

Malden Public Schools Title I Parent Connection



Don't Worry: Be H.A.P.P.Y



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Bobby McFerrin can think it and sing it as much as he wants, but as parents, worrying is in our nature. The economy and flu are bearing down on us. And, we still have to worry about our kids' post-graduation plans.

Ultimately, what all parents want is for their kids to be happy. We may all have different interpretations of what will make our kids happy: graduating or bringing home straight-A report cards, attending the local community college or enrolling in an Ivy League school. Perhaps it's a high-salaried career, taking over the family business or learning a trade, falling in love, having a family or sailing around the world. However we define it, we want them to be healthy, we want them to make good choices, and we want them to be happy.

I spend a lot of time thinking, reading, studying and researching what it takes for our students to be happy in school. I have observations, anecdotes, qualitative data and quantitative results. There are mandates, directives and recommendations. But here are a few things that seem to help kids get and stay H.A.P.P.Y. in school.

H – Homework. How can homework possibly make a kid happy? Especially given how much they may complain about it, tell us it's done, or that they didn't have any? The thing is they do have it, and the kids who try it, complete it, and turn it in are more likely to have a smile on their face.

A – Attendance. They may complain about going, get side-tracked on the way there, and pray for snow days, but the kids that attend school regularly and show up on time actually enjoy their time there.

P – Participation. Being involved in clubs, activities, programs and sports is one of the best indicators of student bliss. Kids who have reasons, other than academics, to be in school have more fun at school.

P – People. I mean the people in your child's school. Be it by a teacher, principal, school counselor, secretary, coach, librarian, cafeteria worker or custodian, a child who is checked on, connected to, mentored, and cared for at school is more content with their educational experience.

Y – You. Who else cares more than you? Who makes sure the homework is done and turned in, that your child is present and accounted for, is involved and participating in extra-curricular activities, and has people to turn to when you can't be around? Students whose parents are appropriately involved in their education tend to be happy in school.

If we follow these steps, are we guaranteed to have happy kids that will grow up to be happy adults? No. There are still a millions things that will shape our kids' futures. There are plenty of things to worry about these days. So while we may not be able to follow Bobby McFerrin's advice, note for note, we can all do our part to make sure our kids are H.A.P.P.Y.

*Written by Manjula Karamcheti, Director of
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