

What Parents Should Know...

Back to School Tips for Parents of Children with Special Needs

It's back to school time and everyone is busy purchasing new clothes and school supplies. A new school year means a new grade, new teachers and maybe a new school. Here is a helpful list of tips for back to school.



1. **Organize all that paperwork.** There is a lot of paperwork to keep track of: notes from school, IEP/504s, testing documents, and much more. Using a three-ring binder with divider tabs will help to keep all this information together. SDPC offers the FILE (Folder of Information of Life Experiences) free to parents to assist with keeping organized. www.sdparent.org
2. **Start a communication log.** Keep track of all phone calls, e-mails, notes sent home, meetings and conferences in a notebook that is easily accessible.
3. **Review your child's current IEP.** The IEP is the foundation of your child's education program, so it's important that you have a clear understanding of it. Keep track of when the IEP expires and if your child is up for re-evaluation. Most importantly, make sure that your child's IEP still fits his/her needs. If changes need to be made, don't be afraid to send a letter/email to your child's school asking for an IEP review meeting.
4. **Daily Routine.** It's important that you begin your school routine: going to bed earlier, focusing on night and morning routines well in advance of the first day of school.
5. **Attend school events.** Take advantage of the open house, back-to-school night, and parent-teacher conferences so you and your child can meet the teachers, staff, students and families. If your child has a One-Page Introduction, this is the perfect opportunity to share it with his/her teacher(s) and other staff who will be working with your child. If you would like help creating a One-Page Introduction of your child, contact us at 605-361-3171.

(continued on the next page)

Easing the Transition

Transitioning from summer time schedules and activities to school can be a difficult time for parents and caregivers. According to www.specialneeds.com, here are a few tips to help make the transition a little bit easier.

1. About 3-5 days prior to school, make a social story with your child that will show what he/she can expect in the next few days. It does not have to be long but should include the basic morning routine, what they should expect during the day and what will happen at the end of the school day. You may want to laminate the story so that your child can check off the activity once the event has occurred. If you would like help creating a social story, contact your child's teacher or SDPC for assistance.
2. If possible, allow the child to visit his/her classroom 1-2 days prior to the first day of school. This will help your child get the 'lay of the land'. If your child's teacher(s) are available, this would be a good time to introduce your child so that the first day won't be so stressful.
3. For middle and high school students, call the school to make arrangements to help your student navigate the hallways and where their classrooms will be without the stress of the typical student orientation night. They can also be shown how to open their lockers in a timely manner.
4. For children with auditory processing difficulties, auditory instructions by the teacher may be difficult to understand. It may be suggested that the student have a visual schedule that can be placed on the child's desk or board to help him/her know exactly what is going on in the classroom and what the upcoming expectations are. Ask your teacher for one to use at home, too!
5. Finally, establish a relationship with your child's teacher(s). That early bond will be important in working with your child throughout the school year.



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What Parents Want Teachers to Know



Just talk to us!

Parents state that the most important thing is to keep the lines of communication open. Parents and teachers should work together to come up with a communication plan that works for both of them, such as notes home, e-mails or a phone call.

Parents would like the time necessary that is truly needed during an IEP meeting.

They notice when a teacher shows up late and then needs to rush off to something else. Parents want to complete that meeting today, so please make sure that everyone who has the ability to make decisions attends the meeting.

Parents want teachers to stay current on the issues affecting their child.

Parents understand that teachers don't have the resources to know everything about every disability. They would like educators to take the time to become familiar about the disabilities the children in their classroom are dealing with.

Be open to suggestions and new ideas.

Parents do a lot of research about the challenges that their child faces every day, so they might email or present you with an article that may provide some insight. Please understand that they care about their child and are trying to help you, as their child's teacher, learn more ways in how you can help in the classroom.

Lastly, look beyond the surface issues with your students with special needs.

There is often a cause for a behavior issue that can be linked to a diagnosis. Parents of students with special needs ask that teachers don't switch into "punishment mode" right away. They want you to look at ways to help students with special needs.

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Our Resources for Back to School

FILE - Folder of Information of Life Experiences

Keeping records is essential for families of children with special needs. Keeping organized records will pay dividends in navigating systems and empower you to advocate for your child. The FILE is a compact, portable storage folder for your child's records.

Communication Log

The Communication Log is a convenient and portable resource to help families record important information, prepare for meetings, or support family-school communication.

Dare to Dialogue... Reach YES!

The Dare to Dialogue is a resource that helps to walk you through the requesting of an evaluation (sample letter to request an evaluation), and responses to statements from the school to Reach YES on IEPs.

What Parents Should Know...About Special Education in South Dakota

This is a user friendly book on the Special Education laws of South Dakota with Federal Regulations. This book tells you what the law is and then explains the law in a friendly and easy to understand language.

You can request these resources by calling 1-800-640-4553, email us at sdpc@sdparent.org or stop in at 3701 W. 49th St. Ste. 102, Sioux Falls, SD.



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