



ChildBuilders

Houston's Advocates for Mental Health in Children

Helping Children Prepare for the New School Year

By Joanne Go, ChildBuilders Community Education Director

As summer begins to wind down, your whole family will need to prepare for the more structure, scheduled lifestyle of the school year. Start easing young children into their earlier bedtime two weeks ahead of time. Research tells us that most children need more sleep than they get. Pay attention to how much sleep your children have been getting in the summer when they can “sleep in” a little more in the mornings and adjust their bedtime accordingly.

Bedtime routines are important to helping your child settle down and get to sleep quickly. The earlier bedtime will also provide some needed quiet time for the adult(s) in the household each evening.

If it's a new school for your child, go and visit together sometime before school starts officially. Usually the doors are open a few weeks ahead of time and some administrators will be there. Give your child an opportunity to ask questions. Listen to hear what his or her expectations and fears are for the coming school year.

Let your children help with some of the preparations. Create a study space at home where your child can place books and school supplies and will feel comfortable working on homework each day after school.

If your child needs a new lunch box or backpack, let him or her come with you to the store and pick it out. On the other hand, don't feel pressured to buy everything before the school year starts. Save some purchases for after the school year begins. Older children often change their minds about what they will wear, or what size or style of backpack they will need after they see what other students are wearing.

For pre-teens and teenagers, let them carry their lunch in a paper sack for the first few days, many students give up the lunch boxes carried in grade school as they enter middle school.

The first few days of school, you will receive many forms to fill out. Plan ahead to be available to spend time filling out forms those first few evenings. High school students should help you fill out these forms. This will prepare them for the task of filling out paperwork for college admissions or employment applications in the near future.

Quick trips to the drugstore or department store will be necessary as well. When you are there to buy the required items, go ahead and pick up a few extra poster boards and folders for future projects.

Attend any meetings that the school announces. Join the Parent-Teachers Organization (PTO). The more information you have the more you can support your child in having a successful year. Teachers and administrators truly welcome the involvement of all parents.

Find out the name of your child's school counselor, if your school is fortunate enough to have one. This way, if you have concerns during the year about your child's mental health, social skills or general well-being, you will have a name of someone to call and talk to at your child's school. Often, meetings with teachers need to be set at certain periods of the day, so keep this information in a folder for future reference. It takes effort and time to get involved in the school, but it makes a big difference in the community when parents become involved! It will also make a difference for your child!

For further information and referral call:

Your child's school counselor

ChildBuilders (formerly known as HAMIC), founded in 1974, is a non-profit organization that provides innovative programs to educate parents, children, teachers and the community about the emotional well-being of children and their families. www.childbuilders.org ChildBuilders Community Education.

For further information & referral
call your child's school counselor

DePelchin Children's Center	713-730-2335
ESCAPE Family Resource Center	713-942-9500
Harris County Psychiatric Center	713-741-5000
Jewish Family Service	713-667-9336
Mental Health Association	713-522-5161
MHMRA of Harris County	713-970-7070
NAMI Metro Houston	281-579-3750
United Way of Texas Gulf Coast	211 or 713-957-4357

© ChildBuilders 2002