

Preparing Your Child for School

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For many children the most challenging part of going back to school is all the changes. There's the new teacher and new classroom, new expectations, new situations and there are new routines. Change, and its unknown elements, can be scary for our children. Preparing your child for the changes to come can help alleviate some of that stress and anxiety and let them know what to expect ahead of time. Here are a few suggestions to help prepare your child for their first days back:

- Start the routine early. A week or so before the start of school, begin putting your child to bed at a normal time for a school night. Also try to wake them up, get them dressed and fed like on a regular school morning.
- Create a social story with pictures to let your child know how they will get to and from school, what the school and classroom looks like, who they may see at the school such as support staff, what a typical day will look like and the expectations of a typical day. Most schools can create one for you. *Visit the WRFN Blog to find a sample Back-to-School social story you can customize for your child.*
- Create a calendar to count down the days left until school begins.
- Get familiar with the school. Before the first day, visit the school with your child so that the route, the building and school surroundings become familiar. Find out what door they will line up at and point it out to your child.
- Call your school the last week of August to arrange a meeting with the new teacher. This will allow you and your child to ask any questions and the teacher to ask questions as well. Ask if you'd be able to take a quick tour of your child's classroom and the area of the school they will frequent the most.
- Set "at home" ground rules. Figure out priorities for after-school activities, homework, chores, TV time, and video games before the first day of school. This will allow you to agree on a schedule and avoid confrontation later on.
- Encourage questions. Give your child the confidence to ask questions in all situations. Let your child know that it's ok to tell the teacher if something is hard to understand or if there is a problem in the classroom.

Preparing the School for Your Child

One of the best ways to plan for a successful school year is to make the school aware of your child's needs. If the school staff know ahead of time what your child needs to be successful at school, plans and strategies can be put into place immediately. The following are a few suggestions of things you can do to prepare the school for your child:

- Create an *All About Me* document outlining your child's strengths, interests and challenges for the classroom teacher, Educational Assistants and special education resource teacher. The All About Me page can also include strategies

to help staff in challenging situations. This page is also very helpful if there is a supply teacher in the classroom who may not know your child. Enlist your child's help, if they are able, as another way to prepare them for the new school year. *Visit the WRFN Blog to find a sample All About Me page.*

- Create a Needs Statement for your child. A needs statement is a more formal document than the *All About Me* Page. This document can address each of your child's specific challenges and what accommodations and/or modifications and possible strategies will help your child to be successful. *Visit the WRFN Blog for a sample Needs Statement.*
- If there have been any changes to your child's needs or any major changes in your family that will affect your child, inform the school before school starts.
- If your child has been in a camp over the summer or in therapy, ask the individuals involved to put together a small report on successful strategies they used so you can share a professional point of view with the school.
- Let your school know how you are dealing with certain situations or behaviours at home so they can address them in the same manner. Consistency is key.
- Make sure the school knows what your child is capable of so they have the same expectations at school that you have at home.

Preparing Yourself for the School Year

Keeping yourself educated and informed about what's happening in your child's classroom, school and school board is important. Being aware of changes to come can help you be a better advocate for your child. Here are a few ways you can keep yourself involved and informed.

- Get involved with the your school's parent council or volunteer in your child's classroom. By becoming involved, even in a small way at your child's school, you become known as a partner instead of "that parent." It will also give you a chance to observe your child in the classroom setting.
- Get involved with your school board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). Meetings are held once a month and anyone can attend, although visitors cannot take part in discussions. SEACs give recommendations to the school board trustees regarding special education issues and representatives from a wide group of special needs sit on the SEAC. Visit your school board's website to find out when the next SEAC meeting will be held.
- Start a communication system between yourself and the teacher. Whether it be a communication book you write back and forth in, a formalized page your child helps fill out about their day, or a quick chat at pickup, find out the best way your child's teacher can keep you informed of the day-to-day events.

- If your child has one, review their Independent Education Plan (IEP) a few weeks before school. How have your child's needs changed over the summer. Have they mastered new skills? Set up a meeting later in the month to discuss any changes.
- Have a binder or some organization system ready for any documentation you may receive from the school.
- Know your child's rights. It's important to know your child's rights under the Education Act. ✨

What's NEW

Wheelblades

These small, but durable skis that fit onto the small wheels of a manual wheelchair can make it easier to maneuver through the snow. The blades are easy to install. They are placed on the front wheels with just one click and bindings are available for several different wheel sizes. \$200-300. Visit www.wheelblades.ch for more details. ✨



BACK TO School

Need information?

If you have a school-aged child, contact the Association to receive a free copy of:

- ✓ Education Handbook for Parents of School-Aged Children
- ✓ Students with Spina Bifida and/or Hydrocephalus – An Educator's Guide
- ✓ A Teacher's Guide to Hydrocephalus
- ✓ Making the System Work

Need advice?

Understanding the special education maze. Advocating for your child's needs.

We can help!

Call SB&H at 800-387-1575 for more information.

