

## Welcome Back to School

Welcome Back to School from the Resilience Project!

October is a month associated with crisp weather, leaves turning color and, of course, we are finally settled into the school year. In the midst of sharpening pencils and filling binders, considering one's mindset is equally essential as it sets the tone for the entire school year.

In past emails, we have documented the stress and anxiety that many Staples students associate with academics. Live grading, phone apps that track GPAs, and social media all provide instant feedback to students – positive and negative – about their performance. Given that this pressure often serves more as a source of anxiety than motivation, what can parents do to support their children in developing a healthy, balanced attitude toward school?

In a recent newsletter for the Challenge Success website, psychologist Madeline Levine shared the critical importance of taking adolescents' physical and developmental needs seriously. Good nutrition and sufficient sleep cannot be delayed until after the algebra exam or until the college applications are complete. The essential development of teenagers' bodies and brains occurs now and cannot be "made up" when the race to college is complete. Not only will the window have passed but the next imperative goal or transition will present itself, and so, and so on.

We exhort you – as Madeline Levine does – to make your child's well-being the primary focus of this school year. Gleaned from Challenge Success and from our own experience as counselors, below are our suggestions for ensuring your child's wellbeing.

- Model healthy habits. The science is clear; good nutrition and exercise help with focus and mood. Insufficient sleep puts adults and teenagers alike at risk for anxiety and depression.
- Stay calm with the first poor grade or lost friendship occur. Adolescence is inevitably full of personal and academic challenges – empathize and problem-solve with your child but consistently communicate that you believe she is a capable and lovable human being.
- Focus on the building of character over fleeting achievements. Social emotional skills including empathy, resilience and kindness are key to your child's growth into a successful and likeable adult.
- Emphasize integrity. Self-esteem is built not through grades themselves but through putting time and work into a product that reflects the child's abilities and work ethic.
- Collaborate with school staff. Your children will see that you are working closely with others to provide the best possible solutions to any problems that may arise.

So enjoy the beautiful weather before winter heads our way and relish the challenges and satisfaction of raising healthy teenagers.

*The Staples Resilience Project is an ongoing endeavor by the Staples Guidance Department aimed to promote the well-being of our students and foster a positive, inclusive school community.*

[shs.westportps.org/departments/guidance/staples-resilience-project](https://shs.westportps.org/departments/guidance/staples-resilience-project)