

insights

Helping children achieve sustained school success

by Sharon Witt



The new school year is well and truly underway and thousands of kids (and their parents) across the country are settling in for a full year ahead. For some children, this year marks their first step into their school journey, while for others it is a chance for new opportunities, friendships and educational experiences. Here are some tips to help your child navigate the school year ahead:

1. Communicate with school

Communication with the school is important in aiding a successful school year for your child, whether they have just started at the school or have been there for several years. Familiarise yourself with your child's class teacher. If your child has any specific learning or behavioral issues it is important to communicate these with their teacher early on in the year. Don't assume that all relevant information will be passed on from previous teachers. It is well worth sending an introductory email to a new teacher outlining any information that would be helpful in relation to your child, including any strategies that have been successful in the past. Far from initiating 'red flags', this information is actually much more helpful for teachers than having to find out themselves.

Be sure to communicate any early concerns regarding your child's experience at school to the class teacher as soon as you become aware of them. Teachers can only deal with information you share with them, so by all means, call or email the school and make an appointment to discuss any issues. Avoid trying to have a serious discussion with the teacher at the beginning or end of the school day as this is often the busiest time for teachers. Booking an appointment time is desirable unless it is an urgent matter.



2. Give organisational tools to support success

Children thrive on routine and being able to visually see what is happening in the school week ahead. Creating a family calendar, whiteboard or wall chart that is visible to your child is helpful. Include important events such as camps, sports days and excursions.

It is also helpful to set up a communication tub or tray in the home where your child can place any notices they bring home, forms that need signing or books that need to be checked or worked on for homework. When children have a place for things it creates an environment that supports them gaining organisation skills and increased independence. Having a place to put their school bag each afternoon and encouraging them to empty out their lunch box and unpack notices is important.

3. Provide support with homework

Homework can be a struggle for both your child and yourself as a parent, especially when you are exhausted at the end of a working day. To enable your child to complete any set homework, ensure your child has a well-lit space where they can complete tasks, with the correct tools on hand – pens, rulers, whiteout, paper, etc. (a stationery tub or set of small drawers is helpful for the home).



Prioritise time to sit with them and guide them through their homework. If homework is becoming burdensome in your home and causing extra stress to your child, communicate this to their class teacher.

4. Prepare for a successful day ahead

Ensure your child gets plenty of sleep. Children should be averaging around 8 to 12 hours of sleep each night. Make sure they have a regular bed time and stick to it wherever possible. Reading before bedtime can be a helpful way to end the day and set the scene for a good night's rest.

The best way to set up a successful day ahead is for your child to eat a healthy breakfast and take a nutritious and balanced lunch with them, including plenty of snacks to keep their brain focused throughout the day.

5. Make time to chat about school

Keep the lines of communication open with your child. Ask them questions about their day and look for any signs that they might be experiencing any concerns, particularly social issues. Remind your child that you are always available to listen. At the end of dinner time each evening you could ask each family member: “*What went well for you today?*”

6. Assist with friendships

Making and maintaining friends is an important aspect of your child's school life. Ask your child regularly about the friends they are making at school, who they are playing with and how they are interacting with others. Get to know your child's friends where possible and look for opportunities to grow your child's social experiences, particularly if you have a shy child. If there are social concerns at school, make sure you communicate these as early as possible to the class teacher.



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