

How To Help Kids Transition Back To The Classroom

The dawn of a new school year is an exciting time. Kids may not want to say goodbye to days spent lounging by the pool, but such disappointment is often tempered by the prospect of returning to school with friends.

For parents, getting kids ready for a new school year is about more than updating their wardrobe or organizing carpools with fellow parents. Reacclimating kids to the routine of school after a relaxing summer is a significant undertaking, and the following are a handful of ways for parents to get a head start as the school year draws closer.

- Establish a routine over the last few weeks of summer. Summer vacations typically lack the structure of the school year, and that lack of structure can help kids unwind and make the most of the freedom

that summer vacation provides. But as summer starts to wind down, parents can begin to reintroduce some structure into their kids' lives to make the transition back to school go more smoothly. Plan morning activities so kids can readjust to waking up early each day. In addition, serve breakfast, lunch and dinner at the same time you typically serve it during the school year so kids' bodies can begin to readjust as well.

- Take kids along when shopping for school supplies. If you plan to buy your child a new computer or other supplies for the upcoming school year, take him or her along on your shopping trips. Kids who get to choose their supplies might be more excited about returning to school than those youngsters who are given what they need without offering their input.

- Monitor or assign summer reading. Many students are given summer reading lists to keep their minds sharp over the summer and prepare them for upcoming coursework. Parents should monitor kids' progress on such reading lists and even discuss the books with their kids when possible. Read the books along with them if you think it will help engage them. If kids were not assigned summer reading lists at the end of the school year, assign your own books, rewarding kids when they finish a new book. Kids who read throughout the summer may be more likely to start the school year off on the right foot than those who don't crack a book all summer.

- Encourage kids to sign up for extracurricular activities. Many school-aged athletes get a head start on the new school

year by trying out for sports teams. Such tryouts often commence a week or two before a school year is scheduled to begin, and this can help kids ease their way back into the school year. But even nonathletes can begin pursuing extracurricular activities before the first school bell of the year rings. Theater programs may begin auditions or encourage interested youngsters to attend orientation meetings before the dawn of the school year, and such sessions can be a great and pressure-free way for kids to ready themselves for a new school year.

The arrival of a new school year can be both exciting and daunting. But parents can help their youngsters readjust to school in various ways after a relaxing summer.

Make School Day Mornings Easier



Parents can take several steps to make sure school day mornings go more smoothly.

School day mornings can be hectic, as getting kids ready for school and out the door on time is not always easy. Working parents may find school day mornings especially difficult, as their own work schedules can make mornings feel even more rushed. Fortunately, parents can employ several strategies to free up time in the morning so everyone starts their days off in a more relaxing atmosphere.

- Wake up earlier. Sleep might seem like a precious commodity, but waking up just 10 to 15 minutes earlier can remove some of the stress from weekday mornings without costing you a lot of sack time. Let kids sleep in until their normal wake-up time, using your extra 10 or 15 minutes to shower or enjoy your morning cup of coffee before the house is abuzz with activity.

- Tackle certain chores the night before. Delaying certain chores until you wake up makes for a hectic morning, so tackle as many morning chores as possible before you go to bed for the night. Prepare school lunches, lay clothes out for yourself and your children, and make sure kids have their backpacks packed and ready to go before they go to bed. Each of these things may only take a few minutes, but when left for the morning, they can add up to a substantial amount of time.

- Encourage youngsters to pick up the pace. Some people are morning people, while others dread setting their alarms for early morning hours. Kids who fall into the latter group may drag their feet in the morning, but parents should offer encouragement when kids are moving slowly in the morning. Allowing your frustration to show may only make kids less fond of mornings, so remind them as nicely as possible that everyone has a schedule to stick to if they seem to be dragging their feet.

- Keep the television off. If watching the television is ingrained in your morning routine, try going a few days without it to see if this makes it easier to get out the door on time. Kids might grow distracted by morning cartoons, and even adults may get caught up in morning news shows or other forecasts. Eliminating television from your morning routine can save time and also may help your family grow closer, as you will have more distraction-free time to speak to one another. In addition to turning off the television, resist the urge to turn on your devices or scan work emails when getting ready in the morning.

Parents know that school day mornings can be hectic. But there are several ways to make such mornings go more smoothly so everyone gets where they need to be on time.

How Parents Can Get Involved At School

Research indicates that children whose parents get involved with their education are more likely to earn better grades and less likely to have behavior problems in the classroom.

The concept of parents working in conjunction with schools is nothing new. A 1987 study by Paul G. Fehrmann and colleagues documented the importance of parental involvement on their child's grades. Published in the *Journal of Education Research*, the study found that when parents stayed directly involved in their child's studies throughout high school, the child's grades improved.

There are many different reasons for parents to get involved with their child's school and the community. Helping their children succeed is just one of them. The choice is just how to go about connecting with the school. Here are a few ideas.

Work With The Teacher
Teachers are increasingly facing obstacles with regards to time and funding. Many must preside over large classes and are responsible for outfitting their classrooms with certain supplies. This presents ideal opportunities for parents to step up and pitch in.

Volunteering in your child's classroom is a good way for you to help his or her teacher and get a

firsthand account of what your child is doing in class. You may be asked to prepare and package homework assignments or put together materials for craft projects. Some teachers welcome parents who come in to read books to the class or even give spelling tests. Think about chaperoning a field trip or helping with the set-up and clean-up of class parties. If you keep an open dialogue with the teacher through phone calls or e-mail, you may be presented with plenty of opportunities to get involved.

Attend Meetings
Parent-teacher associations or organizations are often instrumental in helping a school to run smoothly. They are the people behind fundraisers and special activities outside of the classroom. The PTA is also privy to information on upcoming events before the rest of the school community.

Attending monthly meetings can keep you up to speed on the goings-on at your child's school. It will also ensure your voice is heard with regards to school policy. Showing your face at meetings will also give you the opportunity to meet other parents.

Attend Special Events
Not every parent can serve on the PTA or be present in the daily activities of the classroom. However,

you can show your support by attending special events hosted by the school – such as fundraisers or field-day activities.

Volunteer your time with the setup of teacher-appreciation lunches and bake sales, serve as a tour guide for the school when new parents are invited, build sets or make costumes for a school play, or take pictures of events and create a collage to be put on display in the school.

Volunteer Your Skills
Some schools can benefit from the specialized skills of parents. Ask if you can come in and talk about your job or hobby and demonstrate it to the class. Individuals who have technology skills can volunteer to install computer software or to run networking throughout the school. If you have a background in print layout, find out if you can help design and publish the school newsletter or yearbooks.

Anytime a parent volunteers his or her time, that means less funding has to go to hiring an outside vendor for the job, saving the school money it sorely needs.

Being involved in your child's school sets a positive example for your kids and provides their school with some much-needed assistance.

Easing The High School Transition

Each school year brings new opportunities. Although attending a new school can involve some butterflies as kids acclimate to their new classmates and teachers, the transition from grade school to high school is typically one of the more dramatic transitions students have to make.

Although starting high school can be an overwhelming experience full of change, there are many ways for students to ease this transition.

- Take part in high school orientation. Orientations help students acclimate to their new surroundings. Orientation sessions can provide insight on coursework and help kids learn about the campus and any amenities it provides. Learning the layout of the school in advance can help calm any first-day jitters students may encounter.

- Arrive prepared. Make sure all summer assignments



Entering freshmen can take several steps to make their transition to high school easier.

are completed so you start off on the right foot. Unprepared students are likely to be apprehensive.

- Adjust to new sleep-

wake schedules. Summer vacation may have been filled with late nights and sleepy mornings, but now that school will begin anew,

it's time for students to gradually readjust their schedules. That will make it easier to wake up for school. Many high schools

begin the day earlier than grammar schools and middle schools. It may take a few weeks to grow accustomed to the earlier hours, so start waking up earlier as the summer winds down.

- Plan to arrive with friends. Seeing familiar faces can help students feel more secure. High schools tend to be larger than grade schools and include kids from various neighborhoods, but chances are your friends will be attending the same school as you. Carpool with friends during the first week of school so your first steps on campus are with friends.

- Enroll in a mentoring program. Some high schools pair freshmen with upperclassmen so younger students can learn the ropes of the school. New students can benefit from these personalized guides and should feel comfortable asking questions about teachers and school protocol.

- Participate in clubs and extracurricular activities. Another way to feel more comfortable at a new school is to participate in activities. High schools offer numerous extracurricular activities that cater to an array of interests. Band, choir, sports teams, debate teams, student government, and foreign language clubs are just a few examples of enjoyable extracurricular activities. Joining such groups can introduce you to like-minded students.

- Arrive to class on time. Teachers may be more lenient the first few weeks of school, but over time they will expect students to learn their schedules and arrive to class on time. Students can make arrangements with friends to share lockers or employ other strategies to make it easier to get to class on time.

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How To Help Children Make New Friends

Students learn lessons each day. While many of these lessons pertain to their coursework, kids pick up much more than book smarts from school, where kids first learn to cultivate friendships and build lasting relationships.

In addition to a new curriculum, new teachers and new schedules, kids also might make new friends once a school year begins. While some familiar faces carry through from grade to grade, chances are youngsters will meet new students who will soon become good friends. While many kids find it easy to make new friends, others might need some assistance so they can make the most of opportunities to socialize and form friendships that might last a lifetime.

- Offer opportunities for socialization. Children should be given the opportunity to explore friendships outside of the classroom where peer pressure might not be so prevalent. Establish a carpool or invite a classmate over for a play date. Unstructured time to play or get to know each other

is a great way to establish friendships. Invite new children over each time to see which friendships are the strongest, but make sure you are not pushing a friendship on your child.

- Discover common interests. One of the quickest ways to build friendships is through common interests, says Kirk Martin, a behavioral therapist and author. Encourage your child to join a club or sports group where he or she can meet other kids with similar interests. Sometimes finding reasons to talk other children is the most difficult step to making new friends. Sharing a common interest removes this barrier.

- Teach proper manners. Children who are polite, well-mannered and know how to follow direction are better equipped to attract friends. Children who misbehave may be shunned by other kids and their parents who do not want the hassle of an unruly youngster coming over to play. Respectful children who are honest, trustworthy and capable of sustaining eye contact and making small talk may find it

easy to make friends.

- Take the friendship lead. As parents, you can improve your child's chances of making friends by getting friendly with their classmates' parents. You do not have to become bosom buddies with everyone, but making connections with fellow parents can reinforce the value of friendship to your children. Socializing as families also presents other opportunities to get together and solidify relationships.

- Boost confidence levels. As a parent you can talk to your children about their strengths and positive attributes. Emphasizing kids' best traits will increase their self-esteem, and that sense of self-worth can make it easier for them to make friends. A child who is shy and insecure may retreat when meeting new people, but a child who can proudly stand behind his or her accomplishments may attract friends easily.

School is about more than just hitting the books. It's also a prime opportunity for kids to develop their personal skills and make new friends.