Get in Gear for the New School Year: Back-to-School Tips for Parents


It’s almost that time of year again. Yes, in a few weeks school will be back in session. Is your child ready to succeed? Are you ready to help?

It’s a fact: Parents who play an active role in their children’s education make a huge difference in their success. Here are some things you can do to help your child prepare for the upcoming school year:

Get the children to bed on time. During the summer, children aren’t always on a schedule. But, proper rest is essential for a healthy and productive school year. Help your child get used to the back-to-school routine: start the transition now to earlier wake-up times and bedtimes. For more information, visit: http://www.ed.gov/parents/countdown-success.

Communicate with teachers and the school. Contact your child’s teachers at the start of the school year. Get acquainted with them and let them know you want to be an active partner in helping your student to learn and grow. Plan to keep track of your child’s subjects, homework, activities and progress throughout the school year. And, consider serving on your local PTA or joining other parent groups that engage with and support your child’s school. For additional ideas, go to: http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/succeed/success.pdf.

Provide for healthy meals. Hungry kids can’t concentrate on learning, so good nutrition plays an important role in your child’s school performance. Studies show that children who eat healthy, balanced breakfasts and lunches do better in school. Fix nutritious meals at home, and, if you need extra help, find out if your family qualifies for any Child Nutrition Programs, like the National School Lunch Program.

Learn more at: http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Back-To-School.shtml.

Take your child to the doctor, and make sure your child has health insurance coverage. It’s a good idea to take your child in for a physical and an eye exam before school starts. Most schools require up-to-date immunizations, and you may be asked to provide paperwork showing that your child has all the necessary shots and vaccines. So, check your state’s immunization requirements (http://www.immunizationinfo.org/vaccines/state-requirements/virginia). And, always keep your own copies of any medical records. What’s more, you can explore and choose the most affordable health insurance options (https://www.healthcare.gov/families/), including free and low-cost coverage for those who qualify for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (http://www.insurekidsnow.gov/chip/index.html). Find more student health resources at: http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Back-to-School.shtml.

Prepare a study area. Set up a special place at home to do school work and homework. Remove distractions. Make it clear that education is a top priority in your family: show interest and praise your child’s work.

Read Together. Take the pledge to read with your child for 20 minutes every day. Your example reinforces the importance of literacy, and reading lets you and your child explore new worlds of fun and adventure together.

About the Author: Diondra Hicks is a student at Georgetown University and an intern in ED’s Office of Communications and Outreach.
Seven tips for a greener back-to-school season

(BPT) - With back-to-school shopping, changing schedules and preparing kids for the upcoming school year, your family's environmental impact may be the last thing on your mind.

It is possible to have a greener back-to-school season. Here are seven simple things parents and children can do to care for the environment - and themselves - as they return to school.

1. Reuse and recycle notebooks. While high schoolers may go through multiple notebooks per subject every year, it's rare for elementary school-aged kids to use up their notebooks. Tear out used pages and recycle them, of course, from last year's notebooks so that kids can use the remaining blank pages. Use contact paper to freshen and reinforce covers that are worn or written on.

2. Give broken and worn down crayons new life. Gather all the bits and separate by color. Remove all papers. Using a mini-muffin pan (or mini ramekins in fun shapes), fill each cup with crayon pieces in one color. Melt in an oven set at 350 degrees until crayons are completely melted. Cool at room temperature, then freeze for 30 minutes to make it easier to remove the newly formed crayons.

3. Refresh smelly shoes naturally. Stinky gym bags and tennis shoes don't have to be a reality for your athletic child, and you don't have to resort to chemicals to kill odor. You can create a natural deodorizing spray with essential oils. Simply mix 12 to 16 drops of lemon oil, six drops of red thyme oil and 2 drops of patchouli oil and 4 ounces of water in a misting bottle. Shake vigorously and mist inside gym bags and shoes. The formula not only kills odors, it adds an energizing, refreshing aroma.

4. Look for ways to green your commute to school. If you live close to school, consider walking or biking. Families with longer commutes may consider carpooling or using the school bus.

5. Green lunches by packing them in reusable lunch bags (no brown bags or plastic baggies, please). Pack sandwiches in reusable sandwich containers, and use bento-style boxes with multiple compartments to hold snacks, veggies and other sides. Replace plastic water bottles with reusable bottles - plenty of fun, colorful options are available.

6. Energize naturally. Do your kids grab a sugary soft drink or sweet snack to boost their awareness while doing homework? Instead of relying on unhealthy treats for an energy boost that will come with a crash afterward, energize homework time with an essential oil diffusion. Aura Cacia offers this mood-boosting blend:

   **Ingredients:**
   - 10 drops peppermint essential oil
   - 3 drops eucalyptus essential oil
   - 2 drops ginger essential oil
   - 3 drops sweet orange essential oil

   **Directions:** Combine all oils in a mister bottle and spritz in the air around your child's work space. To give kids a boost during the school day, soak a cotton ball in the essential oils blend, slip it into a reusable plastic container and place in your child's book bag. Whenever he needs a burst of energy during the day, he can open it and take a quick whiff.

7. Lighten up your electricity use and carbon footprint. Get kids involved in a fun weekend project by replacing incandescent bulbs throughout the house with energy-efficient CFLs or LEDs. These bulbs give off the same amount of light for back-to-school tasks like homework or picking out a first-day outfit, but use about 80 percent less electricity and can last for eight or more years before needing replacement.

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**PEATC Workshops and Events: August 2014**

**Thursday, August 7, 2014** – “Transition Planning Topics” webinar, 11:00 am – 12:00 noon, featuring Julie Triplett, Disability Rights Advocate. For more information and to register, please go to: [https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/s/registrations/new?cid=64bmap7q0n7](https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/s/registrations/new?cid=64bmap7q0n7).


**Tuesday, August 19, 2014** – “Pathways to Graduation in Virginia” webinar, 11:00 am – 12:00 noon, featuring J.D. Hiznay, PLLC. For more information and to register, please go to: [https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/s/registrations/new?cid=9tlx81edf7zq](https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/s/registrations/new?cid=9tlx81edf7zq).

**Wednesday, August 20, 2014 to Friday, August 22, 2014** – “Parents as Collaborative Leaders” Regional Training, Region VII. Holiday Inn Express, 165 Malin Drive, Wytheville, VA 24382. For more information or to apply, please go to: [http://www.peatc.org/newsmanager/news_article.cgi?news_id=567&no_popup=0](http://www.peatc.org/newsmanager/news_article.cgi?news_id=567&no_popup=0).

**Monday, August 25, 2014 to Wednesday, August 27, 2014** – “Parents as Collaborative Leaders” Regional Training, Region VI. Sheraton Roanoke Hotel, 2801 Hershberger Road, Roanoke, VA 24017. For more information or to apply, please go to: [http://www.peatc.org/newsmanager/news_article.cgi?news_id=567&no_popup=0](http://www.peatc.org/newsmanager/news_article.cgi?news_id=567&no_popup=0).
Preparate y participa con tus niños este año escolar.

Se acerca el fin del verano y es tiempo de pensar en el año escolar que comienza. ¿Qué van a necesitar tus niños? ¿Van a una nueva escuela o comienzan un nuevo nivel? ¿Cómo le va a afectar los cambios? Nada mejor que estar preparados de antemano con las cosas básicas: las vacunas, las comidas escolares, el manejo de los horarios y rutinas, los útiles y la ropa. Es un buen momento para organizar tus documentos más recientes: IEPs, cartas, evaluaciones, reportes, formularios, etc. Pero también, ten en cuenta que es importante conocer a los maestros que tus hijos van a tener, averiguá cuál es la mejor manera de comunicarte con ellos, deja que te conozcan participando y ayudando en las actividades escolares cuando sea posible. Los recursos que siguen te proveen de información para ayudarte a planificar un nuevo año escolar provechoso.

**Vacunas:** Mantiene siempre una copia de las vacunas de tus niños y manda una a la escuela. Lista de vacunas que tus niños necesitan desde el nacimiento hasta los 18 años.


**Comidas en la escuela gratis o a precio reducido:** Información sobre el servicio de comidas en la escuela y formularios para obtener comidas gratuitas a gran descuento.


Comparte con tus niños ideas de cómo elegir comidas saludables en casa y en la escuela. Usa el mini poster.


**La tarea:** En esta página del gobierno de los Estados Unidos encontraras una guía sobre el tiempo que se debe dedicar a las tareas de la escuela en la casa. Una gran ayuda para organizar tu tiempo y el de tu familia alrededor de las actividades diarias.

http://www2.ed.gov/espanol/parents/academic/tareaescolar/index.html

**Útiles escolares:** Del 1 al 3 de agosto son los días designados para comprar útiles escolares que cuesten 20 dólares o menos y ropa hasta 100 dólares por artículo sin pagar impuestos en Virginia.


Y no olvides que si tienes más preguntas sobre educación especial, estamos siempre aquí para ayudarte, llámanos al 703-923-0010.

Be prepared and participate with your children this school year.

The end of summer is approaching and it’s time to think about the new school year that begins. "What will your children need? Will they start in a new school or at a new level? How will these changes affect them?" Nothing is better than being prepared in advance with the basics: immunizations, school meals, managing schedules and routines, school supplies and clothing. It is a good time also to organize your most recent documents: IEPs, letters, evaluations, report forms, etc. But also it is important to meet your children's teachers, to find out what is the best way to communicate with them, and to let them know by helping and participating in school activities when possible. The resources that follow provide you information to help you plan a constructive new school year.

**Immunization records:** Always keeps a copy of your child's immunizations and send one to school. Here is a list of vaccines that your children need from birth to age 18.


**School meals:** Information about free and reduced price meals in school. Downloadable forms to fill out.


Share ideas with your children on how to choose healthy meals at home and at school. Use the mini poster.


**Homework:** This page of the United States government's website has a guide on how much time they need to devote to homework. A great help organizing your time and your family about daily activities.

http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/homework/index.html

**School supplies and clothing:** August 1st to 3rd are the designated days to buy school supplies items costing $20 or less and for clothing up to $100 per item without paying taxes on Virginia.


If you have more questions about special education, call us at 703-923-0010, we are here to help you.
**Transition Corner**

**Are You Ready for Transition Planning? - by Sherri Coles, Transition Specialist and Resource Developer**

Getting our children and young adults ready for a new school year involves planning and preparation. Is your student in high school? How are plans for his/her transition coming along? In Virginia, the IEP must contain transition goals by the time the student turns 14.

What exactly is transition? It is about preparing for life as an adult, when the student graduates or ages out of school. Everyone has dreams for what they want to do, where they want to live, what kind of job they want when they “grow-up”. Students with disabilities are no different. They dream and worry about life as an adult, just as everyone does. Transition planning is required for all students with an IEP by IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This is the Federal law governing educational services for students with disabilities.

So what is a transition plan, and how does it help?

A transition plan is a series of goals and objectives that will help the student who has an IEP gain the skills and knowledge necessary to be as independent as possible as an adult. It is based on the student’s hopes and dreams for the future. It is a plan to follow to achieve the student’s goals for employment, post-secondary education, vocational training, independent living, social engagement, community involvement, self-determination and advocacy, decision-making skills and, if needed, daily living skills. If that seems like a lot, it is! That’s why it is so important to begin early.

For children without disabilities, the road to independence and adulthood can be hard, but for those with disabilities, it can seem daunting. They often don’t pick up on social cues, and may not have the vision—yet—of how they will live and function as an adult. Parents will probably not always be around when their young adult with a disability is an adult. You want to leave your child with the knowledge, skills and support they will need to have a happy and meaningful life—and transition plans should address this.

Transition plans also need to connect the student with the adult services they will need as an adult, when they are finished with school. That’s why transition planning and preparation is so vital. It will help your young adult achieve their dreams and to have a meaningful adult life.

Please check out our website for more detailed information on transition at www.peatc.org, or sign-up for one of our parent trainings or webinars on transition. Ask your school district to schedule a workshop if there is not one in your area. We will have two transition webinars in August on the 7th and the 19th; "Transition Planning Topics": http://www.peatc.org/eventmanager/event_info.cgi?event_id=260 and "Pathways to Graduation in VA": http://www.peatc.org/eventmanager/event_info.cgi?event_id=261.

Remember, you can help your child be ready for adulthood by making sure there is a great transition plan in place.

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**Family Engagement Corner**

**Back to School - by Rhonda Pratt, Family Engagement Specialist**

When my children were young I looked forward to this time of the year. Although it meant the end of summer, shopping for school supplies, and getting ready to return to work, I looked forward to the changing of the seasons and the opportunity for my children to learn something. Like many of you, I wanted my children to obtain the academic and social skills that would be the foundation for a brighter future. I hoped each year would help them understand the importance of becoming a lifelong learner.

However, as a parent and educator, I believe how I prepared for the year would be a determining factor in how successful my children would be. So, I would like to offer you several tips that you can use to have your child prepare for the upcoming school year:

- Ensure that your child has a consistent morning and bedtime routine before school begins
- If possible, arrange to introduce your child to the teacher prior to the first day of school
- Review all school-related documents (assessments, IEP, health record, immunization record, supply list, etc.)
- Prepare a “snapshot” of your child for your child’s new teacher (i.e. allergies, interests, last book read, sports or hobbies, triggers, etc.)
- Take your child to the local library to obtain a library card

These are just some of the things you can do to help your child prepare for this new season. Your child will be looking to you in the days ahead and how you prepare for this time of transition is important. Transitions from grade level to grade level are sometimes difficult, especially for children with disabilities; they thrive on routines. However, like all children, they will have to work to build new relationships with peers and staff, learn new material, and learn new routines and procedures. So, your active participation in their school life will assist them in making a smooth transition. Perhaps you can consider joining the PTA, becoming a classroom parent, or joining and participating in another parent group (inside or outside your child’s learning community). Your increased participation in your child’s school can enhance your relationships with school staff as well as improve your child’s attitude toward school. As your child’s first teacher your positive attitude, active engagement, and advocacy will make all the difference in their school life.