

HOW TO START THE SCHOOL YEAR WITHOUT ADDED STRESS



CHECK OUT THE SCHOOL

Is your child going to a new school? Or will they be unfamiliar with the part of their previous school? Walking through the school will help to reduce anxiety. Help them find the restrooms, cafeteria, nurse's office, auditorium, gym. If your child changes classrooms, walk them through their schedule.

CREATE SCHOOL SYSTEMS TOGETHER

Identify what your child's biggest organizational challenges are and come up with some solutions ahead of time. A trip to an office supply store will provide materials designed for organizing papers, supplies and time. For example: if losing homework is an issue, pocket folders that you label for work to be completed on the left...completed work on the right.

CREATE A HOME STAGING AREA TOGETHER

Choose an area near the door and equip it with cubbies or shelving, baskets, hooks, etc. Make this the home for books, homework, backpack, notes, sports bag/equipment, keys, lunches and any other school-related articles. Hang a whiteboard nearby for reminders of schedules, tasks, items needed – update it daily. If getting out the door on time is an issue, consider an alarm clock or timer.

STOCK UP ON SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Assume that your child will eventually need poster board or a protractor. Buy extra supplies now and store them where you can easily find them later. If you need ideas about what you'll need, check with a parent of a child one year ahead of yours.

PLAN AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Think about activities that will build confidence, enhance your child's strengths, provide challenges. Studies have shown that scheduling exercise into the day helps to increase focus and sharpen attention at school and at home. Sports or dance provide great physical activity... martial arts, music or chess club are great for practicing focus.

CONSIDER A TUTOR OR HOMEWORK HELPER

If you feel that your child could benefit from some help with homework, find someone now. Try a few candidates for personality fit and skill level...and let your child make the final choice. It's important to avoid someone who doesn't encourage dependence but helps with meeting challenges on their own.

MAKE A CALENDAR

Being able to see upcoming deadlines helps to give us a sense of control over our lives. Start by discussing daily, weekly and monthly schedules. Agree on routines, activities (school, extra-curricular and social) as well as other events that you and your child would like to pursue. Everyone is more likely to adhere to a schedule if they are allowed to have input.

REVIEW MEDICATIONS

If your child takes ADHD medication and was off it for the summer, you will want to start it again a few weeks before school starts. You may want to talk to you doctor about whether changes in medication are needed given the onset of puberty or increased demands at school.

SET LEARNING GOALS – TOGETHER!

Have a conversation with your child about goals for the new year where they answer questions like "My strengths and weaknesses are..." "I want to avoid..." "I want to learn..." Let them talk; you listen. Focus on strengths as well as areas that need improvement. Make sure that the goals are attainable and be sure to acknowledge them as they are met or progress is made!

REVIEW ACCOMODATION PLANS

If your child has an IEP or 504 Plan, consider whether previous goals have been met or other changes needs to be made to allow for remaining issues. You will want to schedule a meeting as soon as possible – even before school starts if that is possible. Be sure to bring report cards, teacher notes, tests – anything that will show current achievement levels. Be prepared to discuss what worked last year and goals you have for this year.