



## NJDOE News

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### ***Tips from the D.O.E.***

Parents Can Play Important Role in Preparing Students for School

On the eve of a new school year, parents and children are winding down summer activities and preparing for school. To mark this special time, the New Jersey Department of Education has issued some tips to help families get ready.

“Parents can do so much to set the tone and the stage for an exciting time in their children’s lives,” said acting Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy. “Now is a good time to think about how they can better prepare their children for another year of school.”

Davy said that parents should now be establishing a school time routine, in which students are eased into a more organized lifestyle, with particular attention to regular bedtimes and specific times for watching TV, listening to music, and using a computer. She said the beginning of school is an ideal time for goal-setting and even for celebration, to emphasize for children that returning to school should be a positive experience.

Staff from the New Jersey Department of Education have developed the following set of recommended back-to-school activities for parents and children.

#### Setting the Stage

- Have a family talk in which everyone discusses the idea of setting goals for the year. Parents should talk about their own work goals and time management with children so that they can model these behaviors.
- Be supportive and encouraging, but also emphasize the importance of high goals and sticking with those goals throughout the year.
- Discuss your expectations. If there are consequences for poor academic performance, they should be made clear at the outset.
- Create a school schedule that includes getting enough sleep, what time to get up, catching the bus, time for homework, how long it takes to walk to school, after-school activities and sports, and eating healthy foods. Make the schedule a fun activity and display it in a prominent place.
- Share positive stories about your own school experiences with your children. Make school sound like fun. Talk with your children about their favorite subjects, projects, or teachers from past years to get them excited about the new year.
- Make “back-to-school” a celebration with a fun dinner or even an ice cream party to emphasize that returning to school is a positive experience.

#### Cover the Basics

- Make sure that even a very young child knows his or her home address, phone number, and complete name.
- Check to see that your children have completed their summer reading assignments or other projects.
- Be sure your children have had their required immunizations and physical exams. Make sure that your children who play competitive sports have registered for the teams and completed the required physical exams.
- Learn your school’s emergency procedures, including those for bad weather and early-release.
- Update the contact information on file in the main office and in the nurse’s office so that your child has correct and updated information.
- Make sure you have back-ups if your child becomes ill at school and needs transportation home.
- If your child will need medication during the school day, make sure you have the correct forms filled out for the nurse and enough medication for the first weeks of school.
- Make sure the school nurse knows about any medical conditions or any changes in your child’s health before school starts. Consider meeting with the nurse to discuss any accommodations that may be necessary to help your child reach his or her academic potential.
- Label things such as jackets, back packs, notebooks, lunch kits and eyeglasses, but don’t buy your children

clothing with their names clearly visible. This can make them targets for predators.

#### New School Tips

- If children will be entering a new school, the family should drive over to the school and see what it looks like and walk around the outside. If the children will walk to school, the family could walk for practice before school starts.
- Be sure the children are familiar with the route to school and your expectation that they take it. Create a map, and identify safe places the child can go if danger arises, such as unexpected bad weather, bullies, strangers or injuries.
- Talk to your children about friendships, bullying and safety issues. Explain that if your child has a problem, trusted adults in the school are ready to help.
- If your child will attend a new after-school program, make sure the applications are completed and your child knows where to go each day.

#### Once the School Year Begins

- Establish relationships and regular communications with your children's teachers and the parents of your children's friends.
- Get involved in school activities so you have a better understanding on what's going on in your child's world.
- Talk regularly with your children about contemporary dangers and problems, such as alcohol and other drugs, smoking, bullying, gangs and stress, and your expectations regarding their behavior. Help them practice skills for avoiding trouble.
- Encourage your children to come to you with their problems. Listen and acknowledge their concerns and get as much information as possible before responding. Keep the communication lines open.
- Finally, celebrate your children's successes, no matter how small and regardless of their ages.