



Start a Successful School Year—and Keep it Going!

“Education is not the filling a pail but the lighting of a fire.”

William Butler Yeats, poet

Whether you’ve experienced sending your child back-to-school once—or several times—or you’re sending your child back-to-school for the first time, planning and preparation are always essential elements in a successful transition from summer vacation to a full-fledged school routine. How are you helping your kids make the transition to school? Start a successful school year—and keep it going!

Tips for . . .

All parents

- Make a big deal about going back to school. When kids see how much you value education, they’re more likely to get excited about school.
- Begin helping your child get into a school routine. Have predictable bed times, meal times, and wake-up times. Talk about the importance of daily routines to do well in school.
- If your school offers a “meet your teacher” or “back-to-school open house,” plan on attending with your child. These are important events that allow kids, teachers, and parents to interact.
- Be clear about what you expect. Talk with your child about the upcoming school year. Set goals together. Throughout the year, see how those goals are coming along. Expect your child to do his or her best.
- Talk about the importance of choosing healthy foods.
- Create a back-to-school budget and stick with it. Parents and kids often have different ideas about “school necessities
- Plan a family dinner or gathering to celebrate the beginning of a new school year. Aunts, uncles, grandmothers, cousins, and neighbors make great resources for help with certain school subjects.

Parents with children ages 6 to 9

- Create a homework spot before school starts. Ideally find a place where you can sit right next to your child. You can pay bills, do work, or read while your child does homework.
- Be patient. Going to kindergarten for the first time—or attending school all day for the first time—can be exhausting for kids at this age. Many may want to take a nap after school. Let them do so.
- Plan to tuck a note in your child’s lunch box, school folder, or pocket on the first day of school. Consider doing this weekly—or even every day through the school year. Some parents draw a picture for their child.

Parents with children ages 10 to 15

- It’s okay if your child seems more interested in seeing friends at school than doing schoolwork. Friendships are important, but also emphasize the value of learning and doing your best.
- Pay attention to how your child reacts to going back to school. Some are excited. Some dread it. Some are apprehensive. Ask questions to learn more about how your child is feeling.
- Encourage your child to not worry when entering junior high and needing to move from classroom to classroom. This is a big change for kids at this age. During the first few weeks of school, most schools are flexible so that kids can figure out how to do this.

Parents with children ages 16 to 18

- By this age, teenagers often have a clearer idea of what they want to accomplish during the school year. Talk with them about their overall schedule: their classes, their activities, their jobs. Work together to create a schedule that isn’t too lax—or too demanding.
- Be particularly sensitive to the demands of high school years. The stresses are different, and teens can respond to stress in different ways. Continue to emphasize the value of your teenager doing his or her best.