
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Settling into a new school year



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

The excitement of the first day of school wears off pretty quickly for some students. For them, the start of a new school year is just a distraction from start-of-school stress.

Students who appreciate the comfort of a stable routine will settle into the school-year schedule, but it may take some time. PBS Parents offers the following tips to set the tone for a positive new school year and help your child settle into a new routine (<http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/starting-school/settling-in/>):

Get to know the teacher.

Establish a positive relationship with your child's teacher to help her feel safe in the learning environment.

Send your child off with a good feeling.

Encourage her to make friends on the bus. Create a special good-bye between you both. Connect to other parents at the bus stop or on the walk to school.

Let your child show off her classroom work.

During drop-off, take an interest in your child's classroom projects. Ask her to show you some of her work and tell you what she's been doing. Praise her for her efforts, set a positive tone about the classroom environment.

Bring something from home to help minimize homesickness.

Children who miss their parents may benefit from having a small object from home or from the parent. A photo, note or special object may provide a source of comfort during the school day.

For the child who says, "I don't want to go," talk to the teacher.

Remind her of the fun things she likes about school and her new friends.

For the child who says, "I hate school," talk to the teacher or ask your child if she would like to talk to the teacher.

Kids may worry about school procedures or classroom routines. Talking it through may be all that's needed to ease your child's fear.

Be prepared for emotional venting at the end of the day.

If your child had a hard day, they may take it out on family members. Kids often save difficult feelings for the safe environment of their home.

For longer transition problems, ask your school for help.

If your child is still struggling to settle into the new year, ask for adjustment tips from the teacher, guidance counselor or principal. Schedule the first meeting without your child. Future meetings can include her.

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Keep things running smoothly all year long

To ensure a good school start and a smooth year, see back-to-school transition tips by Ted Feinberg, EdD, NCSP, & Katherine C. Cowan, National Association of School Psychologists (www.nasponline.org/resources/home_school/b2shandout.aspx).

Set up homework space.

Let older children choose a quiet space. Set aside space near you for younger children.

Find a regular place to stow backpacks and lunches.

Set aside a designated spot for these important school items to make it easier to organize and find things.

Make school lunches the night before.

Reduce stress in the morning by making lunch and laying school clothes out the night before.

Get up early enough to have plenty of time to get ready.

Minimize potential early morning stress by building in plenty of extra time to get ready.

Discuss what your child will be learning.

Talk to your child about what he is learning during the year. Be enthusiastic and encourage him to be patient and positive.

Model a positive outlook.

If your child seems anxious, be optimistic and confident and let him know it is okay to be nervous. Assure him that he will feel better as the school year becomes more familiar.

Arrange play dates.

Help your child establish good social relationships with peers by setting up play dates during the first few weeks of school.

Volunteer in the classroom.

If you can, volunteer in the classroom throughout the year to help out, get to know your teacher, the classroom routine and students, and show your child that you are involved in his education.

If your kids do extracurricular activities, go for quality, not quantity.

Your child will benefit most from one or two activities that are fun, reinforce social development, and teach new skills. Too much scheduled time can be stressful.

Coordinate schedules with the school.

Talk to your teacher about which days have a bigger homework load and schedule activities around them.

Find non-organized enrichment activities.

If your child does not want to participate in regular, organized extracurricular activities, find other options that meet his interests, such as local library reading programs and community center drop-in activities.