

PROMOTING HYGIENE IN THE CLASSROOM

School-aged children are constantly growing and changing, both mentally and physically. It is important to understand developmental milestones to address the changing needs of your students. Healthy kids also move a lot, but movement can make keeping good hygiene more challenging. This will help you keep your students healthy and safe while in your classroom. If your students are healthy, they have a better chance of staying on track and performing better academically.

Why is hygiene important for success in school?

Good hygiene can help a student focus on completing their school work. Poor hygiene may affect a child's physical and mental health. A student may get sick more often causing them to miss school and fall behind in class. If a student has poor hygiene, he/she can become self-conscious or may be bullied.

What can I do in the classroom?

- **Make sure students wash their hands** after touching something, coughing, sneezing, and before eating. You can also make sure students cover their mouth when they cough or sneeze. Everyone should cough or sneeze into their arm, not hand.
- **Talk to your students and their families about cleanliness.** Lessons about bathing properly, washing clothes, sheets, and towels, and brushing your teeth can help students build healthy habits at home. Talk to parents about sending students to school with extra clean clothes especially for younger children and pubescent girls.
- **Promote hygiene in the classroom.** You can use bleach wipes to clean desks, chairs, door knobs, especially during flu season. Try to open windows once a day (for partial or long term) to let fresh air in and break up stagnant air. Hang posters about cleanliness, washing hands, and proper hygiene in the classroom.
- **Refer to the school nurse or counselor** if there is something you don't feel comfortable talking about with a child or his/her family. You can also refer to support staff if you suspect something more serious is going on at home.
- **Consider keeping hygiene products in your classroom.** Extra tissues, hand sanitizer, toothbrushes, soap, sanitary napkins and spray deodorant allow students to freshen up if they are unable to at home. You can keep sensitive items out of sight to the class and make a daily plan with a student if he/she needs certain items.