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## Back-to-School Transitions:

### Tips for Parents

Getting a new school year off to a good start can influence children's attitude, confidence, and performance both socially and academically. The transition from August to September can be difficult for both children and parents. Even children who are eager to return to class must adjust to the greater levels of activity, structure, and, for some, pressures associated with school life. The degree of adjustment depends on the child, but parents can help their children (and the rest of the family) manage the increased pace of life by planning ahead, being realistic, and maintaining a positive attitude. Here are a few suggestions to help ease the transition and promote a successful school experience.

#### Before School Starts...

##### *Physical and mental health*

- Be sure to schedule doctor and dental checkups before school starts.
- Discuss any concerns you have over your child's emotional or psychological development with your pediatrician. Your doctor can help determine if your concerns are normal, age-appropriate issues or require further assessment. Your child will benefit if you can identify and begin addressing a potential issue before school starts.

##### *Review all of the information sent from school*

- Review the material sent by the school as soon as it arrives. These packets include important information about your child's teacher, room number, school supply requirements, sign ups for after-school sports and activities, school calendar dates, bus transportation, health and emergency forms, and volunteer opportunities.
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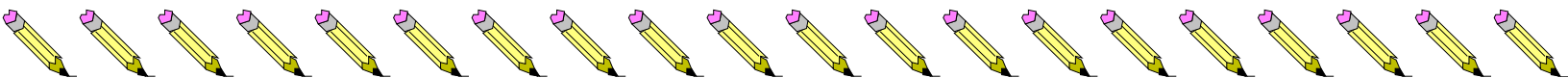
*Welcome to the Jericho High School's psychology corner!*

This is the first posting of the new school year! I hope this article will provide parents with useful tips to help ease their children into a healthy and successful school year. Best of luck!

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Dr. Largotta-Smith, at 516-203-3600 ext 3265.

The following information was obtained and modified from Ted Feinberg Ed.D. NCSP & Katherine C. Cowan from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). In order to view a complete copy of this information, please visit the NASP's website:

[www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)



### *Keeping up with your calendar*

- Mark important dates, especially back-to-school nights on a calendar. This is especially important if you have children in more than one school and need to juggle obligations.

### *Copies of medical records*

- Keep copies of all your child's health and emergency information for reference. Health forms are typically good for more than a year and can be used again for camps, extracurricular activities, and the following school year.

### *Re-establish the bedtime and mealtime routines*

- Plan to re-establish the bedtime and mealtime routines (especially breakfast) at least 1 week before school starts. Prepare your child for this change by talking with your child about the benefits of school routines in terms of not becoming over tired or overwhelmed by school work and activities. Include pre-bedtime reading and household chores if these were suspended during the summer.

### *Turn off the TV and minimize the use of computer*

- Encourage your child to play quiet games, do puzzles, flash cards, color, or read as early morning activities instead of watching television. This will help ease your child into the learning process and school routine. If possible, maintain this practice throughout the school year. Television is distracting for many children, and your child will arrive at school better prepared to learn each morning if he or she has engaged in less passive activities.

### *Visit school with your child*

- If your child is entering the high school as a freshman or new entrant this September, visit the school with your child. Meeting the guidance counselor, locating their classroom, locker, lunchroom, etc., will help ease pre-school anxieties and also allow your child to ask questions about the new environment. Moreover, arrange for your child to attend the Freshman Orientation in August.

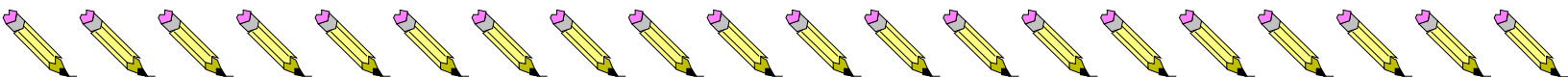
### *Designate and clear a place to do homework*

- At the high school level, the adolescent should have the option of studying in their room or a quiet area of the house. However, it is important to monitor their progress and make sure they are doing their work (i.e., not on cell phone, texting, computer).

## **What to do during the first week...**

### *Clear your own schedule*

- To the extent possible, postpone business trips, volunteer meetings, and extra projects. You want to be free to help your child acclimate to the school routine



and overcome the confusion or anxiety that many children experience at the start of a new school year.

### *Make lunches the night before school*

- Older children should help or make their own. Give them the option to buy lunch in school if they prefer and finances permit.

### *Leave plenty of extra time*

- Make sure your child has plenty of time to get up, eat breakfast, and get to school.

### *After school*

- Review with your child what to do if he or she gets home after school and you are not there. Be very specific. Adolescents should have a routine that includes but not limited to chores, homework, studying, and activities.

### *Review your child's schoolbooks*

- Talk about what your child will be learning during the year. Share your enthusiasm for the subjects and your confidence in your child's ability to master the content. Reinforce the natural progression of the learning process that occurs over the school year. Learning skills take time and repetition. Encourage your child to be patient, attentive, and positive.

### *Send a brief note or email your child's teacher*

- Let the teachers know that you are interested in getting feedback on how and what your child is doing in school. Be sure to attend back-to-school night and introduce yourself to the teachers. Find out how they like to communicate with parents (e.g., through notes, e-mail, or phone calls). Convey a sincere desire to be a partner with your children's teachers to enhance their learning experience.

### *Familiarize yourself with the other school professionals*

- Make an effort to find out who it is in the school or district who can be a resource for you and your child. Learn their roles and how best to access their help if you need them. This can include the principal; assistant principal(s); school psychologist, counselor, and social worker; the reading specialist, speech therapist, and school nurse; and the after-school activities coordinator.

*Ted Feinberg, EdD, NCSP, served upstate New York schools as a school psychologist for more than 30 years and currently is an Assistant Executive Director of the National Association of School Psychologists. Katherine C. Cowan is Director of Marketing and Communications for NASP. This material is adapted from their article posted previously on the NASP and Teachers First (NITV, Inc.) websites.*

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