It's BACK-TO-SCHOOL time in August!

From the Director's Desk by Suzanne Bowers - "Back-to-School Checklist"

The start of the school year is upon us, and as a mother of four and previous teacher, I have LOTS of advice for how to make it run smoothly...but then life happens and we all struggle the same to get through those first few weeks of school, regardless of our best efforts to plan! So since I haven’t perfected the act of creating the perfect, stress-free way to start off the school year, I’m going to share one of my favorite checklists with you that was written by Meryl Ain, Ed. I hope it helps you to make the journey easier!

1. Know the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of all your children’s teachers, principal, other school administrators, and school nurse.
2. Find out if anything that might affect your child has changed since the last school year. With budget cuts, schools have reduced services and personnel, so just don’t assume that everything is the same. Are time schedules the same? Does your child still have bus service? Are there any late buses? Does your school district still offer full-day kindergarten? Is the person you expected to be your child’s teacher still there, or has she been reassigned or moved? Does the school have the same principal and assistant principals? Have sports or music or art been reduced?
3. Know your school and school district websites, and check them frequently for calendar changes, meeting announcements and minutes, news, policies and procedures, and other information.
4. Find out how your school communicates important information with parents and then be alert to those messages. Is it by automated phone message, e-mail blasts, electronically through systems such as Parent Portal, newsletters, snail-mail, or in your kids’ backpacks?
5. Keep the school calendar in an accessible area and check it frequently.

6. Find out when Meet-the-Teacher evenings are held, and do your best to attend them for each of your children even if they’re seniors in high school. If you can’t attend, contact the teachers to let them know you are an interested and involved parent.
7. Know when PTA meetings are held, attend them, and become an active member. This is the single, best way to keep informed and become involved in your children’s schools.
8. Know when and where Board of Education meetings are held, attend them, and feel free to voice your opinion during the public participation part of the meeting if you have something important you want to share. You must sign up to speak before the meeting.
9. Know the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of the Board of Education members and the District Clerk. In public school districts, trustees are elected by the residents and are usually responsive to their constituents’ opinions and problems.
10. Know the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of your Superintendent of Schools and other district-wide administrators. If your child has a particular issue, such as a medical problem, food allergy, or learning disability, it’s important to know the name and contact information for the central office administrator in charge of that issue. Although it is always desirable to follow the chain of command, i.e., teacher or school nurse, then principal, sometimes it’s necessary to go to a higher level in advocating for your child. Be proactive and have that information at your fingertips in case it’s needed.

Latino Corner by Arianna Sweeney

Consejos para que el regreso a la Escuela sea más tranquilo

El comienzo del año escolar conlleva muchos cambios y retos. Nuevos maestros, nuevos horarios y nuevas exigencias escolares. Estos consejos son clave para planear un año escolar exitoso. A continuación, 6 consejos efectivos para el regreso a la escuela.

Ir a la cama temprano
Durante el verano, los niños no siempre siguen un horario de ir a la cama, pero durante el año escolar – es esencial que los niños vayan a la cama temprano. De esta forma podrán permanecer saludables y productivos durante todo año. Ajuste gradualmente la hora de dormir, logre que su hijo se vaya a dormir un poco más temprano cada día hasta que la escuela comience. Un cambio paulatino cada noche no será tan obvio para su hijo.

Comunicarse con los profesores y la escuela en general
Contacte a los profesores de su hijo al principio del año escolar. Haga que ellos conozcan de usted y entable una comunicación estable, hágalos saber que usted quiere participar en las actividades escolares de su niño. Manténgase al día con las materias, tareas, proyectos, actividades y el progreso a través del año escolar. Consideré en ser parte a la asociación de Padres y Profesores u otros grupos para padres de familia.

Prováles Comidas Saludables
Niños que tienen hambre, les es difícil concentrarse en la escuela. Una buena nutrición juega un papel muy importante en el desarrollo de aprendizaje de su niño. Estudios muestran que los niños quienes mantienen una dieta nutritiva y saludable, comiendo un buen desayuno y un almuerzo regular – tienen un mejor rendimiento en la escuela.

Qué la compra de útiles escolares sea una tarea en equipo
Involver a los niños puede facilitar la preparación para el nuevo año escolar. Hablar de la escuela antes de que finalicé el verano puede fomentar el entusiasmo. Al mismo tiempo, pasando tiempo juntos preparando para volver a la escuela podría ayudar a sus niños a compartir preocupaciones que tengan acerca este nuevo año escolar. Sabiendo de esas pequeñas preocupaciones le ayudara a pensar acerca posibles soluciones.

Prepare un área de estudio
Establezca un área específica para que su niño pueda hacer sus tareas y proyectos. Nueva todas las distracciones posibles. Ponga en claro que la educación es un asunto de prioridad para su familia: muestre interés y admiración por el gran trabajo que sus hijos hagan, eso los mantendrá motivados para querer ser mejor.

Qué la lectura sea divertida y esencial
Puede ser que durante el verano se tomara una corta vacación de leer, pero encontrar maneras divertidas para leer antes de que empiece la escuela puede facilitar la transición. Haga la promesa de leer por 20 minutos cada día con sus niños. Su ejemplo será de gran influencia y reforzará la importancia que tiene el saber leer y escribir. La lectura ayudara a usted y su niño a explorar nuevos mundos de diversión y aventuras juntos.

Parent Tips for a Smooth Back-to-School Transition

The start of school brings a lot of changes—new teachers, new schedules and new school demands. These tips are the key to help plan a successful transition. Here are six parent-tested tips for back-to-school.

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 to adjust bedtime gradually to get used to the back-to-school routine: start the transition now to earlier wake-up times and bedtimes. A subtle change each night won’t be obvious to your child.

Communicate with teachers and the school
Contact your child’s teacher 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 engaged with and support your child’s school.

Provide for Healthy meals
Hungry Kids cannot concentrate on learning, so good nutrition plays an important role in your child’s school performance. Studies show that children who eat healthy, balanced breakfast and lunches do are more productive, stay focus and do better in school.

Making Shopping for School supplies a team effort
Getting kids involved in the planning stages can make the actual transition to school easier. At the same time talking about going back-to-school as summer winds down can build excitement. By spending time together getting ready for school, your child may also bring out some concerns for this new school year. Know what they are might help you already planning on finding solutions.

Prepare a study area
Set up a special place at home to do school work and homework on daily basis. Remove all distractions. Make it clear that education is a top priority in your family: show interest and praise your child’s work. That will keep the motivated and will always want to do their best.

Make reading fun and fundamental
Summer ay have been a mini-vacation from reading, but finding way to read before school starts can help ease the transition. 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.
Mental Health Corner by Caroline Gendelman - "Back to School, Not Back to Stress"

We have been reading about “Free Range Parenting.” It has been touted as a style, view, and option. School commencing is on the horizon and we realize there is no mention of “Free Range Schooling.” A child’s school career mimics an adult’s professional life. His time is dictated by a schedule he does not determine. The arrival time, departure time, restroom use and meals are all dictated by “the person in charge”. In between arriving and leaving the duties are scheduled and planned by the same person. How do we as adults feel when we have our every minute structured by someone else?

On the up side, known structure, and expectations can be comforting. On the down side, there is little or no allowance for personal input or preference. When a person is expected to meet specific goals with no control as to how and when to do it, inner tension can build.

No one denies that children need guidance and structure. A child who has special needs may depend on a predictable routine even more. Scheduling a child’s day is like a gourmet recipe. It must have the right measure of mental activity, physical activity, quiet (or self) time, mental stimulation and social interaction. Is this the same for every person? Is it the same for us each day?

As caregivers we must be conscious of the child’s mind coming into the school year. Preparing him for the transition is key, as we know. Here are a few practical tips for closing summer and welcoming the classroom.

1. Take your child by his school several times. Do a “drive by.” Simply keeping it familiar in his mind will ease his tension.
2. Make shopping for school supplies fun. Make it a special trip and cap it with lunch or snack at a special place.
3. Take advantage of an open house to meet his teacher and maybe meet classmates.
4. Arrange his daily routine to mirror that of his school day. (waking, dressing, snacks, bedtime)
5. Talk, talk and listen, listen. Talk about what will be expected from him by you and his teacher. Ask him what his goals and wishes are for school.
6. Offer your child’s teacher a list of his particulars. Does he need quiet time after lunch? Does he need “outside” time after lunch? Is he especially sensitive to stories of animals? Is he tense during thunderstorms?

As caregivers, this can be a very intense time. One article for further reading, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn/201408/the-danger-back-school, gives a sobering look into what the regimen of school can feel like to our child. On a lighter note, actions, like mediation can work well for us all to reduce stress levels.

Please remember, school resuming is a cycle. Our children take cues from us. We must lead them towards ease and adaptability. When school begins, our children will get to see friends, feel the investment of his teacher and we know we are sharing our magnificent creation.

PEATC On Demand and In the Spotlight by Kristin Kane - "Back to School"

Research shows that students who actively participate in the IEP process are more likely to achieve their academic and personal goals. So as we begin to think about heading back to school in less than a month, why not start thinking about how your child can participate in their Individual Education Plan or IEP this year. To learn more about involving your child in the IEP process check out our webinar: Students in the Driver’s Seat Student led IEPs: https://youtu.be/LMU2NoOABAg

Within this webinar you will find many tips and resources. One Virginia based resource mentioned is the I’m Determined website. That can be found here: http://www.imdetermined.org/

The I’m Determined One Pager is a great tool and children of any age can use this worksheet to participate in their IEP meetings or with their IEP team. A child’s participation can vary depending on the comfort level of your child. That worksheet can be found here: http://www.imdetermined.org/quick_links/one_pager
Early Childhood Corner by Lakeshia Yancey - "Count down to the first day of school"

As summer winds down you may be starting your count down for the first day of school! This may be a scary time for parents knowing you are sending your baby off to a new world. Whether it’s the big step to preschool or kindergarten, summer is the time to prepare your child and yourself. You will want to find ways to prepare your children that are appropriate for their development level. A new classroom will introduce your family to new teachers, parents, and potential friends. Take this time to let your child participate in play groups, join in play at the local parks, or kid friendly activities. This will give them a chance to interact with a diverse group of children and personalities; this will be something they encounter in school. Go on visits to your child’s new school so they will get familiar with the building. Check out the playground on site, this may make them a little more excited. Also take the time to point out things on the ride so that it will become part of a routine. Read books with plenty of pictures that show children going to school, the items they may see, and the activities that they may participate in. Most importantly, create some form of an “All About Me” fact sheet about your child. Feel free to contact PEATC to get a copy of the “Family Transition Toolkit”. This will help you give teachers and service providers an insight into who your child is.

Parents also need to prepare themselves. Schedule a time to tour your child’s new school prior to the beginning of the school year, if possible. Talk to other parents in support groups who may have children entering school and those who are experienced. While on your rides to the school, time the trip so that you can make sure you are prepared to make the adjustments in your family’s morning and afternoon schedules. If your child has an IEP make sure you are familiarizing yourself with your child’s goals so that you know what to look for in progress reports and to also know what you can do to bridge the home to school connection and reinforce those goals at home. If you need any additional tips on getting back to school ready feel free to contact PEATC.


Family Engagement Corner by Tina Norris - “It’s That Time Again”

Uniforms, books, pens and pencils, children scurrying down the hallways, laughter and cheer – it sounds like school will soon be in session. Where has the summer gone? When the summer winds down, it is time for a new school year.

What a wonderful time for families to rally together to prepare for the upcoming school year. Change is never easy however, engaged families can assist their children with the transition. Some children may experience anxiety or fear about going to a new school, while others will return to familiar surroundings and reacquaint with old friends. Either way, our children have a bright future ahead of them with untapped possibilities and new beginnings. The sky is the limit to what they can achieve this year.

Parents as you prepare your children and yourselves for this upcoming school year re-establish your child’s school routines and nurture their independence. Parents, decide early to be more involved this year than last. Plan to join your local PTA. Engage more with your child’s teachers and the administration. Volunteer when your schedule permits. Children gain a sense of pride and thrive when their families are engaged in their schooling.

This is going to be the best year ever for you and your child. Enjoy the journey, together!
**Tuesday, August 4, 2015** - Exceptional Family Member's Program (EFMP) and School Liaison Officer's (SLO) Training; PEATC and VDOE are co-sponsoring this training for EFMP and SLO personnel at the Clubs at Quantico, 3017 Russell Rd, Quantico, VA 22134. REGISTRATION REQUIRED: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EFMPSLO](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EFMPSLO).

**Wednesday, August 5, 2015 to Friday, August 7, 2015** - Parents As Collaborative Leaders (PACL) training; PEATC and VDOE are co-sponsoring this training for Military members, dependents and professionals who serve them at the Clubs at Quantico, 3017 Russell Rd, Quantico, VA 22134. REGISTRATION REQUIRED: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2015PEATCPACL](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2015PEATCPACL).


**Wednesday, August 12, 2015 to Thursday, August 13, 2015** – PEATC will be an exhibitor at The Virginia Head Start Association (VAHSA)'s "Infant & Toddler Conference" at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel, 24 South Market Street, Staunton, VA 22401. CONFERENCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED: [http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07eb112sjf2399e086&llr=ahuqcqda2](http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07eb112sjf2399e086&llr=ahuqcqda2).

**Friday, August 14, 2015 to Saturday, August 15, 2015** – PEATC will be an exhibitor for Surfers Healing’s Virginia Beach camp between 2nd & 5th Streets and Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA. For more information, please go to: [http://surfershealingvb.org](http://surfershealingvb.org).

**Wednesday, August 19, 2015** - PEATC will be an exhibitor for the Stuart Pyramid Resource Fair 2015 from 2 - 7 p.m. at J.E.B. Stuart High School, 3301 Peace Valley Lane, Falls Church, VA 22044. For more information, please go to: [http://www.stuartpyramidfair.org](http://www.stuartpyramidfair.org).

**Wednesday, August 19, 2015 to Friday, August 21, 2015** - Parents As Collaborative Leaders (PACL) training; PEATC and VDOE are co-sponsoring this training for Foster Care and Kinship families and those that serve these families at the Tides Inn, 480 King Carter Drive, Irvington, VA 22480. REGISTRATION REQUIRED: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2015PEATCPACL](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2015PEATCPACL).

**Saturday, August 22, 2015** - PEATC will be an exhibitor for the South Lakes Pyramid Back to School Bash from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at South Lakes High School, 11400 South Lakes Dr., Reston, VA 20191. For more information, please contact Amanda Riley, Community Organizer & Wellness Support Lead, Southgate Initiative at Amanda.riley@cornerstonesvva.org, or Claudia Thomas, FCPS Region 1 Representative, Family and School Partnerships at cethomas1@fcps.edu.

**Wednesday, August 26, 2015 to Friday, August 28, 2015** - Parents As Collaborative Leaders (PACL) training IN SPANISH; PEATC and VDOE are co-sponsoring this training for families that speak Spanish at the Hyatt Fairfax at Fairlakes, 12777 Fair Lakes Circle, Fairfax, VA 22033. REGISTRATION REQUIRED: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2015PEATCPACL](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2015PEATCPACL).