Prepare Now for the Best School Year Ever

August is fast coming to a close and a new school year is just around the corner. Now's the time, in between the final lazy days of summer and shopping for school supplies, to start your family's transition to the school year.

Doing so now allows everyone to feel more in control and to have less anxiety. You, as a parent, have some work to do.

Take time to look back on the last school year: what was most challenging and stressful, both for you and for your child? Think too about what worked and about what inspired your child.

Some questions to consider:

- How much does tiredness contribute to your stress? Juggling work and family responsibilities can be exhausting. Is everyone in the house getting enough sleep?
- How can you be better organized? What can you do to better manage everyone in the family's time?
- Think about out-of-school commitments. How much time do various extracurricular activities take? How much time does your family need to manage the essentials of school and work, and what other activities can you manage while keeping your sanity?
- What is your child's learning style? People learn in different ways, and your child's learning style may be different from your own, which may make helping your child challenging.
- Does your child have learning differences? Have they been identified and is the school providing the necessary support? Are there other things you can do at home to help?

Engage the whole family in identifying the issues and in thinking about ways of addressing them.

- Start your back to school routine **now**, getting everyone used to getting up in the morning, which probably means earlier bedtimes and less television or screen time.
- Plan and hold a family conference to talk about goals for the year. Start by talking about last year, what worked and what went wrong. Brainstorm solutions as a family. Set up a plan and decide how everyone will be held

accountable. Start using a calendar that everyone can see to keep tabs on upcoming commitments. Schedule a regular weekly check-in to organize the coming week.

- Encourage using reading and math skills by setting up a family reading chart (including everyone in the family) or post vocabulary, math or logic challenges on the fridge.
- As a family, designate and decorate a table, a corner or a room for homework. Take time to talk about how to accomplish homework success before the pressures of the school year start to build up. Help your child set achievable goals and find a way to chart progress on those goals. Have your child design or print out encouraging statements to hang up there.
- Hold a family treasure hunt, searching for all those loose crayons, pencils, pens, calculators, notebooks and other academic supplies lying around the house. Store them all together in a shoebox or bin for use when supplies are low or missing.
- Plans ways to celebrate your child's accomplishments. Don't forget to reward effort and hard work.

Remember to take the time to savor the last days of summer. Don't be too frantic about the coming year; you want to make sure your batteries are fully charged for the first day of school.

You are now on the way to having the best school year ever.

Further Reading for Prepare for the Best School Year Ever

Supporting Children's Different Kinds of Intelligences: https://www.childcaregroup.org/training/images/Misc/DifferentKindsofSmarts.pdf

Help Your Child Prepare for Back to School: <u>http://www.webmd.com/parenting/family-health-12/back-to-school-prep</u>

Back to School Tips for Children on the Autism Spectrum: http://www.researchautism.org/family/Transitioning%20Back%20to%20School%20for%20Pare nts.pdf

Get in Gear for the New School Year: http://blog.ed.gov/2013/08/get-in-gear-for-the-new-school-year-back-to-school-tips-forparents/

How to have a family meeting:

https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/emotional-fitness/201209/10-tips-holding-family-meeting

Ideas for setting up a homework station: http://modernparentsmessykids.com/poyel-do-able-diy-homework-stations/

Innovative ways to celebrate your child's accomplishments: http://fatherhood.about.com/od/activities/a/celebrating.htm