



The Children's link Society

FALL 2010

Ten Steps to Start the School Year...

A better school year often begins with the parent.....

The first few days of a new school year can set the tone for the next nine months. Students (and parents) may be apprehensive about going back to school, especially if the year before was a negative experience. Parents always hope that "this year will be better." Here are some ideas about how to make that happen.

1. Get the teacher on *your* side. Try to approach the New Year and the new teacher with a fair and open mind. How you view your child's teacher has a tremendous effect on whether or not you can have a productive relationship with this person. How you view - and talk about - the teacher also effects how your child will view him or her. Do your best to give the new teacher a fair chance, without holding them responsible for mistakes or bad relationships you may have had with other teachers.

Call the school and schedule a time to meet with your child's teacher. Remember that the beginning of a school year is a hectic time for teachers. Try to schedule your meeting at a time that is convenient for both of you. Do this either before the year starts or within the first few weeks. Some parents like to "drop in" to visit. There are times when a surprise visit may be appropriate. However, scheduling the meeting before hand allows both you and the teacher to prepare. A scheduled meeting is less likely to be interrupted or cut short. Also, scheduling the meeting shows that you respect the teacher's time and work load. This is a simple courtesy that can go a long way towards fostering a positive relationship.

2. Be professional Teachers are really into the "I am a professional" thing. But, parents need to present themselves as professionals, too. Parents who arrive late don't make a good impression. Arrive on time. Dress in nice clothes. A suit isn't required, but you should wear something that you would expect a teacher to wear. Rather than carrying all of your papers in a shoe box, invest in a briefcase. The goal is to make a positive impression.

3. Be fair You may have already heard some things about your child's teacher that you may not like. But, chances are that he or she may have heard some things about you that aren't particularly thrilling, especially if you have had to present a vigorous case for the special needs of your child. Try to think of the teacher as a partner and a professional. This attitude will help establish a friendly tone.

Back to School Cont....

4. Explain your child's disability Don't assume that the teacher understands autism, or ADHD, or dyslexia or anything else. Take along some information about your child's disability. Don't bring an entire library - a one page sheet will suffice. You may want to write a letter explaining specifically how your child is affected by his or her disability.

5. Speak honestly about your child Acknowledge your child's limitations in an honest and objective manner. Accept the fact that your child is not perfect. But, don't dwell only on your child's problems. Talk about strengths, skills, any favorite activities, and what has worked for teachers in the past. As much as possible, show the total child to the teacher.

6. Be willing to listen. Listen careful to any thoughts or questions the teacher may have. If you would like feedback about certain behaviors or subjects, ask for it *and accept what the teacher has to say*. Even if you disagree, at least try to be empathetic: *"I know it can be frustrating."* Here is an exercise for empathy: Imagine your child on his or her worst day. Now, imagine your child in a class with 25 other kids. Now, imagine your child in a class with 25 other kids who act just like your child.

7. Establish a plan How can the two of you communicate during the school year? What type of communication do you expect? What does the teacher need from you? Is a phone call convenient, or are letters a better idea? How can you find out about homework, field trips, and other important information? Talk with the teacher about how you can stay informed and in touch. Be sure that the teacher has *all* of your phone numbers and knows that he or she can call you.

8. Ask about expectations Does the teacher give a lot of homework? How does he or she grade? How can you help your child?

9. Don't forget to watch the time. During the meeting, stay focused on your child. Teachers hate meetings that drag on forever. You can encourage future conferences by keeping this first meeting short.

10. Remember to say "Thank you." Thank the teacher for his or her time before you leave the meeting. Later, send a thank you note. This helps to establish a positive relationship and encourages communication.



Back to School - Our Children with Special Needs

At the time school begins a new routine can be daunting for a child with special needs. The first day of school is nerve-racking for any child, but just imagine what it's like for one with special needs. However, by providing a little extra assistance before school begins, you can help ease anxieties and make the transition to a new class (or even a new school) much easier for your child:

A child with special needs benefits from the security of a repetitious pattern, so it's a good idea to ask the school in advance for the daily schedule. Then you can talk to your child often about what will happen and when, letting him get familiar with the routine. Even a child who can't tell time will learn the pattern of the day in relative terms. For example, "Now is when we'll walk to the bus ... to lunch ... to recess with your friends ... come home on the bus."

You also can ask the school to arrange an advance tour and meet your child's new teacher, before classes begin. A special-needs child coming into a new school will be able to learn about the school's environment, establish motor pathways and make visual-motor associations more effectively without the noise, motions and distractions he will encounter once classes really begin.

Older children may need to practice and familiarize themselves with the routes through the building from one class to the next and learn the best times to visit their lockers or exchange books. They need to be prepared for alternating schedules, such as gym day alternating with library day. They should explore the building fully, establishing locations of the lunchroom, restrooms, nurse's office, gym and locker rooms.

If your child is going into a mainstream class, prepare a one-page summary of his significant needs, key strengths and weaknesses. It will take a teacher several weeks to get acquainted with all her 25 or so students, and she may not be able to get through and absorb information from the detailed files for your child right away. So the "tip sheet" will be useful in getting started.

The teachers and therapists at the school should know how to reach you and the best times to do so. Tell them the best phone numbers to use to get in touch — work, cell phone, pager, etc.

Get to know the schedule of your child's therapy, when it will start, what day of the week, etc.

Be aware of the time duration that your child may be on their own i.e.: before and after school and lunch hour. Find out what hours your aid works, does the school have monitors or a buddy system for these time periods.

To reduce anxiety of textbooks left at school in error, talk to the school about borrowing extra copies from the library.

Also be sure teachers and therapists know about your child's special medical or dietary needs.

Get to know the school's staff and other families by joining and participating in regular special-education and parent-teacher organizations.

And finally, encourage your child to get involved with his peers and new friends by joining an after-school club, or taking part in other activities.

September 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 Between Friends Coffee Social Between Friends Club House 7:00pm to 9:00pm	15 NW Coffee Social Varsity Acres Church 9:30am to 11:30am +13 Coffee Social Radisson Hotel 7:00pm to 9:00pm	16 Multicultural Coffee Social Radisson Hotel 7:00pm to 9:00pm	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

October 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6 STA STA's main office 7:00pm to 9:00pm	7	8	9
10	11	12 Between Friends Coffee Social Between Friends Club House 7:00pm to 9:00pm	13 NW Coffee Social Varsity Acres Church 9:30am to 11:30am	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 +13 Coffee Social Radisson Hotel 7:00pm to 9:00pm	21 Multicultural Coffee Social Radisson Hotel 7:00pm to 9:00pm	22	23 Family Halloween Jelly Bean Dance Calgary Quest School 1:00pm to 3:00pm
24 31	25	26	27	28	29	30

Family Link Program Coffee Socials

**Are you a parent of a child with Special Needs?
Do you feel isolated at times and overcome by your circumstances?
Did you know parents could be your best source of information?
Would you like to talk and connect with other parents?**

The Children's Link Society knows firsthand that the best resource for a family facing the challenge of a child with special needs is another family facing the same issues.

We believe that families are the best source of information and emotional support for each other. In general, most families feel comfortable talking to other families. In doing so, they can enhance their ability in making appropriate decisions for their child.

The Family Link Program provides guidance and information in an informal environment. This enables families to find their own empowerment in a secure and nurturing setting.

Please join us for an informal morning or evening of inspiration and information at...

Coffee Social	Date/Time	Location	Facilitator
<u>Multicultural</u> Next group September 16 th 2010	3rd Thursday of each month 7:00 - 9:00PM	Radisson Hotel Boardroom #1 2120 16 th Ave N.E	Soledad Johnson & Maria Vial (Autism Calgary Association)
<u>North West</u> Next group September 15 th , 2010	2nd Wednesday of each month 9:30 - 11:30AM	Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church 4612 Varsity Dr NW	Carrie Lawson & Sheralee Stelter (CP Association)
<u>+ 13 Evening</u> (Parents of Teens) Next group September 16, 2009	3rd Wednesday of each month 7:00 - 9:00PM	Radisson Hotel Boardroom #1 2120 16 th Ave N.E	Jan Mason & Amy Davidson
<u>Between Friends</u> Next Meeting September 14 th , 2010	2 nd Tuesday of each month 7:00 - 9:00 pm	Between Friends Club #205, 8989 Macleod Tr. S.	Amy Davidson Carrie Lawson & Shannon Smid (Between Friends Club)
<u>STA</u> Next Meetings: October 6 th , 7:00 - 9:00 pm November 3 rd , 9:30 - 11:30 am	1 st Wednesday each month; alternating between day (9:30-11:30 am) and evenings (7:00 - 9:00 pm)	Society for Treatment of Autism 404 94 th Ave SE	Jennifer Morton (Society for Treatment of Autism) & Carrie Lawson

Celebrate THE JOURNEY

2010 Transition Fair

Dear Family,

The transition from children's services to adult services for youth with ongoing health care needs and/or a disability often presents significant challenges and barriers. Parents, caregivers and individuals with special needs often have questions along the transition journey and the goal of the sixth annual Transition Fair is to share information and resources available in Calgary and the surrounding area. A variety of agencies, organizations and association will be at the fair to support the community.

New! This year the Transition Fair will have an information session regarding PDD, AISH, Guardianship and Trusteeship for families from 12:00pm to 1:00pm. This presentation is to provide an overview and general information from each program. Representatives will then be in the main area from 1:00pm to 2:00pm to answer any other questions you may have.

Several community partners have come together to organize the 2010 Transition Fair. It is our hope that you find this fair useful as you or someone you know makes the transition into adult services.

Place: Centre Street Church
Address: 3900 2nd Street NE
Date: Saturday, November 13th 2010
Time: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. (Transition Presentation at 12:00pm)

Admission is **free** and refreshments will be served.

For further information please contact Amy Davidson at 403-230-9158 or by email at amy.davidson@childrenslink.ca

Sincerely,

Amy Davidson
Chair
Transition Fair 2010





You are invited to join us for an afternoon of family fun... at our **Family Jelly Bean Dance!**

When: Saturday, October 23th 2010 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Where: Calgary Quest School 3405 Spruce Dr SW

This is a Halloween Jellybean Dance -
wear your costume!

Please RSVP to Angie at the Children's Link Society
(403-230-9158) to ensure we have enough goodie
bags for all the children.

Halloween Tips

The following tips are only suggestions and may not be appropriate for all children. As you know your child best, please use your own discretion when making decisions regarding Halloween costumes and activities.

Costumes

1. Face paint is useful for children with disabilities who need to be free of encumbrances such as masks.
2. Halloween is a time for make-believe. Children may just choose to ignore their disabilities and select a costume without considering their adaptive equipment. Wheelchairs and canes need not necessarily become a part of their costumes if their fantasies are fulfilled.
3. For children who want their assistive equipment to become part of their costume, offer options. Wheelchairs can become thrones for kings or queens. They can also become fire trucks for fire-fighters or tractors for farmers. Canes can become swords for pirates. Ventilator hosing can even become the air supply for deep-sea divers.
4. Give your child input in his or her costume. Sometimes small details can mean more to the trick-or-treater than the overall costume. For example, an ordinary witch costume could become a little more exciting if a black stuffed toy cat is wheeled along too. A magician might become a little more magical with a glowing wand.

Merriment

1. If outdoor trick-or-treating is inaccessible or too challenging to negotiate, find out if your local shopping mall or any other buildings are offering indoor trick-or-treating.
2. Set the Halloween scene at home by dimming the lights and getting the jack-o-lanterns aglow. Then tell scary stories, such as the classic tale "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."
3. Play in fall leaves. For children with mobility challenges, bring in a pile and let them look closely at nature's colours and designs that they might not typically have a chance to enjoy. Children with low vision can experience the sense of leaping into a leaf pile outdoors.
4. Candy is a sweet part of Halloween, but you can also introduce your child to other fall flavours. Let children sample pumpkin pie or bake a loaf of pumpkin bread. Think of ways to serve apples. Pour tall glasses of cider or cut apple wedges for dipping into caramel.



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