

# News Release

## For Immediate Release

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PIERRE, SD (August 13, 2007) – As the start of another school year nears and parents and children fill their shopping carts with new school supplies, Delta Dental of South Dakota reminds parents to consider adding a new toothbrush to their purchases.

The start of a new school year is a good time to evaluate your children’s dental health and habits. Children need their parents to help them maintain their oral health. Parents need to help their children brush their teeth until age seven or eight (or until the child can write in cursive) and they need to remind older children to brush after every meal and floss daily. And starting at age one, all children should have at least one dental check-up a year.

The consequences of not maintaining a child’s oral health can be substantial. Dental problems like tooth decay and trauma can cause schoolchildren severe pain and keep them from learning in the classroom. Sometimes the problems keep them out of the classroom altogether. It is estimated that U.S. children lose roughly 51 million school hours each year due to dental-related illnesses.

“Poor oral health is a very real distraction and can cause some children to have a difficult time participating or concentrating in the classroom,” said Mark Nielsen, DDS, a dental consultant for Delta Dental of South Dakota. “People need to understand that students with chronic dental pain aren’t always able to verbalize it. Teachers may notice that a student is anxious, depressed or fatigued, but not automatically recognize these behaviors as manifestations of physical pain.”

When children’s dental problems are treated and they are no longer in pain, both their learning and school-attendance records improve, according to the *American Journal of Public Health*.

In between visits to the dentist, parents should monitor their children’s oral health or changes in behavior that might signify pain or discomfort.

“Parents should regularly check children’s mouths for any signs of concern,” Dr. Nielsen said. “Checking oral health is as important as booster shots and should be part of regular back-to-school preparations.”