

# Better Parenting: 8 Tips To Help Your Kids Have a Smooth Start For The New School Year

By Sonia Spackman

Starting school after summer's end can be hard for kids. Many kids worry about fitting in and making friends before they start to think about learning and homework. Here are 8 tips you might try to make the school year easier for your child and you.

## 1. If your child is worried or nervous about school

Let your child know it's normal to be nervous. Let your child share their feelings and worries while you just listen. I discovered with my own kids that I needed to let them "just talk" without trying to change their thinking. It's ok to ask questions, what kids don't want is lectures. Share some positive or funny stories about your back to school jitters.

## 2. If your child doesn't want to go back to school

**Elementary School** --Maybe you could call the grade school and see if the teacher is available to meet your child for a brief visit and see the classroom. If

your child walks to school, walking your child to school a few times before and after school starts might help him or her become more familiar with the school. Maybe you can buy something special as a way of "looking forward" to the first day of school. You might say: "You can have your game, toy or book when you get home from school. When school starts give your child a family picture, or write a note to put in the backpack as a reminder of what time you will be back to pick up your child.

**Middle/High School** --Stress can intensify when kids make the leap from grade school to middle school or middle school to high school. With older kids you can go over their class schedule with them so they know where each classroom is located, especially if this is their first year in a Vernonia School. Suggest activities your child might like to get involved in that are enjoyable to them. You could point out, "Next year you will be the experienced kid that can help the new kids around.

## 3. Teach your kids to organize first

Tell the kids that you are setting

aside part of a day to help them organize their rooms. Get rid of the clutter and have them organize their drawers and closets. With a clean room, you'll get your kids started on the right foot. Train your children to keep their supplies in their backpacks. Make a habit with the kids to lay out their clothes the night before so it's easier to get ready for school in the morning. Have them immediately put homework in the backpack with any books that were used and place in the same exact spot every day, such as by the door. This will save you and the kid's morning panic trying to gather up homework and find the backpack. Also be sure to check the backpack each day for any information sent home from the school.

## 4. Fuel the mind and the body

The most important way to ensure your child's success is to make healthy meals and snacks for your kids and cut back the sweets and caffeine drinks. Eating too much sugar hinders their brain. It acts like a drug, making them tired, irritable and foggy or hyper. Brain healthy foods for breakfast might be oatmeal with raisins, string cheese with wheat crackers and fruit or scrambled eggs with cheese in a tortilla. Afternoon snacks could be string cheese, prepackaged fruit cups or oatmeal raisin cookies, air-popped or low fat popcorn with a sprinkle of Parmesan cheese.

## 5. Set a time and place for homework and chores

Before school starts set aside time each day your children will use for homework and chores. It is a good idea to have an hour of fun and a snack after school and then it's time to do the homework. Homework should start before 5:00 p.m. This routine helps kids develop the habits for tougher and longer assignments that are required for middle school and high school. Help your child learn to be a self-starter when it comes to

homework and planning for projects and tests. Post a calendar on a wall, door or desk just for tests and projects.

## 6. Plan for enough sleep and begin quickly

If your kids have been staying up later during the summer like most kids, start getting them to bed a little earlier each night and waking up a little earlier each day. The last thing you want is the hassle of trying to get them out of bed in time for school starting the first day. Kids need to be rested to do well in school. Start getting the kids into the routine by turning off the TV and video games 15 minutes earlier each night. Get them to bed another 15 minutes early the next nights and up an additional 15 minutes each morning until they are at the routine they need to get their rest.

## 7. Help your kids develop a love for reading

Make reading important in your home. Read aloud to your child or set aside time where you have your child read to you – or maybe your family can read silently together. Teach your kids to be interested in books – for every interest there is a book or magazine on it. Teach your kids to use the library to read or get their homework done.

## 8. Teach your kids right from wrong

This will improve peer relationships and grades more than anything else. The real world your child grows up in will punish crimes, so give your child a head start by teaching them right from wrong. It will be the best gift you can give your kids.

*References: Steven George, Better Homes and Gardens, Laolan Madden, Mom's Home Room, Maya Cohen, Family Education, American Counselor Association, Maya Cohen, FamilyEducation.com, Patty Catalano, School Family.com*

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