

Our Family Plans for School

By: Maria Cipriano, Parent

The transition from the summer back to school is difficult for some children and this can be an extra challenge for children who are easily disturbed by changes in their daily routines. Our son is no exception. He loves the play time summer affords him and he resists giving this up come September. Making the transition to a new teacher, classroom, classmates and a full day of school will be stressful.

Our main strategy for dealing with these challenges is communication. In our family, we start discussing the next school year before the current school year ends. We make a point of introducing him to his new teacher and showing him the classroom in June. We take pictures of the teacher and the classroom and use them to make a social story that we can read. We have found this to be an effective way to get

him used to the changes.

We make visits to the school playground over the summer to keep him in the habit of going to the school. Playing in the school playground is fun for him and creates a positive association with the school.

In August, we take him to meet with the teacher and visit the classroom. We talk about the upcoming school year on a daily basis and do a countdown to first day of school using stickers and a calendar. This visual aid helps him understand the concept that school will start on a given date and will help him adjust to the idea. A successful and positive



start to the school year begins with lots of planning and preparation.

Picture books and DVDs on the subject of going back to school are also helpful and readily available at the public library.

Going Back to School: Helpful Tips for a Great Start

By: Kim LaGamba, Instructor Therapist, and Alyssa Goldberg, Supervising Therapist, TPAS

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often respond well to structured environments and may have difficulty adjusting when their daily routines change. Some of the following strategies can help to keep consistency in your child's day.

Maintain a schedule that includes some school activities and continue to follow it over the summer. For example, have story time or eat lunch around the same time that he would at school. A few weeks before school, start to wake your child up at the same time as for school and follow the same morning routines that he will follow during the school year. As the first day of school approaches, it may be helpful to create a special "countdown to school" calendar using visuals your child is familiar with. Visual schedules can give your child predictability and direction which may reduce anxiety and problem behaviour.

Another helpful strategy is priming. This

involves giving your child exposure to the school environment before going back to school. You may want to ask the teacher what activities are planned for the first week of school and rehearse them with your child at home. You could create a visual story for your child and read it together daily as the first day of school approaches.

The visual story should be individualized to his needs and preferences. Use lots of pictures and short sentences that include descriptions of various school situations.

Back to school time can be stressful for parents and challenging for children with ASD. However, using the above strategies can

assist in creating a positive and successful experience.

For more information and strategies to help your child get ready for school, check out the "Off to School" workshop on www.connectability.ca, or talk to your child's clinical team.



School's in...What now?

By: Leanne Small, Transition Coordinator, TPAS



The start of the school year is here, and it is time to begin thinking about what to do with your child after school. Here are a few suggestions:

LIBRARY

Head to your local library to borrow different educational books. Most libraries have children's areas with child-sized furniture to enjoy reading the books there. On specified days, some libraries have guest readers or fun children's activities to participate in free of charge. Ask at your local library, or go to <http://kidsspace.torontopubliclibrary.ca/>, click on Fun & Toronto and then on the Kids and the Library link to find out what is going on at the library in your neighbourhood.

RECREATION PROGRAMS

Now is the time to begin thinking about fall recreation options. Registration for the fall season begins in late August for most programs. The City of Toronto offers a range of programs including swimming, skating and discovery walks, as well as support for children with special needs. Look under Adapted and Integrated Services in the "The Fun Guide" at your local community centre, or visit www.toronto.ca/parks for more information about different activities being offered in your neighbourhood.

For more information on these and other after-school activities for your child, talk to your Transition Coordinator.

The Book Nook

By: Julie St. Amant, TPAS Assistant

Reading a book with your child can be an ideal way to settle after supper or before bed. Here are some books that can be found in the Parent Lending Library at Surrey Place Centre which may help your child to better understand school and social situations.

1. Friends Learn About Tobin (by Diane Murrell)
2. King of the Playground (by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor)
3. Now I Get It: Fire Drills/ Assembly, Getting Ready for School/ Getting Ready for Bed (by Natural Learning Concepts)
4. When I Feel Afraid (by Cheri J. Meiners)
5. All Kinds of Friends, Even Green (by Ellen B. Senisi)

On a rainy night, try watching some of these DVDs with your child. They are designed for children and can help them to learn about important social skills.

1. Model Me DVD: Time for a Play-date
2. Model Me DVD: Time for School
3. Storymovies: Social Concepts and Skills at School

Contact your Transition Coordinator to borrow these materials and to browse the Parent Lending Library catalogue for other resources.

Fall Festival

TORONTO PARTNERSHIP FOR AUTISM SERVICES

**Please join us for our 2nd Annual Fall Festival.
We have activities for the entire family and
a light lunch will be served!**

Saturday September 11, 2010 11:00AM – 2:00PM
2 Surrey Place, Toronto ON • RSVP by August 31, 2010

RSVP to David Toms 416-925-5141 ext. 2363

Surrey Place Centre is accessible by TTC. Parking is limited.