



Back to School

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Back to school often leads to mixed emotions for all of us--students, parents and teachers. Families handle this in a variety of ways. As a parent, you can prepare your child with a disability in a variety of ways. The following suggestions could reduce the anxiety level for you and your child and help you get ready to start the new school year.

Work ahead of time to reduce stress and anxiety.

- Share the story of your own school years, walk down memory lane and focus on the "pros" that relate to your child.
- Go shopping. Gather school supplies. Take your child to purchase items, checking off items as you collect them in the cart, smelling the crayons, pencils, etc. Shop for new clothes, trying on new clothes and tennis shoes.
- Reconnect with friends and the natural support system in your neighborhood; call parents of last year's classmates, PTA members, etc.
- Do a dry run, a rehearsal or practice to figure out how much time you will need to be ready each morning.

Start some general routines or guidelines to prepare your child.

- Establish a bedtime routine a couple of weeks before school starts by having your child in bed on time; focus on the time and read a book. This will help your child become accustomed to going to sleep on time and getting up early.
- Review or talk with your child about the routines for after school, homework, reading, or dinner. Remind your loved one that last year's routines might work or might need to be tweaked.
- Take a leisurely visit to the school. Discuss it with your child, whether he is returning to the same school or a new school.
- Arrange to meet the teacher before the first day of school. It is acceptable to ask the teacher to look at the classroom roster. Talk to your child about new classmates, returning classmates, and peers your child already knows.
- Be up to date on vaccinations; have your paperwork in order so that it does not bring stress to you and your child.
- If your child will be using bus transportation, find out about the route, the pickup/drop off location and times.

Texas Parent to Parent

1805 Rutherford Ln. ★ Suite 201 ★ Austin, TX 78754 ★ 866-896-6001 ★ 512-458-8600

website: www.txp2p.org ★ Email: info@txp2p.org

When school begins, there are always meetings about your child's educational needs, so be prepared, positive, and proactive.

- Come prepared with positive anecdotes about what your child has accomplished and suggestions or strategies that help your child.
- At meetings, inquire about who the participants are and in what capacity they interact with your child.
- The ARD meeting will discuss IEP, BIP, LRE and other educational needs. Here is a helpful [list of special education acronyms](#) from Parent Companion if you need to brush up on these terms, or have a match through TXP2P with a parent who is experienced with the ARD process. (Call Toll Free: 866-896-6001 or Austin: 512-458-8600 to learn more about having another parent as a mentor.) Here are two websites that explains more about the ARD process: <http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/> and <https://www.navigatelifetexas.org/en/education-schools/special-education-101>
- Create a folder or binder where you can keep long-term information, state and local resources. Have a meetings journal where you can record brief notes about decisions and comments made.
- During meetings, have strategic seating for your spouse and advocates so that everyone can express his or her opinions/suggestions freely without reproach.

Communication between home and school is important.

- Start a teacher-to-parent journal for daily communication to relate successes, suggestions, concerns. It would be ideal if the teachers or parents shared a daily comment about things that affect the child.
- You can provide basic information from your doctor to the school nurse and teacher. A list of medications and allergies might be helpful; share with school staff what you feel comfortable sharing/on a need to know basis.
- Give school staff a schedule or general routine of home weekday/weekend activities. You might request that schedules from home and school use similar visuals.
- Provide the school staff with a contact list in order of preference: spouse, grandparents, older sibling, etc. If you are working full-time, provide your direct line number and the times that are best to contact you.
- Share your ideas/suggestions that calm or soothe your child; later you can share things that tend to set off your child on a need to know basis as they get to know your child.

The best advocate to insure that your child gets the best education possible is you! Remember no one knows your child better than you. Stay involved all year long, and it will be the best year yet.

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