

Back to School Media Room

BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS FOR PARENTS



4 Ways to Help Your Child Succeed in School

The education experts at The Learning Partnership know just how important it is for parents to actively participate in their child's education. An engaged parent can make all the difference between a child who simply attends school because they're required to, versus one who is motivated to be the best they can be – not just in school but in life. So you want to get involved but don't know where to start? Whether they're in kindergarten or Grade 12, here are four ways parents can help their children succeed in school. [Read more.](#)



4 Healthy Media Activities for Families with Pre-Schoolers

Through digital media, we communicate with each other freely, entertain ourselves endlessly and find any type of information at the click of our fingers. Computers, tablets, cell phones and televisions are in the home and the community. The influence of media is everywhere. Raising children in this digital age is filled with opportunity and also with challenges. [Read more.](#)



3 Ways to Spark Student Interest in Coding

As Canada's workforce is evolving and becoming increasingly digitalized, the skillsets needed for the 21st century are evolving as well. Close to 90 per cent of jobs now require basic information, communications and technology (ICT) skills, yet there's a chronic shortage of skills in the Canadian tech sector. Studies predict that Canada will be short 180,000 ICT workers. [Read more.](#)



7 Common Household Items that are Early Learning Tools in Disguise

Starting school for the first time should be an exciting time for four-year-olds, and their parents and caregivers - and a positive start to their journey can begin right at home. From kitchen utensils to old cell phones, The Learning Partnership identifies seven common household items that can build the foundation for early learning. [Read more.](#)



6 Ways to Stay Active and Healthy Throughout the School Year

With summer winding down, the endless afternoons of running and playing outside are coming to an end – but cooler weather doesn't have to mean staying inside! This school year, The Learning Partnership suggests six simple ways to keep your children healthy and active. [Read more.](#)

BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS FOR STUDENTS



5 Ways to Prepare Early for the "World of Work"

Are you prepared for life after graduation? Do you know what you want to do once you're "out there"? Whether it's your graduating year or you have many years of back-to-schools to come, there are things you can do now to help you prepare for that dream career you can't wait to start. The Learning Partnership's school-to-work transition experts have compiled the following list of initiatives you can take this year to help you get a leg up on career readiness. [Read more.](#)



5 Cool Careers that Require STEM Skills

It's time to go back to school and you may be one of those students who still wonder about the point of learning statistics or algebra, or dread chemistry class and science lab. While it may be tempting to drop your science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) courses now, when they're no longer required courses, you could be closing the door on some of the coolest jobs tomorrow – and ones you probably didn't even realize – if you do. Here are 8 cool careers that require a background in STEM education. [Read more.](#)



5 Activities to Spark Your Entrepreneurial Spirit this School Year

Learning about entrepreneurship early in your school journey not only gives you a sneak peek at how the world of business works, it can help prepare you for life. You learn to brainstorm ideas, set goals, budget, identify your strengths, and learn about society around you and how to personally contribute to it. This school year, The Learning Partnership suggests five activities you can do to kick-start your entrepreneurial spirit now and get you started on the path to future success. [Read more.](#)



Why Student Volunteering is Critical to Future Success and 5 Steps to Get Started

Volunteering is about helping others, but it also has other great rewards and benefits that can help you throughout life. Make this school year the time to get on the right path to a rewarding journey of volunteering. Not only will you contribute positively to your community and society, you'll also experience personal and professional growth through new interests, skills and strong connections that can build a strong foundation for your future. [Read more.](#)

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Summertime is often a much-needed break from the demands and stresses of school. So when grade-schoolers have to head [back to school](#), they may be especially nervous. You may not be able to remove all the [anxiety](#). But there are ways you can help calm your grade-schooler's first-day jitters.

1 of 6

Focus on feelings.

Young kids don't always have the words to express their emotions. And certain learning and attention issues can make it even more difficult. What you might get from your child instead of conversation is acting out or being cranky.

Give your child opportunities to talk by saying things like, “You seem to be very grumpy lately, and that’s not like you. Are you thinking about the first day of school?” or “Going back to school can be scary. Is there something you’re worried about?” Explore other questions to ask to get your child talking about school.

2 of 6

Go over the class list.

Schools don’t always like to give them out, but ask if you can get your child’s class list before the start of school. Even if it’s the day before, looking at the list takes away at least one piece of uncertainty.

If there are kids she likes in her class, she may look forward to seeing them. If there are kids she doesn’t like or has a hard time with, you can brainstorm ways of dealing with them to give her some control over the situation.

3 of 6

Go through the drill.

Most kids don’t look forward to switching gears from summer mode to school mode. But for kids with certain learning and attention issues, that shift can cause even more anxiety. Walking through the new daily routine in advance can help, even it’s the same as last year’s.

Go over the morning drill—what time she needs to get up, when you’ll leave the house, where and when the bus will arrive. Do the same with the afternoon schedule—when school ends, who will pick her up at the bus stop, when she’ll do homework. Factor in afterschool activities, too. And if possible, schedule a school visit before the new year begins. This way your child can get used to the layout of the school and classroom ahead of time.

4 of 6

Practice first-day interactions.

The first day of school means lots of conversation. For kids who struggle with social skills, that can be very difficult—and stressful.

Discuss and rehearse conversations you know your child will have with other kids and the teacher. Give her words to say when introducing herself: “Hi. I heard you were in my class. How was your summer?” and “Hi. I’m Annie. Art is my favorite class. Will we get

to do pottery this year?” Practice how to greet a familiar face, too: “It’s great to see you! I think we’re in the same class. I’m glad.”

5 of 6

Talk about the teacher.

Kids who struggle with behavior may have another concern about walking into the classroom on the first day of school: *What if the teacher doesn’t like me, or is mean?*

Reassure her that the teacher is there to help her learn and understands that sometimes she may need extra support. Explain that you and the teacher will work together to make sure she gets the help she needs. Having your child meet the teacher ahead of time can also help your child feel more comfortable.

6 of 6

Explain how school will support her.

If your child has an IEP, a 504 plan or informal classroom supports, explain how these work to help her at school. For instance: “You’ll have a little more time to complete the writing assignments and you can do them in a quiet room.”

Also tell her that there are plenty of people she can go to if she needs a hand. That might be a counselor, case manager, nurse or other staff people. If your child has a “go-to” person—maybe someone who helped her a lot last year—try to meet with that person before school starts. That can remind your child she has a support system in place.

5 Tips for Calming First-Day Jitters in High School

By [The Understood Team](#)

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Teens aren't always eager to share all their worries with their parents. Just because they haven't *said* anything doesn't mean they don't have any worries as they approach the [start of the school year](#). High school can be a [very stressful time](#), especially for struggling students.

[Demanding academics](#), [more responsibilities to juggle](#), a confusing [social scene](#), and [college](#) and [career](#) on the horizon—there's a lot to deal with. If your teen isn't open about her feelings, be on the lookout for [signs of anxiety](#), and try these tips to calm first-day jitters in high school.

1 of 5

Make sure his schedule is correct.

Sometimes schools make mistakes as they schedule classes for students. An unexpected mix-up can heighten first-week anxiety. Suggest your child look over his schedule ahead of time, or do it together, so there are no surprises. That also allows him to have his schedule corrected as early as possible.

2 of 5

Talk about non-school commitments.

Sometimes high-schoolers bite off more than they can chew in terms of activities and part-time jobs. Ask whether he thinks he'll be able to juggle all the activities he's involved in, along with schoolwork. If it's just too much, ask which one he'd choose to drop for right now. Doing it before the school year starts will save a lot of stress in the long run.

Read how to [help your high-schooler find the right mix of activities and classes](#).

3 of 5

Remind him of the support he has.

Your high-schooler might feel like he's suddenly on his own when it comes to staying on top of schoolwork. But while he's expected to take on more responsibility, there are a number of people he can turn to for help.

Encourage him to [self-advocate](#) with teachers and [case managers](#), and to speak up before things get way off track or he feels totally lost or overwhelmed. Remind him that he can always come to you, too.

Help relieve fears about the future.

As kids progress through high school, the prospect of college, work or a combination of the two looms large. So do tests like the [ACT and SAT](#). Assure your child there are many [paths students take after high school](#), and that you'll help him explore ones that are right for him. If he has an [IEP](#), remind him that together you'll work with the school to [plan for a smooth transition](#) to life after school.

Be sensitive to social pressures.

Your teen may not tell you outright that he's nervous about social situations. But if you know what his past experiences have been, you can try to open the door to discussion.

You might say something like, "The high school is so much bigger than middle school. Are you afraid you won't know people in your classes?" Or, "You haven't seen Emily since you broke up this summer. Are you worried about running into her at school?" Find out [what to do if he gives you the silent treatment](#). And learn more about why your teen may be [frustrated about school—and what you can say to help](#).

An Open Letter to the Parents Worried My Son Is in Their Child's Class

[My Parent Journey](#) blog post by [Amanda Morin](#)

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To all the parents who are worried that my son is in their child's class:

I heard through our mutual friend that you were asking whether my son is in the same class as your child. I wondered why my phone wasn't blowing up with the "whose class is he in?" messages, as it often has after report cards and class assignments arrive in the mail.

I certainly don't mind my phone being quiet. But I do mind that you were asking other people instead of me.

I seriously doubt it, but maybe you were asking because you want our kids to be better friends next year. That would be great because my son [has a hard time making friends](#) and he really admires your child. Or maybe you heard I have a great sense of humor that will make you happy to hang out during playdates.

I have *no* doubt, however, that you've heard about the [supports and services](#) and extra help my son receives. I'm pretty sure you know that he sometimes gets loud and has to leave class when he's [overexcited](#). I'm sure other kids have told their parents about his [behavior plan](#) and that information has made the rounds, too.

So maybe you're asking about his teacher because you're actually afraid they *will* be in the same class. I know some parents are concerned about the [impact of inclusive classrooms](#). They worry that their child will lose out because the teacher is spending too much time with kids like mine. They also worry that classroom expectations will be lowered or that their child will pick up "behaviors."

I understand why people have those worries. We're scared of what we don't know or understand. But you're not going to understand it if you don't ask the right person. And that person is me.

So, ask me. Text me, message me, call me—whatever your favorite mode of communication is works. But come to me and ask, “Whose class is your son in?”

If you want to know if my son is in the same class as yours because you don't want him there, well, I'm not going to lie—that hurts. It hurts because he's a little boy and he's doing the best he can. It hurts because he has so much to offer the world and so much friendship he's eager to share with your child.

But it also upsets me because I worry about whether your child hears you asking about my son. Believe me, I'm not perfect, and I've said my share of things in front of my kids that I shouldn't have. That's why I worry. I know how hard it is to walk it back once you've said something you wish you hadn't.

What if our kids have the same interests and are destined to be best friends? What if you and I have loads in common and could be close friends? What if your child is struggling, too, and I know how to help you get him the help *he* needs?

So, yeah, I got my son's teacher assignment in the mail today. I don't know if he's in your child's class because I never heard who your child has. I know who my friend's daughter has because she told me when she shared that you were asking about my son.

I hope we get to talk for real soon because I'd love to tell you more about my son. I hope our kids are in the same class because then your child can see what a great kid my child is. And I'd like to get to know you better, too.

Just text me.

—Amanda

Read ways to respond when [people are insensitive about your child's learning and attention issues](#). Find out what to do if you [notice signs of learning and attention issues in other people's kids](#). And read another open letter, this one [from a father to his son on graduation day](#).

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About the Blogger



Amanda Morin is a parent advocate, a former teacher and the author of *The Everything Parent's Guide to Special Education*.

Here are five questions to cut through the chatter and get your most pressing concerns answered up front. (If you have more time with the teacher, [you can go more in-depth with your tech and media questions.](#))

- **What's the best way to reach you? Email, text, phone call?**
With so many ways to communicate, it's important to know the teachers' preferred modes. Ask them how they want to be contacted (and when), how they want students to contact them (and for what issues), and which contact method they prefer for different concerns.
- **Which websites or apps do you use the most in the classroom?**
Some programs, such as Khan Academy, let teachers differentiate lessons for different learning styles, levels, and proficiencies and can generate reports on individual students' strengths and weaknesses. Find out if your kid is using programs that provide this type of feedback on his or her progress. Some fee-based programs used at schools, such as BrainPop, let students use a special code for access to activities at home.
- **Which apps should we get and which sites should we bookmark for homework help?**
Teachers want parents to choose apps and websites that reinforce the methods and standards they're using in the classroom. Many popular apps and websites adhere to the Common Core standards, for example. Being aware of what your kids are using also can help you support their learning, troubleshoot issues, and manage their screen time at home.
- **How much homework will require a computer or an Internet connection?**
Knowing how much your kids will need to go online will help you prepare for the weekly routine. You might want your kids to get their online homework out of the way first, for example, and focus on non-screen stuff closer to bedtime. It also will help you keep your kids on track once they go online. You can allocate time, coordinate your kids' schedules, and plan accordingly.
- **How does the school deal with cyberbullying?**
Look for a coordinated, consistent, compassionate procedure for dealing with bullying. You'll want to make sure that the school takes cyberbullying seriously and encourages kids to report it. The disciplinary process should respect the role of social media in kids' lives by encouraging kids to stand up for each other. But you can't expect the school to do *everything*. Ask how you can work together with the school to teach kids about using social media responsibly and respectfully and supporting targets of bullying.

<https://www.common sense media.org/back-to-school/what-questions-should-i-ask-teachers-on-back-to-school-night>

Timeline Leading Up to the First Day of School

(You may not need to take all of these steps)

At least one week before:

- Start your child on a school-day routine – waking up, eating, and going to bed at regular times. Explain that everyone in the family needs to adjust to the new schedule, so he or she doesn't feel alone with these changes.
- For older children who having troubles getting up and out of bed, give them a "big person" alarm clock, and let them practice using it.
- Ask your child to help plan school lunches for the first week.
- Create a list of school supplies together and plan a fun shopping trip.
- Teach and practice coping skills to use when feeling nervous, such as [How to Do Calm Breathing](#) and [Developing and Using Cognitive Coping Cards](#)

A couple days before school:

- Go to school several times – walking, driving, or taking the bus. For young children taking the school bus, describe and draw out the bus route, including where the bus goes and how long it takes to get to school. Talk about bus safety.
- For new students, take a tour of the school. Show your child the classrooms, the cafeteria, and the bathrooms. If possible, meet your child's teacher with your child present.
- Ask your child to help choose the outfits for the first week of school. Let your child wear his or her favorite outfit on the first day.
- Together with your child, pack up the schoolbag the night before, including treats.
- For younger children who are nervous about separating, suggest taking a special object to school that reminds him of home. A reassuring note in a child's lunch can also help ease separation anxiety.

The first day of school:

- Have your child go to school with a friend for the first couple of days.
- Tell the teacher that your child is having some separation anxiety – most teachers are experts in this area, and have years of experience!
- Most importantly, **praise and reward your child for brave behavior!**

