

How to Start the School Year Right!

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It is hard to believe that summer is over, and a new school year is here! The beginning of a new school year is often a source of worry for parents, teachers, and students. Here are some suggestions for getting your child ready to start his/her school year right.

The First Day Jitters: Many children are nervous when anticipating a new school year. Sit down with your child and discuss the new year. Talk about catching up with old friends and meeting new ones and learning the classroom rules. Also discuss the details of the expected school day. Be sensitive to how your child feels and help him/her talk it out.



Take the Time: Getting to know your child's teacher and school are important. Let the teacher know that you would appreciate any feedback on your child's progress — both positive and negative. If something unusual is going on in your family, let the teacher know so that he/she can be sensitive to your child's needs. If you have the time, introduce yourself to other school staff members that might have contact with your child.

Finding a Place: Designate a place for your child to complete his/her homework, such as the bedroom desk or kitchen table. This place should be well-lit and as free of distractions as possible. Keep materials on hand that your child might need to complete homework— paper, pencils, and a dictionary.

Routines, Routines, Routines: Set aside a time each night to complete homework. Discuss with your child a time that might work best— right after school, after dinner, etc. Some children attend after-school programs and might be able to complete some of their homework there. If your child does attend an after-school program, review homework with him/her at home. Set aside time to study for tests or upcoming quizzes that your child might have.

High Expectations: Children respond to the expectations that the adults in their lives set for them. Help motivate your child by providing positive feedback to instill self-confidence in your child. Praise your child and make a point to encourage your child's best efforts.

Model Behavior: Children often model the behaviors they observe in adults. Read with your child at night or set aside a family reading time where everyone reads something of their choice. Keep plenty of reading materials available—books, magazines, newspapers—so that your child has something to pick up and read.



Parent-Teacher Conferences: Before parent-teacher conferences, talk with your child about what he/she thinks is going well at school and what he/she might be struggling with at school. At the conference ask about your child's progress and expect the teacher to show you samples of your child's work. Also, talk to the teacher about ways you can work at home to help your child.

Support Your School: Support your school by participating in school events. Look for specific ways that you can support your child's school. Volunteer in the classroom; offer to speak to your child's class about a special hobby or expertise you have. By volunteering at your child's school, you will send a positive message to the teachers and others that work with your child on a daily basis.

At various times during the school year, you may need to contact your school to speak with teacher, the principal, counselors, or others. Create a list of these important phone numbers and email addresses to keep in your purse, wallet, or on the refrigerator. Be sure to list the main office hours as well as important dates.

Resource

National Education Association - www.nea.org/parents/startnewyeartips.html. Retrieved 7/19/06.