

Back to School Basics

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What every parent needs to know about transitioning you and your child back into the school year.

By VICKI ZION

Returning to school in the fall is an exciting but nervous time for both parents and their child. This year you can have a smooth transition. Just try out these basics.



1. Schedule a conference right away. Invite everyone on the IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) team: current teachers, resource room teacher, psychologist, and even the principal if needed. This will open lines of communication and everyone will be on the same page.

2. Come prepared. Bring all of your records (test results, current IEP, doctor's report, WASL scores, and report cards). Write down all questions and concerns ahead of time. Make a list of goals you want to achieve for this school year. Note any progress that has occurred since the last IEP was put into action. Maybe your child had a tutor this summer and has made great strides. Then, goals would need to be adjusted.

3. Begin the meeting on a positive note. State the purpose of the meeting: working together as a team (parent – child – school) by sharing information and making plans for a successful year. You want to build trust and initiate a great working relationship. Be sure to allow enough time for all to share ideas and concerns in order to get a complete picture of your child.

4. Be sure to document everything! Write down any new goals, questions, concerns, agreements, and action to be taken by all parties. If changes are going to be made in the IEP, write them down and have all parties sign it, so they can be added to your child's file.

5. Make a plan for communication. How often you will touch base with the resource teacher, regular classroom teachers, and psychologist? Will it be once a month, more or less often? **How will they communicate with you or each other?** Will it be by phone, a letter, email or a meeting in person? Be sure to cover any classroom accommodations or remedial techniques to be used with your child. If you need suggestions, go to the Child Development Institute website at www.cdipage.com. If outside tutoring is needed in addition to the help from school, get suggestions of who to use from the teacher, school district, principal, friends, neighbors, or the internet. Be sure to include the tutor in the circle of communication with your child's IEP team.

6. Get involved! Join one or more of the Learning Disability organizations in your area. They help by giving you support, information, and networking with other parents that have children with similar needs. They can help you find information that is available on the internet if you have further questions.

Finally, by setting appropriate expectations and objectives for the year, and by planning for specific communication processes, the school year will go smoother and you will see a much clearer picture of your child's progress. Have a great year!



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