

Transitioning Back to School: Tips for You and Your Student

School is almost back in session! While the first day of school can be full of excitement, it can also be a time for stress and anxiety for some students. Adjustment from summer schedules back to the school routine can feel overwhelming at times for your student and you. This bulletin covers some ideas and strategies to help you prepare your family for that first day of school.



1. **Introduce the School Schedule:** Contact your student's school or teacher and ask for a copy of the daily schedule. Start bringing the routine back into your home. Some ways to help your student get used to the school schedule again can include:
 - **Begin following a school-like routine at home**, including quiet work or homework time during the day.
 - **Move bedtime and wake up times closer to the school schedule.** Try to eat meals and snacks at the same time they would at school.
 - **Practice morning routine:** getting dressed, packing backpack, walking to the bus or getting in the car. This can help your student feel ready for the first day.
2. **Introduce the School Environment:** Go to the school's open house if you can. Walk around and show your child important places like the classroom, bathroom, lunchroom, and playground. If possible, help your child meet their teacher before the first day. Seeing the school and meeting staff ahead of time can help your student feel more comfortable.
3. **Social stories:** Social stories are short, simple stories that explain what will happen in certain situations. They can help your student understand what to expect at school. You can make social stories about going back to school, meeting new teachers, or riding the bus. Reading the stories can help your student feel more ready.
4. **Create a Schedule:** Before school starts, make a visual schedule that show's your student's whole day from getting ready in the morning to coming home after school. This helps your student know what to expect and can make the school routine feel easier and more familiar.
5. **Connect with the School Team:** If your student has an IEP or a 504 Plan, check in with their teacher or case manager before school starts. Ask about any chances to supports or routines. You can also share updates about your student from over the summer. Create a quick "All About Me" sheet with your student that you can share with the staff!

Resources for a Successful School Year:

- Learning in School Resources, Washington PAVE: <https://wapave.org/learning-in-school/>
- Special Education, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI): <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/special-education>
- Education Ombuds, IEP Resource: <https://www.oeo.wa.gov/en/education-issues/supports-students-disabilities/individualized-education-programs-iep>