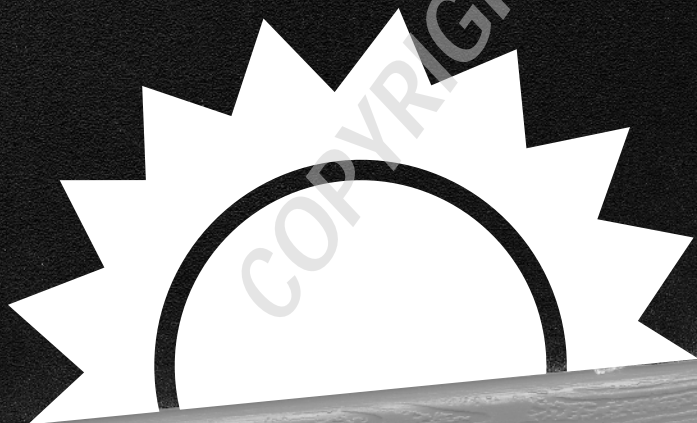


SECTION ONE:
SUMMER
Gearing Up for
School Success



"I like a teacher
who gives you
something to take
home to think
about besides
homework."
Lily Tomlin as
"Edith Ann"

Snapshot #1:

My Child Has the Back-to-School Blues

www.school-talk.com

Parent-to-Parent Tip:

For a successful start to the school year, bring **Getting to Know My Child** (Worksheet #5, page 116) to your first parent-teacher conference.

My child is starting a new school and is very concerned about the new school year. He is anxious about making new friends, meeting new teachers, and not knowing the school building or the neighborhood and its surroundings. To tell the truth, I am anxious too. What should I do?

Tip :

Elementary/Middle/High:

Call the school before the first day to find out if and when it is open. If it is, pay the school a visit. See if you and your child can meet the new teachers before school starts and tour the building to become more comfortable with it. You may want to call beforehand to make sure that the principal or other school personnel will be available to assist you. It's a good idea to start at the main office and sign in as a school visitor before walking around campus. If the principal is there, introduce yourself—smile and be friendly. If your child has any special needs for learning, is gifted, or requires any unusual accommodations, locate the school counselor, administrator, or specialist in that area and set up an appointment so you know your child's needs will be met immediately. Make sure that all your medical records and phone contact numbers are up-to-date and correct. Ask about his class schedule and when you can get a copy. Visit the school's website to get the school supply list for each teacher, if available, as well as other important information about the school. About a week before school starts, ease your child out of the casual summer vacation time schedule and into the school bedtime and morning routines. By getting used to the change in the time schedule before school starts, your child will be eager, ready, and less stressed when it's time to go—and so will you.

Be prepared for the new school year well ahead of the actual starting date. Being prepared will give your child greater security and confidence.

Tip : **Extra Tip for Older Children:** Talk to your child about taking on the responsibility of getting prepared for school. Show your child how to set the alarm clock for the new hours and advise him to begin the schedule for getting up and going to bed a week before school begins to better understand what is expected. Even when your child takes responsibility for getting ready for the school year, however, you still need to check that everything is in order. If you let him know how proud you are for taking on that job and following through, he will start the year with the right attitude and will be well prepared. Remember, you are the parent and your input and guidance are still extremely important.

Parent-to-Parent Tip: Take your child for a practice ride or walk prior to the first day of school. Show your child the safest route to school. Create a safe haven if an emergency occurs. Talk about what to do and where to be if stormy weather occurs. Find out when and where there is adult supervision before and after school hours in case you decide to change the method your child uses for transportation. You may want to schedule a meeting with the teacher during the first week of school for him to get to know you and your child. Bring along **Getting to Know My Child** (Worksheet #5, page 116).

Getting Ready for School Checklist:

ITEM	YES	NO	ADDITIONAL
<u>Uniform/school clothes</u>			
<u>Shoes/accessories</u>			
<u>School supplies</u>			
<u>Backpack/purse/lunchbox</u>			
<u>Extra school supplies for home</u>			
<u>School tour</u>			
<u>School orientation visit</u>			
<u>School schedule</u>			
<u>Updated medical records</u>			
<u>New health problems reported</u>			
<u>Correct emergency information</u>			

Parent-to-Parent Tip:

Shop with your elementary student for school supplies! Let him help make the choices on folders, notebooks, and other supplies. For older children, give them the responsibility for buying what's needed, but be sure to check their purchases and give the final okay. Buy extra supplies for home, such as glue, loose-leaf paper, markers, pen, pencils, and erasers. Back-to-school sale prices are usually excellent and supplies are readily available. Later in the year, not only will the prices be higher, it may not be as easy to find what you need.

Keep extra school supplies on hand so you won't have to go shopping at the last minute when your child runs out.

Snapshot #2:

***I Am Recently
Divorced and Have
Sole Custody of
My Child***

Parent-to-Parent Tip:

If you are separated, estranged, or divorced, you want to avoid having the school become involved in personal family conflicts. In many cases, the court specifies in the official court document which parent has custody of the child. If you have joint/shared custody, the document will state the adult who is the residential parent and who is the custodial parent. The residential parent is the parent whom the child lives with. In many cases, this is the parent who registers the child in school and fills out the necessary emergency information. Always present official court documents and communicate in person with the school principal when dealing with sensitive issues. Always keep your child's welfare uppermost in your thoughts and actions.

I recently got divorced and received sole custody of my child. My ex-husband moved out of state and I have not seen him since the divorce. I recently heard he is back in town. I am afraid that he will try to take my child from school. Worse yet, he has threatened to do this. What should I do?

Tip :

Elementary/Middle/High:

Before the first day of school, call the school and make an appointment with the principal. At the meeting bring the official court document that says that you have sole custody of your child. Make sure that you give the principal all of your emergency contact numbers. The official school emergency information card will always have a place where you put who is allowed to take your child during the school day in case of emergency or illness. This person will have to show a picture identification before the child will be released. By letting the principal know of your situation, she will be able to alert the teachers and the school staff, as well as flag your child's records. When filling out the official school information card, make sure you put in bold letters that your child's father is NOT allowed to see or take your child. Once again, the school principal should have a system with the front office and the teachers to keep the child safe when situations such as these occur.

Snapshot #3: My Child Does Not Speak English

Parent-to-Parent Tip:

Get to know your child's guidance counselor; he can serve not only as a liaison between you, your child, and other school personnel, but can also assist your child with the adjustment issues he will most likely be facing. Ask if the school district has a program for adults to learn English. Learning English with your child can be a very positive experience. It will show your child that you value learning and education. Learning is a lifelong experience.

Get a list of the names and contact numbers of all key personnel at the school.

We just moved to the United States from South America. My son is having a hard time learning the English language. My husband and I are concerned that we will have difficulty communicating with the school. What should I do?

Tip: **Elementary/Middle/High:** When you visit the school, ask a person who speaks both your language and English to accompany you and act as your interpreter. Have your interpreter take notes in your native language on the important points of your meeting so you can have this information handy at any time. At the school, ask which staff members you should see when you need help with certain problems, such as: academic assistance for your child, bus schedules, medical information, and notices to be translated. Explain that you want to support your child and the school, but until you learn to communicate on your own, you would like to get as much help as possible. Use **Who's Who at the School** (*Worksheet #3*, page 114) to assist you. Ask what services are available to both of you. Repeat everything to make sure the interpreter relayed all of your concerns. Ask for a contact person at the school and introduce yourself so you will feel comfortable calling her with your questions.

Have your child attend the conference with you so he understands that there are people at the school to whom he can go when he needs help. Set up a time when he can meet all of the school personnel who can assist him. This is important so he will know where and when to find them. You may want to ask if there is a student from the same country at the school who may be able to be your child's buddy until your son gets more proficient in English. They may become good friends as well.

Snapshot #4: *My Child's Friend Is a Bad Influence*

My daughter made friends with another classmate last year who became a bad influence. My daughter had always been a good student and had never gotten into trouble. By the end of the school year, she had failed a class and had been in the principal's office several times. Problems occurred not only in school, but also after school when she got together with this girl. I do not want her having any contact with this child and am concerned that they will again be in class together. What should I do?

*Teach your child
to be responsible for
her own behavior and
its consequences.*

Tip :

Elementary Middle/High:

Before school starts, make an appointment with the principal or assistant principal and talk about your concerns. Ask that your daughter not be placed in the same class/classes as this child. At this meeting you should give an example of an actual incident that happened with your daughter last year that made you come to this decision. This will help explain your position. If necessary, ask the administrator to pull up your daughter's behavior records and final grades as documentation of the problem. Be polite, but firm, as you insist that it's essential that she not be in the same classroom. Even if the school staff does make the necessary changes, continue to monitor her. Work with the school counselor and set up some clear boundaries at home. A good suggestion is to have your daughter sign a behavior contract with you stressing the outcomes you would like to see happen. Use the **Behavior Contract** on page 72. Prepare the contract with the school counselor and present it as a team effort. Make sure to establish clear consequences if any of the rules are broken.

Explain to your daughter what you are doing and why. Make it clear that you feel this is necessary even though she may not agree. You, as the parent, have not only the right but the responsibility to make this decision. Talk to her about developing other friendships and learning better decision-making skills. You also need to discuss the importance of not forming negative habits and behaviors, regardless of what others may be doing. Express the fact that she alone is responsible for her behavior and its positive or negative consequences in her life. You may also want to establish a relationship with the school counselor who can give you resources and assistance for further help with your child. Parents also need to take responsibility in working with the school and setting boundaries with their children. Bad habits and behaviors left unchecked can have serious, long-lasting results.

Snapshot #5:

***My Child Is Gifted
and I Want Her
Placed in the
Gifted Program***

www.school-talk.com

My child has always received A's and school-work seems to be extremely easy for her. The teacher agrees with me. I need to make sure the school places her in a class that will challenge her. What should I do?

Tip :

Elementary:

Once school begins, set up a conference with the teacher. Explain that you understand from comments on all of her school papers and report cards that your child is doing extremely well, and that all test scores show she is ahead of her grade level in reading and math. Bring in the previous two years' report cards to show the consistency of this trend. Ask the teacher what services the school provides for the children who are consistently ahead of their class. If there is a gifted program, ask what you can do to get her tested for placement. Talk to your child and make sure she is comfortable with a new classroom and placement. Many children may do well when allowed to go at their own pace, yet become stressed and perform below their ability when pushed to do more. Ask also whether the school's gifted program will take children away from the regular classroom part-time, and make sure your child is not penalized for the work she misses while participating in the gifted program, if that is the case.

A good-quality education program is geared to meet all students' needs.

Tip:

Middle/High:

Once school begins, speak with the team of teachers your child has and

ask how they view your child's academic ability. If they all agree that your child excels in academics, ask how you go about testing her for placement in more advanced classes or the gifted program. Ask about the program and the process for evaluating your daughter. Become informed on your child's rights for being tested in a timely fashion. Talk to your child and make sure she feels comfortable going into an honors course or Advanced Placement classroom. Ask the school counselor or administrator about "dual enrollment" type programs, which allow your child to attend high school and college at the same time. This can give your child confidence, knowing she can succeed at that level, but make sure that your child is emotionally ready. You do not want to add unnecessary stress and pressure.

Parent-to-Parent Tip:

Seek assistance. Recognize that your child has certain talents. Capitalize on her interests and create an environment enriched with materials that will challenge her and encourage exploration. You may need to increase your knowledge in those areas where your child shows an interest. Learn together and search out people and places that will increase your child's capabilities and learning enthusiasm. Recognize that your child learns at her own pace. Some children excel when given greater challenges; others do not.

Snapshot #6:

My Child Is Failing at a High-Performing School

Parent-to-Parent Tip:

Even though the school that your child attends may be rated high academically, it is extremely important that you monitor your child individually and not assume that he will be successful. A school's high academic rating does not necessarily translate into your child succeeding. Advocate on his behalf. Ask what is being done to help your child become successful. No matter what your child's level is, even if he is in special education classes or has Limited English Proficiency, make sure he is making adequate yearly progress. This means that he is steadily learning, improving, and moving forward in his educational experience.

We specifically moved to a new neighborhood last year with the best school in the area. This school has won many national awards of distinction and had the highest test scores in the state last year. However, my child did not do well and received two F's on his report card. With the new school year about to begin, I am concerned he is falling behind. What should I do?

Tip : **Elementary/Middle/High:** Make an appointment to meet with the principal before the first day of school. Bring your child's report card. Talk to the principal about your concerns and ask what standardized test your child was given and ask to see your child's scores. Have the principal explain the standardized test scores to you. Compare the scores to his report card and other tests, assignments, and projects. Find out if your child is reading on grade level. After you collect all of this information, create a plan with the principal. Set up a timeline where you will once again meet to discuss your child's progress. Use the **Assessment Tracker** on page 29 to keep this information handy. Find out the school district's policy in relationship to standardized testing. Some states use this information to promote children from one grade to the next and even for high school graduation.

Your child's progress, not the school's ranking or rating, must be your primary concern.

The Assessment Tracker

Is your child making the grade or falling behind? Tracking your child's report card grades and standardized tests from year to year will give you a better picture of how your child is learning and succeeding in school. Use the chart below to keep track of your child's progress.

Student Name: _____

Directions: Using the school records, fill in the student's standardized test scores. This is a recommended resource that you may want to keep in order to track the student's history on previous standardized tests. A history can provide a wealth of information for conferences, determining skill level, and seeking knowledge on a child's performance record. This is an easy snapshot of a child's test history.

	Math Level	Reading Level	Writing Level	ESL/LEP Level	IEP Status	Other	Teacher
K							
1st							
2nd							
3rd							
4th							
5th							
6th							

Snapshot #7:
***My Child's Health
Needs to Be
Monitored and
He Must Take
Medication Daily***

Parent-to-Parent Tip:

Catching an asthma attack at an early stage can make a big difference in reducing its severity. You may want to go to the school and talk with the administration about the procedures they follow when an attack occurs. Bring in informative brochures for the staff to keep. Insist that you be called the minute your child has an attack. Make sure that all appropriate school officials know about your child's medical condition and that all emergency contact numbers are kept current. Your child's comfort in knowing that procedures are in place will remove much unnecessary anxiety, which some doctors believe contribute to some asthma attacks.

When my child complained of having difficulty breathing at school, I took him to the doctor, who diagnosed him with asthma. Now he has to take medication in the middle of the day while at school. Frankly, I'm worried. What if he has an asthma attack at school? What should I do?

Tip : **Elementary/Middle/High:** Notify the school and his teacher about your child's condition. Put it in writing and give a copy to everyone who works with your child.

This is very important, as the school can flag your child as having a medical condition. Make sure that all medical forms and parent contact information are up to date in your child's records. You may want to call the school counselor, since some schools have programs to help children manage asthma. Ask for and fill out the appropriate medical form giving permission to a trained staff person or school nurse to administer the medication to your child during the school day. Make sure you have provided the medication to the appropriate school official for safe storage. Have the person in charge of the medication contact you when the supply begins to get low. Talk to your child about this plan. Make sure he understands that if he does not feel well, he should go to the office. Impress upon him that he must be responsible for how his body is feeling and to speak up right away if he can't breathe.

Make sure you have provided the medication to the appropriate school official for safe storage and that your child knows the location of the office and whom to see for medication when an attack occurs.

Snapshot #8: *My Child Has Diabetes*

My child was diagnosed with diabetes three years ago. At her previous school, I had problems. Several times, when she felt ill, the homeroom teacher wouldn't let her go to the office. Many times after recess, the teacher would not allow my child to have a snack if she felt that she needed it. Because of my child's condition, certain procedures must be followed; otherwise, she may become ill or worse. What should I do?

Tip :

Elementary/Middle/High:

Before the first day of school, call and make an appointment to see the school principal. At this meeting bring a letter informing everyone at the school who comes into contact with your child about her condition. Share with them the routines for medications, the possible signs of trouble, and under what circumstances your child should be allowed to go to the office. The school staff needs to know what to do in case of an emergency. Make sure that they have your best telephone contact number, and that they know to call you the minute your child does not feel well. Tell them how to handle any situation, and ask the teacher to allow your child to go to the office and have a snack when necessary. Practice with your child what the proper procedures are and when and how to follow them.

***Inform the school of
all medical conditions and
how they must be treated.
Bring medical information
and brochures if you
have them.***

Parent-to-Parent Tip:

Make sure that your child knows the physiological signs that necessitate some food or medicine. Have your child keep an appropriate snack in his or her backpack. Ask the school about special programs. Many districts now have training workshops for school personnel that provide information on diabetes. Call the school district to see if such training exists, and if it does, request that someone from your child's school attend that workshop. Also, check with the school and the local school board about their policies on diabetic children, and make sure you and the school are following the correct procedures.

Snapshot #9:
***I Just Moved to a
New Community:
How Do I Find a
School for My Child?***

**Places to find information
on schools:**

1. **GreatSchools.net**
<http://www.GreatSchools.net>
An online guide to K-12 schools
2. **Your local Chamber of Commerce**
3. **Your Realtor**

We just moved to a new community and school starts in less than three weeks. I have not had any time to get my son registered in school. In fact, I don't even know what school to send him to. What should I do?

Tip : **Elementary/Middle/High:** First, determine your options. Call the local school district or go on the Internet to find what school choices are available in your area. One of the better resources on the web is GreatSchools.net. Get the addresses of the schools in your area and visit each one, even if they aren't opened yet, just to have a look at the facility and the neighborhood. Second, after you have done some research and decided which schools will benefit your child, you can either call or go in person to find out the admission and registration procedures. Third, take a school tour with your child and ask questions. Following are the top ten questions to ask, depending on the age, grade, and special needs of your child.

Top Ten Questions to Ask When Visiting a School

Elementary:

1. What curriculum does the school use to foster school success?
2. What standardized tests does the school give students yearly? How does the school measure up? Is passing the tests a requirement for promotion?
3. How is student achievement measured? Is there assistance for children who need extra help?
4. Does the school have a safety plan?
5. Does the school have a discipline plan?
6. Does the school have an active parent organization? How can I join?
7. Does the school have extracurricular activities, clubs, and sports programs?
8. Does the school have a parent/student handbook?
9. Are there before- and after-school child-care programs?
10. What are the drop-off and pickup procedures?

Middle/High:

1. What curriculum does the school use to foster school success?
2. What standardized tests does the school give students yearly? How does the school measure up? Is passing the tests a requirement for graduation from high school?
3. How is student achievement measured? Is there assistance for children who need extra help?
4. Are Advanced Placement and honors courses provided?
5. Does the school have a safety plan?
6. Does the school have a discipline plan?
7. Does the school have an active parent organization? How can I join?
8. Does the school have extracurricular activities, clubs, and sports programs?
9. Does the school have a parent/student handbook?
10. Does the school have counselors who can help students get information and guide them in decisions on career goals, college placement, and other issues?

Snapshot #10:
***My Child Does Not
Want to Wear the
School Uniform***

**Parent-to-Parent
Tip:**

Talk to your child about your decision. Be sure to be specific and open for discussion. Your reasons should be logical and truthful. If purchasing the uniform places a financial burden on you, check with the school administration. They may have a program to assist you.

I have decided to send my child to a school that mandates wearing uniforms, because I believe this will foster better discipline and a higher-quality education. My daughter is not happy about this decision. What should I do?

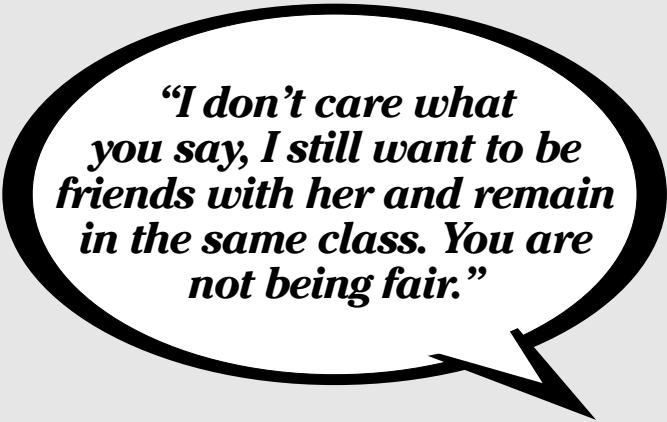
Tip : **Elementary:** Have a discussion with your child about your reasons for this decision. Offer to let her help pick out the uniform style and colors if there are options, perhaps letting her decide what to mix and match. Even though your child will not like your decision, it is yours to make.

Middle/High: Again, discuss the rationale behind your choice with your child. Listen to your child's reasons, try to understand them, and then explain to her that you bear the responsibility for her education and you feel this choice is best. Perhaps you can say you'd be willing to compromise on other issues, like curfew, phone privileges, and makeup, but education comes first and this was the school of your choice. Tell her

that if she does well now, when it comes time to choose a college, you will visit schools with her and make a decision on that together.

***You are the
parent; some
decisions are
yours to make.***

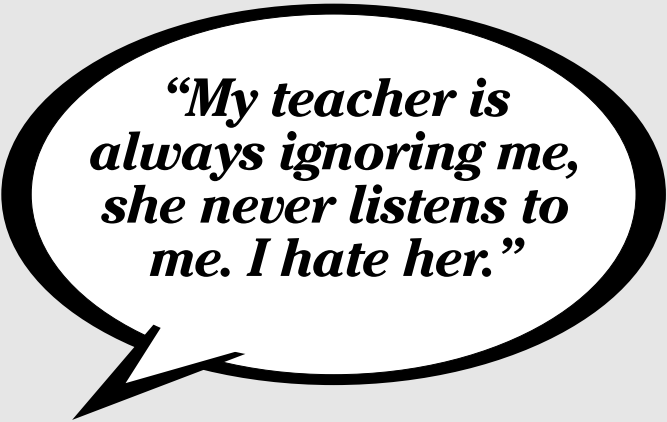
P.S.: Practice *What to Say* When They Say...



“I don’t care what you say, I still want to be friends with her and remain in the same class. You are not being fair.”

“No one likes to be told who their friends should be, so I understand why you are angry with me. However, you have been getting into trouble since you have become friendly with this girl. This is unacceptable. Up until you developed this friendship, school had always been the most important part of your life. You behaved appropriately and worked hard to earn good grades. I would like to see you regain that positive and productive attitude.”

“Let’s decide on a time to discuss this further when neither one of us is distressed or angry. Maybe together we can come up with a suitable solution that is satisfying to both of us.”



“My teacher is always ignoring me, she never listens to me. I hate her.”

“Let’s practice what to say to your teacher so that she knows that you have an important question or concern.”

“No one likes to be ignored, so I understand why you are angry with your teacher. However, there are times that are best to ask for help. Let’s go early to school tomorrow and talk to the teacher before school starts. You need to go up to her and say, Mrs. Smith, I need your help. Would you please help me with (state the problem or concern)? If the teacher tells you that she is busy, then ask her when would be a good time to talk: after school, during lunch, or before reading time.”

“I would like to see you speak up for yourself when you have a question or a problem, but remember, you have to do it the right way. The right way is to be polite, state your problem or concern, and listen to what the teacher has to say.”

