get Involved, Stay Involved

Here in Arlington, only 28% of middle and high school students report that their parents are involved in school. *Get involved with your child's education now and stay involved all the way through 12<sup>th</sup> grade!* One great way to be involved is to have **real conversations** about school. "Do you have homework?" is not a great conversation starter. Instead, you might say:

- Who did you eat lunch with?
- Why did you choose that particular book for your report?
- Tell me about your new teacher? (Instead of "Is your teacher nice?")
- Tell me about the kids in your class?
- When I went to \_\_ grade, I remember feeling\_\_\_\_\_.

If your child doesn't feel like talking when they first come home from school or you first come home from work, try again later.

### **Letting Youngsters Learn From Mistakes**

*It's always good to remind yourself that it's your child who is going to school, not you. Their successes and their failures are just that - theirs.* As hard as it can be, let them learn from both. Children learn about being responsible and planning ahead by practicing. Everyone makes mistakes. They probably will forget their homework occasionally and let projects go to the last minute and leave books they need at school. But if there are never any consequences to their mistakes, there's really no reason for them to learn to be responsible. Why should they learn to be better planners and more responsible if you're there to do it for them? Using mistakes and their consequences as learning opportunities lets your children know that you believe in them and their capabilities even when they've made a mistake.

### **Play Time Matters, Too**

*Finally, let your children be children.* It's your job to make sure your children have time to laugh and be silly and play and day dream. It's essential for them and it will do wonders for you!