

Parent Connections

5 Easy Tips to Help Your Child Get Ready for Back to School

1. **Reflect on the past school year.**
2. **Set a realistic reading, writing, and math goals.**
3. **Visit a local college.**
4. **Have fun, and don't forget that service is good for the heart.**
5. **Update and verify your contact information with your child's school.**

The first day of school for more than 1 million New York City children is only a month away. For many parents, this occasion brings relief because back to school means back to a more structured day. As parents know, it can be difficult having to plan days of fun while working and dealing with the stress of everyday life. They also worry about what to do to ensure that their child is still learning and getting the practice he or she needs to be ready when school doors reopen in the September.

Here are 5 quick tips to help you and your child feel prepared for school and to take some of the anxiety away as you both enjoy the last days of summer fun during the month of August.

1. Reflect on the past school year, and set goals for the upcoming school year.

Children need to know what they did well as they prepare to set realistic goals and targets. In June when end-of-year report cards make it home, most children are burned out and really can't focus on a meaningful conversation about what they did well and what they need to improve on. Now that they have had the month of July to relax, swim, and unwind this is a great time to now help your child reflect on the previous school year and to talk with Mom and Dad about realistic goals for the upcoming school year. Below are some great Ask questions to get the conversation going. Keep in mind that the purpose is to get your child to talk openly with you so don't make the conversation too structured. You can talk at the dinner table or during a moment in the morning or before bedtime. In addition to setting a learning goal you should set a personal goal such as learning how to do laundry or learn how to clean the bathroom.

Ask

- **What did you think you did well this past school year?**
- **What did you learn about yourself?**
- **What do you want to improve on?**
- **How will you know you are improving? What will it look like? Sound like?**

- **Is there something I can do as Mom/Dad to help you improve?**

2. Set realistic reading, writing and math goals.

Helping your child get ready for the next grade should not be about volume but about building perseverance and understanding. Don't try to do too much. The goal is to help develop good work habits and to instill confidence in your child feel as they get ready to return to school. If he or she came home with a reading list or summer packet and has not yet

started working on it, then August is a great time to begin. Set realistic targets given your child's summer schedule, which may include day camp, evening at the park with friends, biking, travel, and just enjoying the warm days. Get a calendar and identify three or at most four days a week for Reading, Writing, and Math. Ensure that a block of 20 minutes is set aside each day or night for independent reading. If your child struggles with reading, then try to get audio books that will support as he or she develops confidence. Mom and Dads, don't be hesitate to get a good book yourself to show that you can also enjoy independent reading time.

Sample Schedule							
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Reading	20 min @1pm		20 min @7pm		20 min @7pm	20 min @4pm	
Math			20 min @6:30pm			20 min @4:30pm	
Writing	20 min @6:30pm				20 min @6:00pm		
Bedtime Reading		20 min		20 min			20 min

3. Visit a local college

The goal of K-12 education is to ensure that all children are prepared with the cognitive backpack to be successful in college. Research indicates that children need opportunities to visit college and encouragement from parents to know that college is right for them. As you plan your summer experiences and trips to the pool, consider taking a half day to do a walking tour of a college campus. If your son or daughter is in middle or high school, then take the opportunity to do a formal tour. You may also schedule a formal tour during the school year. Even though the number of students on the campus is significantly lower during the summer, this is still a great opportunity to just enjoy the college atmosphere. Visit the college bookstore and get a T-shirt or banner as a future reminder for your future HS graduate. For a complete list of colleges in New York City and New York State search Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_colleges_and_universities_in_New_York

4. Have fun and don't forget that service is good for the heart!

It is okay to have fun! While several policymakers may be pushing for year-round school, the research has consistently demonstrated that children who play and engage in music and arts outperform their peers. Children need time to grow, and playing helps them to develop real life skills that will contribute to success in the workplace and in personal relationships. The winter months are long, and we quickly forget how frustrating it is to not be able to move about freely. As you plan your month of August, with your children in mind, remember that this is a great time to enjoy your local swimming pool, have a family picnic, implement a family game night, play a game of volleyball, and just get moving outdoors. Keep in mind that fun may include service. Parents are often surprised about how much fun it can be and rewarding it is for children when they volunteer at a local senior citizen center to read a book or at a local food pantry to help serve others in greater need. Service is good for the heart and spirit. Community service also looks great on high school and college

applications. For ideas on volunteering you can check online at:

www.newyorkcares.org New York Cares
www.voa.org Volunteers of America
<http://www.nycservice.org/> New York Service

5. Update your contact information with the school.

Schools are committed to bridging communication with parents and educators. New York City schools have Parent Coordinators who help parents stay connected with what is happening within the school and who also to help connect parents to services and support to improve the quality of life for their child. As parents we get busy and often forget to let schools know if we have changed our mobile number, or if we have recently moved, or if we are no longer using that old email account. Whatever the issue, it is the parent's responsibility to keep the school informed about the best way to reach you to share information. In the month of August, schools are sending out notices regarding back-to-school orientations and other events for both students and parents. If you have not yet verified your contact information, take a moment to call or email the Parent Coordinator to ensure that the school has the most updated information. Also, in the first week of school ALL children will be bringing home the "Blue Cards" so make it a priority to complete and return the Blue Card in a timely manner. Your child's safety is a priority for you and your school.

Dr. Selma K. Bartholomew
President of Legacy Pathways

Dr. Selma K. Bartholomew, president of Legacy Pathways, has more than 16 years of solid experience as an educator and leader. She works with schools locally and nationally to help them improve the quality of teaching, learning, and leadership. Helping schools bridge the communication gap between home and school is critical if we are ensure that ALL students are prepared with the cognitive backpack and skills to meet College and Career Readiness goals.