

## Back-to-School Transitions: Tips for Parents

Find the full article at [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)

Getting a new school year off to a good start can influence children's attitude, confidence, and performance both socially and academically. The transition 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.

### Overcoming Anxiety

*Let your children know you care.* If your child is anxious about school, send personal notes in the lunch box or book bag. Reinforce the ability to cope. Children absorb their parent's anxiety, so model optimism and confidence for your child. Let your child know that it is natural to be a little nervous anytime you start something new but that your child will be just fine once he or she becomes familiar with classmates, the teacher, and school routine.

*Do not overreact.* If the first few days are a little rough, try not to over react. Young children in particular may experience separation anxiety or shyness initially but teachers are trained to help them adjust. If you drop them off, try not to linger. Reassure them that you love them, will think of them during the day, and will be back.

*Remain calm and positive.* Acknowledge anxiety over a bad experience the previous year. Children who had a difficult time academically or socially or were teased or bullied may be more fearful or reluctant to return to school. If you have not yet done so, share your child's concern with the school and confirm that the problem has been addressed. Reassure your child that the problem will not occur again in the new school year, and that you and the school are working together to prevent further issues.

*Reinforce your child's ability to cope.* Give your child a few strategies to manage a difficult situation on his or her own. But encourage your child to tell you or the teacher if the problem persists. Maintain open lines of communication with the school.

*Arrange play dates.* Try to arrange get-togethers with some of your child's classmates before school starts and during the first weeks of schools to help your child re-establish positive social relationships with peers.

*Plan to get involved.* If possible, plan to get involved in the school community, such as participating in the PTO. Doing so helps your child understand that school and family life are linked and that you care about the learning experience. Being in the school is also a good way to develop a relationship with your child's teachers and classmates.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or want further information. Have a great school year!

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