

Back To School Tips

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 stressful experience.

Here are some back to school tips:

- **Building positive communication with your young person's teacher**
 - Approach the new school year and the new teacher with a fair and open mind.
 - How you view your young person's teacher influences whether you can have a productive relationship with this person. How you view and talk about the teacher also affects how your child will view them. Give the new teacher a fair chance.
 - Call the school and schedule a time to meet with your young person'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.
 - Scheduling a meeting shows that you respect the teacher's time and workload. This is a simple courtesy that can go a long way towards building a positive relationship.
 - Do this either before the year starts or within the first few weeks. Most schools might already have a meet and greet scheduled for the beginning of the year – contact the school directly or check out their website and try to attend.

- **Be professional**
 - Parents need to present themselves as professionals – you know your child best.
 - Arrive on time and look presentable.
 - A binder with all your child's information might be helpful.
 - During the meeting you will be able to access and provide any information the teacher requires. Being organized will be helpful for both you and the teacher.

- **Be fair**
 - Give your child and the teacher time to get to know each other
 - Think of the teacher as a part of your child's team

- **Explain your young person's disability**
 - Don't assume that the teacher understands your child's disability



Back To School Tips

- Your child is unique in how his/her diagnosis shows
- Provide some information about your child's disability and how it may specifically affect them

- **Speak honestly about your young person**
 - Acknowledge your child's strengths and challenges
 - Talk about skills, favorite activities, and what has worked for the child in the past
 - Discuss strategies that might be helpful for your child and the teacher.

- **Be willing to listen**
 - Listen carefully to any thoughts or questions the teacher may have
 - If you would like information about certain behaviors or subjects, ask for it
 - Please keep in mind that the teacher may have many students with disabilities

- **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 or email more convenient? How can you find out about homework, field trips, and other important information?
 - Talk with the teacher about how you can stay informed and involved
 - Be sure that the teacher has all your contact information and knows how to contact you

- **Discuss your young person's IPP (Individualized Program Plan), if applicable**
 - Discuss realistic goals for your child with the teacher
 - Talk about the length and quantity of goals that will be achievable for your child



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More tips for Back to School:

Set up a back-to-school routine in the weeks before the school year starts to ease the transition (e.g.: bedtime, morning routine, packing lunches, healthy dinners, etc.):

- It's a good idea to learn the daily schedule at school and discuss what will happen and letting them get familiar with the routine.
 - Even a young person who can't tell time will learn the pattern of the day in relative terms.
- You can ask the school to arrange a tour and a meet and greet with their teacher.
- Your young person may need to familiarize themselves with the school's layout.
 - They might need to be prepared for alternating schedules.
 - They should explore the building fully, establishing locations of the lunchroom, restrooms, nurse's office, gym, lockers, etc.
- Get to know the schedule of your young person's daily routine
 - E.g.: therapy times, programs, etc.
- If your young person requires an aide, find out what hours your aide works and what hours your young person may be alone
- Be sure all school staff know about your young person's medication or dietary needs
- Try to volunteer or join parent organizations at your young person's school
- And finally, encourage your young person to get involved with their peers and new friends by joining an after-school club, or taking part in other activities.

Places and contacts to help you navigate the Education System:

1. [Program Unit Funding \(PUF\)](#)
1-780-422-6326
 - Preschool children with disabilities of 2½ years old as of September 1st are eligible for PUF funded preschool programs
2. [The Calgary Catholic Board of Education](#)
3. [Home Schooling Options](#) (*click the link to search "homeschool options" in our database*)
4. [Private Schools in Calgary](#) (*click the link to search "private schools" in our database*)

