



OH NO! It is “Back to School” at Home!

OH NO...The new school year is coming and for many it will be “Back to School” at home!

When the pandemic was identified and schools closed there was no time for planning or preparing children, adults or home environments for Homeschooling. Nor did schools and teachers have time to coordinate effective learning environments. BUT now we have time to explore what went well in the spring and what needs to be changed as we plan for a new school year.

Here are some suggestions to consider:

- **Conduct a “family meeting”** (or a few!) with all family members involved, even preschoolers! Discuss what was good about virtual learning in the spring and what changes would make it better. Let everyone share their thoughts, feelings and ideas!
- **Take notes from your “family meeting”** and build a learning/work environment based on everyone’s needs and ideas. Everyone ,especially children, are more cooperative if they have a part in the plans and solutions.
- **Keep regular “Back to School” traditions**, such as shopping for school supplies (even online), first day outfit, first day pictures, lunch choices, (maybe even packing lunches in lunch boxes)
- **Set up a “School’ Location in the house/apartment** (even if it is used for other activities after the school day is over). If space is shared purchase plastic roller drawers to store schoolwork and supplies, one per student (even preschoolers)
** This is especially helpful if children must go to work with parents.
- **Set up a “School day” Schedule.** This might be the regular school hours (9-3) or a different time period based on parents work schedules. Break the daily schedule into blocks of time for each subject, breaks/recess and lunch/meals.
- **Post the “School Day” schedule** where everyone can see it. This helps everyone stay on track and focused
- **The dreaded homework:** Virtual learning might still include after “school hours” work. Set up “homework” time just as you did when children attended school providing a break between the “School Day” and homework time.
- **Rewards and Praise:** This is a challenging time so provide regular and frequent praise and rewards for staying focused, completing tasks, improving student skills, etc. Rewards do not need to cost money but should be honest, consistent, earned and FUN!! Reward the adults, too!
- **PARENTS:** Stay current with all school district/teacher communications. Tell Teachers of any issues or concerns you have so you and your child(ren) can receive support quickly!

Maintaining routines and schedules, “Back to School” traditions, defined school space, hours and supplies provide children with the feelings of safety, security and predictability.

This is especially important in challenging times to reduce stress and anxiety. Children are resilient when their environments and the adults they trust stay stable, calm and consistent