

Back To School

By LouAnn Viado, School Counselor

The beginning of the school year can be exciting and fun, but also stressful and overwhelming for parents and students. The following suggestions can assist parents and students in having a successful transition into the school year.

- Become familiar with school guidelines and procedures regarding dress code. Go shopping with your child for clothing that is appropriate for school.
- Become familiar with the school's attendance policy. Find out what absences are considered excused and unexcused. Find out how to arrange pre-arranged absences.
- Be aware of what items are allowed at school as well as behavior guidelines and review this information with your child.
- Be aware of the school's cell phone policy.
- Find out what the school's promotion and retention policies are.
- If you would like to learn more about the curriculum taught in your child's classes, access the district website or talk with your child's teacher.
- Have school phone numbers and extensions where you can easily access them.
- Make sure the school has up-to-date information: address, home, work and cell numbers, emergency contact information
- Most schools will not take messages for students. Find out now what you need to do if you need to get in touch with your child during the school day.
- Find out how you can best communicate with school personnel regarding your child: e-mail, phone, written communication.
- Obtain a school calendar and mark down important dates such as: report card/progress distribution, Open House, vacations, holidays, Staff Development Days.
- Identify your child's counselor; find out from the counselor how to best address any future concerns.
- Become aware of after school activities your child can be involved in.
- Access the school's website and learn more about the school your child will be attending.
- Find out what the progressive discipline procedures are at your child's school.
- Become involved with the school's Parent Advisory Committee or PTA.
- Attend Open House and other school functions.
- Find out who your child's teachers are and what subjects they teach. Introduce yourself to your child's teachers. Ask the teachers how you can best support your child academically from home.
- If you have questions or concerns that you would like to share with the school counselor and teachers, schedule a parent-teacher conference.

10 Ways to Get Your Kids, and You, Ready for School
By Natasha Tebbs, M.Ed, Counselor

- 1. Build excitement with your kids!*
Believe it or not, this can even work with high school kids! Find out what your kids are interested in...cheerleading, sports, a particular elective, social activities, college, music, etc. and play it up! Remind them how much fun they are going to have and how their success will lead to a future full of happiness, achievement, responsibility and freedom.
- 2. Read ALL information that is sent to you from the school.*
Some of the information may seem dull and repetitive, but it is extremely important that parents and students read this together. This can eliminate future conflicts during the school year such as an argument over dress code, tardies, behavior guidelines, etc. When everyone is clear on expectations, the relationship between school, parent, and student runs more smoothly.
- 3. Practice bedtime and wake-up schedule.*
Have your child go to bed at a decent hour and wake up at a regular school time for approximately a week. If your child has been extremely off schedule for the summer, you may want to slowly change the schedule day by day and allow two weeks to achieve the goal. You may also want to start practicing with an alarm clock. Allow your child to pick out a new “school” alarm clock and start practicing. Parents can be a “back-up” plan for the morning, but kids should not depend on this. Of course, smaller children will need more assistance and responsibility can build as the child gets older.
- 4. Get basic school supplies.*
The schools typically advise to have a backpack, paper, pencils, pens, and binder ready for the first day. Other than that, teachers will prepare a list of expected supplies for classes. Some elementary teachers will even mail home a supply list so students will have everything on the first day. Kids typically enjoy purchasing these items to reflect their personalities, so make sure to take them along with you! This is a great way to show them you want to participate in school planning together!
- 5. Review social skills with your kids.*
After having a relaxed, fun summer with friends, kids may need to review appropriate school behavior and social skills. Students are expected to be respectful and responsible while on the school campus and to and from the bus stop. Remind your child that he or she doesn't need to be “best friends” with everyone, but staying away from hurtful gossip (this means spreading the gossip as well as listening to it...both are equally harmful) benefits everyone. Teachers always appreciate a well-mannered student. Remind your child to say please and thank you!

6. *Get connected with your child.*
Remember that you are your child's most important support. Your son or daughter needs you! Socially, school can be a difficult time for students of all ages. Peer pressure can be huge and you'd be amazed at some of the things that go on as early as elementary school. Remind your child that you are always a listening ear when they need to talk...and do just that...LISTEN! It's okay to use this as a time for teaching as well, but don't lecture them! I'll promise you...they WON'T listen!!

7. *Review your house rules for the school year.*
Make sure your child knows the consequences for poor grades, ditching, incomplete assignments, etc. This can prevent some of the major upheaval when he or she gets grounded! If your child has been warned that the consequence for a missing assignment is no computer for a week, he or she will be less likely to argue with you. Your response can simply be, "We discussed this issue already and you were aware of the consequence for your choice. Yes, it's a bummer you won't be able to go on AOL with your friends, but hopefully you will make a better choice next time."

8. *Go school clothes shopping together and review dress code policy BEFORE shopping!*
The school district has a strict dress code policy. With these short, short skirts that are so popular this year, the girls need to be careful! Skirts and shorts must be fingertip length. That means fingertip length while walking...NOT after yanking it down. And the tight little shirts that are so popular must cover the belly when arms are raised above the head. Do a dress code check before your child leave for school. This will prevent you from having to make an extra trip to bring her a change of clothes. And boys...NO SAGGING! Have plenty of belts on hand! Review school policy for more dress code information.

9. *Encourage your child to be involved in a school activity.*
Discuss some possible school activities that your son or daughter could join. This encourages kids to keep up grades, associate with other kids who are involved, and promotes healthy self-esteem. Be careful not to impose your interests too strongly. Allow them to explore their interests. Just because you were a musician doesn't mean they have to be! It is important that a child is involved in some type of extracurricular activity!

9. *Plan to be involved with your child's school and be aware of resources.*
Get to know your child's teachers. Ask questions when necessary. Attend school functions. Meet your child's counselor...we have enormous resources available for all types of situations. The more involvement you have during the school year, the more successful your child will be. Stay firm and structured, give lots of positive reinforcement and encouragement and have fun! These will be some of your child's most memorable years! Be involved!