
READY for SCHOOL News: Back to School Routines

Many of us have delightful memories of summer nights – playing flashlight tag in the dark, sleeping outside in a tent, or just “hanging out” on the porch watching the stars. Children need and benefit from relaxed times out of the daily routine. However, some children will be entering more formal schooling in the fall. While it is wonderful to give children the opportunity for a more relaxed schedule during the summer, August is the time for easing children gradually back into a routine so that when school starts, it won’t be an abrupt transition. Here are some ideas for easing the transition into school:

- Start re-implementing your regular routines during August. If you let your child stay up a little later during the summer, gradually get back to the bedtime you will expect when school starts. Talk to your child about why you are doing this and how it will help his/her transition back to school.
- “Rehearse” packing lunches in the morning, if that will be part of the fall routine, so that you will know how much extra time it will take and what supplies you will need to have on hand. If your child will purchase lunch, begin collecting dollar bills and change in a location in the kitchen so you will have it handy. Find out how much lunch will cost and practice together counting out lunch money.
- If your child takes a nap, begin decreasing nap time so that he/she will be ready for a full day without a nap by the time school starts.
- Do a “dry run” of the new morning routine, whether it is walking to the bus stop, driving to the new school, etc. to see how much time it will take. Remember, it almost always takes more time than you think, especially when the unexpected happens (you have to go back for homework, sneakers for gym, etc.)
- If you haven’t done so already, make a visit to the new school to meet your child’s teacher and other familiar faces (secretary in the office, etc.). If this doesn’t work with your schedule, maybe a relative or neighbor whose child attends the same school can take your child.
- Make sure you and your child know the routine for before and after school care – where he/she will go, how he/she will get between school and child care, etc.
- Have a back-up plan for what to do in case you are late. You probably had a plan for your current early childhood center, but be sure that your emergency pick-up people know where the new school/after-school program is located and what the pick-up routine is there. Better to prepare ahead of time than wait for an emergency.
- Your child may have been used to eating breakfast at your early childhood center. Breakfast will not be available in many schools, so plan extra time during August to get in the routine of having a good breakfast before leaving for school.

With a little bit of advance preparation, the transition to school can be a very positive one for you and your child. Enjoy this next stage in your child’s life and in your life as a parent.