

SURVIVING THE RETURN TO SCHOOL (for parents!)

I saw this sign at a hockey rink the other day and I thought how relevant it is in regards to our children returning to school. We all want our children to be successful and success is measured in many ways, not just academically.

“Your child’s success or lack of success in sports doesn’t not indicate what kind of parent you are.

*But having an athlete that is coachable, respectful, a great teammate,
mentally tough, resilient, and tries their best IS a direct reflection of your parenting”*

~author unknown

It’s that joyful, stressful, exciting, anxiety inducing time of year again for all of us: BACK TO SCHOOL. I have heard it said, students returning to school after 2 months of vacation is like trying to run a marathon after lying on the couch all summer! Children are often completely off their regular routines, diet, nutrition, sleep, activities, not to mention, they are likely not reading a lot or practicing math! There may be some jitters: new friends, new teachers, challenging school work and anticipating new transitions. We parents can have similar jitters: new teachers, maybe new school, new parent friends, etc. We feel panic at how we are going to do it all and vow that “this year it will be different!”.

I am sharing with you some tried and tested (by me, a super busy mom of 4) that may help you survive the return to school. But first I need to say this, for all you exhausted and frazzled parents trying to do everything on your own (and I cannot emphasize this enough!): ***get your children on board to help you! I am a firm believer of the notion “Do not do for your child what they can do for themselves”. If your child is old enough to go to school, they are old enough to take on some responsibilities.***

1. Save panic by ***downloading school supply lists*** on line and having the local stationary store prepare it for you. What a stress relief!
2. Find ***lunch box inspirations***: think roll-ups, wraps, Bento boxes (just a healthier, fancy Lunchable), left overs in a thermos, cheese/crackers/pickles. With encouragement and guidance, by age 7, (in my humble opinion) children should be able to make most of their lunch on their own.
3. ***Talk a lot about your child’s school friends***. It will get them excited about who they haven’t seen for a while.
4. Go to the school, play in the playground, and walk around the building to ensure they know the doors to go in and out of.
5. Keep a ***family calendar***, either digital if all your children can access it, a whiteboard or an old fashion paper one. It helps prepare children for what is coming, so they know what to expect and hopefully provide smoother transitions.
6. Create an ***accessible*** and ***convenient*** routine for all the paper that comes into your home: hanging file folders, individual storage boxes or crates, wall folders. Whatever works for you, your family and the space in your home.
7. Go through the letters, notes and agenda items ***each and every day***. Many tears have been shed in my house over missed permission forms and upcoming activities that they were not able to attend because we did not complete the forms!

8. **Help your children organize their tasks, chores and responsibilities** by creating a chart, lists or reminders throughout the house. I am talking signs or notes taped to doors, TV's, mirrors, etc. on things such as what to pack in their backpack, their jobs, chores or homework after school.
9. Bring closure to the end of summer by doing a **memorable family activity**: picnic, going for ice cream, playing board games, visit a museum, have a different dinner (fondue, indoor grill, make your own pizza). Talk about some of the memories you created over the summer and what you are all looking forward to in the new school year.
10. **Screen time** is a constant battle in my household. It wreaks havoc on proper exercise, homework and sleep. If you have this issue as well, consider contacting your Wi-Fi provider about available options to set time limits for devices. Utilize "Apple Screen Time", "Google Family Link" already on your smart phone or download an app such as "Our Pact", "Questodio" or "Mobicip" which are all very effective at a minimal cost.
11. If you're really organized (I have never actually done this, but it sounds like a sweet and thoughtful idea), print off "My Teacher's Favorite Things" at www.likeabubblingbrook.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Teacher-Favorite-Things-Printable.pdf

I have to admit, I begin each school year with good intentions and enthusiastic optimism of staying organized and in control - only to feel like I am losing my grip on everything by October 1st. But like we teach our children: every time you fall, get back up again! Welcome back to Northern Gateway Public Schools! We are all in this together, we got this, and we are just getting started!



This article was submitted by Tammy Charko BA, BSW, RSW. Student Support Facilitator at Northern Gateway Public Schools. Tammy advocates for students and parents, providing a link to other supports within the community. Tammy has been a social worker for over 20 years and is a mother to 4 children, 3 of which are teenagers.