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Back to School Essentials That Won't Weigh Your Backpack Down

From CapEd Credit Union Idaho Teacher of the Year Trent Van Leuven

(BOISE) – Several years ago I attended a teacher professional development session in Twin Falls and brought along my son, who was about to enter second grade. As we live in a remote valley, I was tasked with buying items from his class supply list. As both a teacher and a parent, this was like Christmas for me. When we returned home I had to defend a couple of the choices to my wife—especially the huge box of crayons. At my son's age I had envied my friends' large crayon boxes while working with my small box of crayons. My wife had a good laugh about that story.

As parents and guardians help their children search for those coveted “Back to School” items, I hope students will also remember to bring the following to class each day:

1. **Kindness.** Years from now, at your 20th-year reunion, your peers will remember you most for how kind—or unkind—you were. Your kindness has the power to change lives.
2. **Organization.** Keep a binder or folder for each subject. Stay organized. Bring the required materials, and keep returned assignments, quizzes, and tests to study for finals. If you have a locker, keep it tidy.
3. **Your best self**—rested and fed. If these basic needs are not met, then learning becomes difficult. Remember, too much screen time in the evening can lower your GPA.
4. **Gratitude.** Teachers enter the profession to make a difference. They will move heaven and earth for a student who is motivated and eager to learn. Show interest in the subject, and after a lesson, take a moment to thank your teacher. You might be surprised by the incredible opportunities that come your way.
5. **Career goals.** View every lesson and school day as a stepping-stone toward the career that will excite you every morning.

6. **Time management.** Keep a running to-do list and prioritize tasks. Physically checking off these boxes gives a sense of accomplishment. Sharing this list with parents will prevent the late night trips for poster board.

7. **Involvement.** Join a club, organization, sport, or any extracurricular activity that adds value to your education. These experiences contribute to your overall development, form lasting friendships, and help you build a strong network. Consider taking the road less traveled—it might just help you stand out in future job interviews.

8. **Work ethic.** Research shows that work ethic is a better predictor of GPA than IQ tests. Remember, “Hard work beats talent when talent stops working.”

Students and parents should regularly take stock to ensure this “class supply list” is brought to school each day. When I sent my son to school with that big box of crayons, I hoped that he would be the kind of person who shared them with his peers.

To all of our Idaho teachers: your power to change lives is immense. If you remember that every day, you will indeed change lives every day.

I wish you a successful 2024-2025 school year!

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Attached: headshot of Idaho Teacher of the Year Trent Van Leuven