



READi Lab Tip Sheet: Back-to-School Strategies for Parents August 2014

Summer is almost over, and it will soon be time for the school year to begin anew. This transition from the more relaxed pace of summer, to the new routines and expectations associated with school, can be especially challenging for children with ASD. Here are some positive steps you can take to ease the transition back to school for your child, as well as decrease overall family stress.

1. Begin now to establish household routines that will be in place during the school week. Start to set an earlier bedtime several weeks before school starts. Encourage your child to get excited and involved in morning routines, such as preparing breakfast or lunch, or helping select his or her own clothes for the day.
2. Schedule short “work” times for your child at home. Create an art project together, play a structured game, or go on a scavenger hunt outside on a sunny day. Getting into a routine of following directions and completing tasks can help make the transition back to school a bit smoother.
3. Create a visual schedule to remind your child of the sequence of activities that will occur for all or part of the school day. For example, a schedule of the morning routine might include symbols depicting eating breakfast, getting dressed, then brushing teeth. Even if you no longer use schedules with your child at home, reintroducing them even for the first month may ease the transition back to school.
4. If your child is entering a new classroom, arrange a visit prior to the first day to acquaint your child with his or her new surroundings. Introduce your child to his or her teacher or a classmate if possible, so that your child can look forward to seeing a familiar face.
5. Encourage your child to be positive and enthusiastic about the new school year. Provide a good model for your child by expressing excitement and confidence about the upcoming school year.
6. Show your child pictures and photos of the school buildings, people, and activities to help him or her know what to expect. Practice walking to the bus stop and look at pictures of a school bus together while you're there. Check out the school's website for pictures of the playground, cafeteria or other available photos. Look for pictures of the teachers and talk about who they are and how nice it will be to get to see them at school.
7. Keep in mind that you will all get through to the other side. Adjusting to transitions and changes in routine is not easy, but remind yourself that things will get better and that eventually this change will become routine!