Tips for Parents: Kindness, compassion are important gifts for teachers

K-State’s Wiles says parents’ role should focus on support

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — A thank you note, and even a shiny, red apple, are nice.

But Kansas State University child development specialist Bradford Wiles said being kind to your children’s teachers is one of the best things parents can do.

“I see supporting teachers as an expression of our appreciation for them,” Wiles said. “While thank you notes and volunteering are helpful, I think it really makes more impact when you do nice things for teachers, and you express your concerns with kindness.

“Teachers,” he adds, “put up with an awful lot of difficulty for very little recognition. We know recognition is not why they teach. But it still makes a difference for you to recognize them and treat them kindly.”

Wiles said being kind to teachers is akin to teaching kindness to children: “Because we are always modeling (behaviors) for children when we are more involved in their lives, we are showing that we care about them, and we care about their school and their teachers. Most importantly, we care about their learning with others.”

At home, Wiles encourages parents to ask children what they’re doing at school. Parents can offer to provide classroom supplies to the teacher, or volunteer time, “but make sure that is what the teacher would like,” he said.

Parents should see their role as being supportive, compared to teachers as the primary educators at school.

“We want to make sure that we honor the teachers’ roles and not step on their toes, but we also want our children to fully understand the value that we place on forming solid relationships with trusted adults in their lives,” Wiles said. “When we give respect to the teachers in our children’s
lives, children start to understand how much they do for them. This is especially important when there are disagreements or issues that need to be addressed in the classroom."

“When you involve yourself in respectful, kind and compassionate ways in your children’s education by supporting teachers and your children, you are building a community of learning that will likely make a positive difference in children’s lives,” Wiles said.

More information and tips for raising healthy families is available online from K-State’s School of Family Studies and Human Services.

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K-State School of Family Studies and Human Services, https://www.hhs.k-state.edu/ahs

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