

Preparing for the School Year

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“If there were no schools to take the children away from home part of the time, the insane asylums would be filled with mothers.” (Edgar W. Howe) I laughed reading this quote because most mothers I speak with all express the same sentiment. Summer is a wonderful time of the year...well, at least for kids! Most mothers are ready for the school year to begin by the time August comes around. Even the children seem ready for a change! I realize it is only July, however, September rolls around quick and here are some helps that may make coping easier as you prepare for the school year.

1. Contact the school in prior to the first day to notify the school and teachers of any specific medical or learning difficulties that need planning. Taking the initiative is a way to communicate your support of the teacher and the school with your son or daughter. If special planning is needed, it allows time for you to review the plan and provide additional information.

2. If this is your child's first year in middle school or a new elementary setting, make an appointment to take your child to school before the first day. The more a child becomes familiar ahead of time with his or her new setting, the less they will experience anxiety or stress on the first day.

3. As your child develops friendships, keep an eye out for ways to encourage ongoing times together. This usually takes place around similar interests like seeing their favorite movie, playing the same sport, participating in a similar interest like cooking or learning about the stars. The younger your child is, the smaller the goals, supporting and encouraging him or her along the way.

4. Depending on his or her personality, your child may need help organizing assignments and homework. This particular concern is a great way to work with the teacher and her deadlines. Most schools offer online access for parents to view assignments and grades. Staying in touch with your child and his/her teacher helps in the avoidance of potential pitfalls around test anxiety or lost assignments.

5. Do not hesitate to set up a regular contact time in which you receive behavior and homework updates. The end of a quarter or semester is not helpful when the success of the child is at stake. This does not mean that he or she is not responsible for their homework or behavior. Staying in touch with the school on a regular basis is a way to communicate to both the child and the school your commitment to help the child's struggle points not turn into failures. Reinforcing time management, breaking assignments down into small manageable steps and providing a place for after-school work helps in avoiding behavior AND homework hassles.

6. Ensure success with consistent discipline and include playtime. Parent with firm but loving boundaries. Children respond to and need structure. Consistently expect certain behaviors, including manners, completing their chores, and respect filled behavior. This consistency is still needed even during the summer months. Once school begins, many children need a decompression period of time after school. Find the time and behavior that best helps your child transition from school to time at home. They will be much more able to focus and manage their assignments.

As early as it may seem, the school year will be upon you quickly. Thinking ahead is helpful for you and for your child/children. In the meantime, enjoy the time you have and have a wonderful summer!

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