

Ask an Expert – Four Back to School Tips for Parents

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Summer is winding down, and many children are hitting the books instead of the snooze button. In addition to encouraging children to stay organized and responsible with their time and activities, it is important to have conversations about social tips that will help in their relationships with friends, teachers and other employees at the school.

Here are four things to discuss with your children as they head back to



school:

- **Make time to be kind.** One of the best ways to make friends and a good first impression at school is to be kind. There are three simple things children of all ages can do – the three S's – smile, serve and share. A smile is the first thing most people will see and remember. It shows friendliness, warmth and openness. Serving others in small ways will also open doors to friendship. A simple compliment or grabbing something that has fallen on the floor for someone can work wonders. Sharing paper, crayons or a treat can help as well. Parents can model these principles and invite their children to be kind and respectful to everyone.
- **It's good to be grateful.** Just like with kindness, gratitude shows others you are open, thoughtful and humble. Children can give thanks to anyone they meet, from the bus driver, to the gym teacher, to

the principal. They all work hard and need to hear expressions of thanks. Letters, texts and sticky notes are simple ways to show gratitude to others. Cultivating gratitude in children starts with parents' willingness to express sincere thanks to others, especially their children.

- **Notice and appreciate the good in each day.** Children are often bombarded with negativity, often from right from the start of school. From teasing and tests to homework and bad hair days, our brains are wired to focus and dwell on the tough stuff that happens. When children come home from school, ask about the best part of their day. Parents can do this at dinnertime or right before bedtime as well. It's good to get good at noticing the good!
- **Be quick to forgive.** New schedules and routines can bring new challenges and stress. Be patient with your children, especially the first few weeks of school. When parents keep their tone of voice low and are quick to forgive, it helps teach children to be quick to forgive others as well. Similarly, teach children to be patient with others and quick to forgive offenses, including those from friends and teachers.

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