



# PARENT NEWSLETTER

## AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

### STARTING OFF THE SCHOOL YEAR RIGHT

Whether your kids are going to school for the first time or are in high school, a new school year marks a new beginning not only for your child, but also for you and the teacher(s). A new year means you, your child, and their teacher(s) have an opportunity to think about what has or hasn't worked, and how best to build on previous successes so your child can have an incredible year. Remember, you are your child's first teacher – both by example (when you model things like behaviors for them) and through conversation (when you discuss experiences with them). Therefore, planning for a successful year begins at home. Here is a checklist to guide you and your child as you prepare for this new year.



**Reflect on the previous year and set new goals.** Discuss the previous year with your child. What were your child's grades like? In what areas did your child excel? In what areas did your child need help? What was your child's relationship with his/her teachers? What are some challenges your child might face this year? What supports might your child need, and how might you help him/her? You also want to help your child set some realistic goals for the year and help them track their progress throughout the year.



**Develop a morning and evening routine that is pleasant for your child.** As the beginning of the school year gets closer, help your child develop some routines. For example, consider setting a bedtime and wake-up time to ease them into their school-year routine. Sleep can have a significant effect on your child's performance and success in school, so you want to make sure they get enough sleep. You may also want to get an alarm clock for children who can tell time to help develop their independence. Also, consider having your child pick out school clothes the night before to make things run a little smoother in the mornings.



**Make sure your child reads and/or writes each day.** Reading and writing keep your child's literacy skills sharp and will help them succeed inside and outside of the classroom. As the school year nears, engage your child in reading and writing activities for at least 15 minutes a day to get them back in the swing of things.



**Play educational games.** Board games and other educational activities can be a great way to stimulate your child's brain. Take 30-60 minutes each day to play games that will engage your child academically while they have fun. When the school year begins, you can do homework in place of these activities, or add them to homework assignments to help your child make meaningful connections to the real world.



**Limit screen time.** During the summer months, you may have relaxed some of your rules about screen time (the amount of time your child spends watching T.V., playing with laptops, phones, tablets, etc.). This is the time to begin setting boundaries if you haven't already. Instead of playing video games or watching T.V., have your child play outside, help you around the house, or read a book to make the transition during the school year a lot easier.



**Buy or create a wall calendar.** A calendar is a great way to help your child learn how to organize. It is also a useful tool for the entire family. Once you buy or create your calendar, hang it in a visible place where everyone can add their events or commitments (e.g., after-school activities, play dates, testing dates, vacations).



**Show interest in what is happening at school.** You can do this by asking questions (e.g., what did you learn today?) or helping your child with their homework. Also make sure that you take time to review your child's assignments and homework.

## FAMILY FUN FOR BACK TO SCHOOL

To get into the spirit of Back to School, here are some fun activities you can do with your child.

- **Cook together.** When you cook with your child, you have an opportunity to make learning meaningful. Through cooking (and eating), you can teach your child how to count, use math, and make sense of fractions (e.g., measuring ingredients, cutting slices,). You can also help them become better readers as they learn about nutritional facts and support them in exercising their creative muscles as they come up with new recipes!
- **Play outside.** While the weather is still nice, play with your child outside. This is a great way to learn about nature (e.g., plants, animals, flowers) and get some exercise in. Consider working with your child to write short stories, poems, or songs about what they learn outside.
- **Make a game of reading.** To develop your child's literacy skills, consider making a game of reading. When you go to the grocery store or a restaurant, for example, help your child read the grocery list, signage, or the menu. This is a great way to build vocabulary and spelling skills.

## 21ST CENTURY SKILLS: COLLABORATION

Twenty-first century skills are abilities that today's students need to succeed inside and outside of the classroom, as well as in their careers. These skills help students to keep up with the changing times and to make sense of the world around them. Each newsletter will feature a 21st century skill that your child needs to succeed and some tips for developing the skill at home. In this issue, we are going to discuss collaboration. Simply put, collaboration means working together to solve a problem. The key to effective collaboration is willingness and compromise. For a team to solve a problem successfully, everyone must be willing to work together and compromise some parts of their own ideas to make sure all team members' ideas are included in the solution. Here are some tips for building collaboration at home.

- **Invite your child to help you solve a problem.** Whether it's fixing a broken toy or coming up with ideas for a meal, you can work with your child to make problem solving fun at home.
- **Use random materials at home to build.** If you have ever played with building blocks with your child, you know that this is a great to develop their collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving skills. If you don't have building blocks, feel free to use random objects around the house (e.g., plastic utensils, paper, straws) to come up with new designs and structures.

## TECH TALK

You can also use technology at home or your local library to help teach your child about collaboration! Here are some ideas.

- **Create an audiovisual project.** You can download free tools to develop multimedia projects with your child. Consider writing a song or making a video together with some of these resources:
  - o **VoiceThread** - Easily collaborate and create with voice, videos, or images.
  - o **Mural** - Design message boards that can help you collaborate with your child around different ideas.
  - o **Siftr** - You and your child can collect and store images for later use as you explore your neighborhood.

For more ideas, visit <https://www.commonsense.org/education/top-picks/best-student-collaboration-tools>.

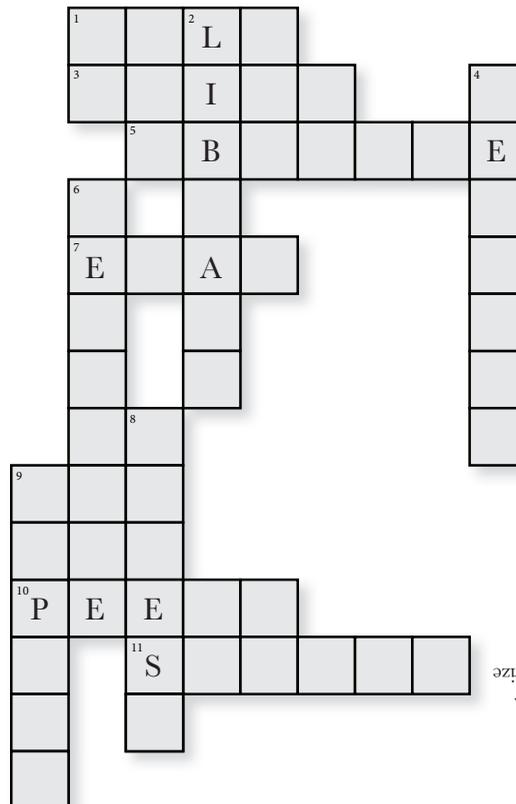
## BRAIN TEASER: CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### ACROSS

1. This season comes after summer
3. You use your brain to do this
5. When you look at something carefully
7. Another word for test
10. Another word for your classmates
11. A place you go to learn

### DOWN

2. You go here to borrow books
4. A person you learn from in the classroom
6. You do this so you can remember something
8. During this time at school, you play with your friends
9. You write this after you read a book



- ANSWERS  
DOWN  
1. fall  
2. library  
3. think  
4. teacher  
5. observe  
6. memorize  
7. exam  
8. recess  
9. report  
10. peers  
11. school