

READY for SCHOOL Parent News: Back to School Routines

July may seem early for some to begin to think about Back to School routines, but for those who start school in early to mid-August, it is just around the corner. Thinking ahead about preparing yourself and your child for formal school entry will help the transition go much more smoothly. Here are some thoughts:

- Separations can be hard at any age, but even children who have separated from their parents easily for years, may have some hesitation at the thought of entering a new school alone. Talk together about the routine ahead of time. “I am not going to be able to walk you to your classroom like I could at preschool. I will walk you to the bus/school door, give you a hug, and then I’ll have to leave.” You can try special touches like giving your child a family picture to tuck in his/her pocket or lunchbox.
- Recognize that separation may be as hard for you as the parent as it is for your child. Give yourself a chance to notice your feelings, talk about them to your partner or friends, and also congratulate yourself for helping your child reach this significant milestone. A few tears from both you and your child are to be expected.
- Some schools will be less welcoming to parent visits and involvement than your early childhood program was. The program may also seem a little less personal than what you were used to. You may have to be the assertive one in getting to know your school personnel, policies and routines. Make sure that you meet your child’s teacher and that you introduce yourself to people in the office. You may have to take the initiative to stay informed. Look for opportunities to get to know other parents of students in your child’s class.
- Write appreciative notes to your child and occasionally put them in your child’s lunch bag.
- Expect that your child may not give you a lot of details about the school day when you ask. You may have to wait until your child is ready to talk, which could be right before bed, during a long car ride, etc. You could try having each family member share something about their day during dinner. That way it won’t feel as much like your child is being “grilled” for information.
- Go together to buy school supplies – a lunch box or bag, pencils, backpack, etc. Many schools have particular things your child will need, so you may want to save some purchases until after the first day to learn specific school requirements.
- If your child will be riding a bus for the first time, you might try practicing first. Is there public transportation that you could ride together to experience what riding a bus is like?
- Work out a homework routine early in the school year. You might decide that your child is to complete his/her homework while attending an after-school program. Or you might decide that you’d like to be a part of the homework process and want your child to save it until he/she is home with you. Whatever you decide, set the practice in place right from the start of the school year and show your child that you value homework completion.

All of these things are challenging when you are a full-time parent working outside the home. Do the best you can and don’t dwell on what you can’t do. Celebrate this milestone that you and your child have reached together.

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