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# Five Tips for a Healthy Start to the New School Year from the

# Michigan Department of Education’s think.respect. initiative

*Good Nutrition & Healthy Habits are Critical to*

*Ensuring Continued Academic Success*

Lansing, Mich., August XX, 2014 – As part of its continued efforts under the *think.respect.* grant, the [Michigan Department of Education](http://www.michigan.gov) (MDE) is providing tips for parents to ensure their students get off on the right foot this school year.

The *think.respect.* grant makes it possible for schools to create an environment that is safe and supportive for students to learn. The grant seeks to improve student learning by coordinating academics along with healthy living, anti-bullying programs, parent and youth engagement, and other initiatives to allow students to be physically, emotionally and socially healthy. Both parents and youth are a key piece to the success of this program. Locally, SCHOOL NAME is participating in the *think.respect.* initiative.

“As the lazy days of summer slip away, it’s time for students and families to prepare for going back to school,” said Kim Kovalchick, Coordinated School Health and Safety Programs Unit supervisor at MDE. “There are some easy tips you can follow as a parent to help ease the back-to-school transition and to ensure that your student’s school year is off to a healthy start.”

Going back to school means getting back into a routine to help students achieve success at the start of the new school year. However, multiple studies show that good nutrition and healthy habits are just as important in ensuring continued academic success.

MDE and the *think.respect.* grant provide the following tips for a healthy start to the school year:

* **Schedule a back-to-school checkup-** A yearly physical exam is an important part of your student’s health care. The back-to-school season is a convenient time to take care of the exam and necessary immunizations, and to screen for health issues such as diabetes, asthma, or mental health disorders. Back-to-school appointments also are important because it may be difficult for your student to learn if he or she is having trouble seeing the chalkboard or hearing the teacher.
* **Get enough sleep-** The most important school health issue for students of any age is getting enough sleep. Though it sounds simple, it’s not always easy to adjust sleep patterns after a summer filled with late nights. Elementary students need 10 to 11 hours of sleep a night, while teens require between eight and nine hours of sleep.
* **Plan healthy meals-** The best way parents can help their students nutritionally is by making sure they have a healthy morning meal. Try to provide nutrient rich foods such as high-fiber grains, fruits and dairy products. Parents also can ensure their students pack or have access to a healthy lunch. According to many studies, a balanced breakfast and lunch are vital to a child’s ability to concentrate in school.
* **Get your kids involved-** Discuss healthy food options and have students be responsible for packing their own lunch. Having your students help with meal planning and preparation is another way to get them involved and educated on the importance of nutritious meals.
* **Get enough exercise-** Long, summer days provide plenty of time for your students to get enough exercise. However, students spend much more time sitting down once school is back in session. You shouldn’t assume that gym class is providing the daily activity needed to stay healthy and happy. Remember, students need at least 30 minutes of regular exercise every day.

The Safe and Supportive Schools (S3) model, titled *think.respect*.in Michigan, is a grant that ensures students in the 22 pilot high schools learn an array of skills that – when paired with school improvement efforts – can lead to greater academic achievement among students through better physical, mental and emotional health.

For more information on *think.respect.,* visit the Michigan Department of Education’s website at [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov).

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