

## Back to School Strategies to Make a Smooth Transition

After a summer of freedom and lax rules (and occasional boredom), kids often have mixed feelings about going back to school. Younger students may be longing for the active busy-ness of school. Middle-schoolers may be anxious to get back with their friends and social events. And, high school students are a mixed bag--some will be ready to put-nose-to-grindstone; others may be dreading another year of drudgery and disappointment.

Following are some tips to help smooth the transition from summer to school. All of them apply for all age groups, but you may want to modify the specifics for your child.

**1) For a Good Morning start, get a good night's rest--**plan on a routine time to be in bed. Establish regular bedtime habits that relax and slow your child down so he/she is ready to go to sleep. Younger kids should go to bed earlier than teenagers. But teenagers often find their biological rhythms are out-a-whack. It may be too much to try to force a teen to go to *sleep* at a particular time, but you can enforce a no-TV rule and a phone curfew. Quiet reading in the evening can help your teen get into a habit of earlier to bed. FYI, most teenagers need more sleep than you'd think--and with high school starting early and homework keeping 'em up, they don't always get the sleep they need. Do your best.

**2) Prepare the night before school** so morning isn't a rush--set out school clothes, prepare lunch boxes, collect school items and put them where they'll be all together and easy to find. All kids, even teenagers need guidance to be organized. When morning time is a rush and crush, things get forgotten and the family mood can get testy. So, perhaps part of quiet time can include preparing for the next day. It's also helpful if there is a shelf or table on which each kid's stuff can be ready to grab so they can run without frantic drama.

**3) Eat a good breakfast.** Kids can focus better if they aren't hungry--so be sure they have time and the good foods are available. If you can, avoid sugary cereals--or at least complement them with milk, yogurt (for protein). Protein is digested slowly and the nutrition is time-released so kids are nourished all through the morning--ready to learn and be actively involved at school. It also makes sense to give them a dollup of Vitamins and Minerals with a piece of fruit or glass of non-sugary real fruit juices. If you can, make breakfast a sit-down event allowing enough time to avoid gulping or shoveling. An anxious body won't digest good foods as well and may actually make your student(s) physically uncomfortable.

**4) Be positive--**expect your child to enjoy school, expect enthusiasm, and share your appreciation for their effort and successes. Kids reflect what we think and say. So, be sure you talk about your positive feelings and thoughts--about school, about education in general, and proclaim your confidence that your student will enjoy school and be successful. Avoid phrases like: "I wasn't good with math either", "I always hated history

class", or "I can't believe your teacher assigned THIS"! Instead, demonstrate a positive attitude and keep your negative experiences or thoughts to yourself.

**5) Talk together** a language-rich environment is important for student success. Ask questions; listen to your child's ideas/thoughts; and share your positive experiences. Dinner-time is a great opportunity to practice language and communication skills. Turn off the TV, set the table together, sit down together and converse about your day, your child's day and what he/she learned or experienced. When your child says something you don't understand, encourage him/her to explain it to you (without judgment or argument, of course). The idea is to give your kids a positive environment to stretch their vocabulary muscles.

**6) Homework Hints**--make sure your student has a quiet place so he/she can concentrate -- or have "family quiet time" so everyone can read or do homework in a quiet environment. When you demonstrate your commitment to your child's learning process, he/she will develop respect and appreciation for learning as well. OK, maybe not right away. But when the family rule is "quiet time between 7 and 8 PM" (for example), kids are more able to focus without media distraction. Quiet background music can smooth the mood--but no TV, no Video Games, no talking on the phone. For younger kids, quiet time is a good time to read to them or with them.

For more back-to-school tips, you're encouraged to visit:

<http://www.HomeworkSuccessNetwork.com>. To be prepared is an important first step in making the transition from vacation to school easier on everyone