

SAN JACINTO RIVER AUTHORITY KIDS PAGE



How to make this the **BEST** Back to School time...ever!

Kids may groan and complain, but adults will often smile and remember how exciting it was to anticipate going “Back to School.” Of course, not everyone thought this was a great time of year... especially in situations where they were new to the area and attending a new school.

Why is returning to school a better experience for some youngsters than for others? Is there anything a student -- and their parents -- can do to improve this experience?

It starts at home...

Many parents start worrying about how they'll help their youngsters do well in school before they're even out of diapers. There is a lot of pressure to provide educational guidance and encouragement in a world where 35 percent¹ of children are being raised by single parents, and 57 percent² live in households where both parents must work. While it is true that children develop at different paces, and there is no single characteristic that will predict or determine how well a child will do in school, parents can help their youngsters develop positive skills and attitudes to get them off to a great start!

Here are a few suggestions:

1. Basics for Success -- A combination of things contribute to academic success; *perhaps at the top of the list are good health and physical well-being.* These attributes do not happen by chance. Start the day with a nutritional breakfast. Make sure youngsters get regular check-ups, enjoy plenty of exercise,

and get enough sleep. Kids cannot be expected to perform well at school if they are tired, hungry or not feeling up to par.

2. Attitude is everything! If parents treat the whole idea of going back to school as an adventure or something to be happy about, that enthusiasm and excitement will be contagious! Learning IS fun, and school involves things like field trips, making new friends, athletic competition, and discovering the world around us. Don't be afraid to be a FAN of education and pass that mind-set along to your kids.

3. Realistic rules and expectations -- No matter what grade level your students are, it is productive to establish certain “rules” before school even starts. Adjust bedtime earlier to “reset” the child's body clock so they can synch-up to new school routines. It is more than just going to bed earlier, however, decisions need to be made about bathing (at night or in the morning), chores (who, what and when), and the use of electronic devices before school (yes or no). Agree on a specific location for backpacks/books/home-work to be placed, so time isn't wasted hunting for



1 Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation

2. Source: Catalyst.org

them before school. Be sure to check the school's website for dress codes before heading to the mall so you don't waste money on clothing that cannot be worn in the classroom. Be specific about your expectations about completing homework, making good grades, and even the kind of friends (values and behavior) you hope they will make. Since everyone operates better when they know the boundaries, spell out the consequences if expectations aren't met.



4. Organize and declutter! Albert Einstein had *“Three Rules of Work: Out of clutter find simplicity; from discord find harmony; in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.”* Those are not bad words for a student to live by. If your child doesn't yet have a dedicated, organized area to work in, help set one up. The workspace needs to be quiet, distraction-free, well stocked with school supplies (pens, pencils, notebooks, tablets, and appropriate electronic “tools”), have a comfortable chair and good lighting. Using favorite colors and designs will make your student at ease in the space. If there's room, include a bulletin board for “memories” and wall calendar to keep track of assignments and events.

Getting off to a great start!

Actually, adopting the right attitude and some careful preparation can make a world of difference for just about everyone. Here are some positive steps students can take to be ready for the big day:

1. Carpe Diem -- that's Latin for “seize the day.” Make every single one of them count! And to do that, remember this is a brand new year...leave any “bad” stuff behind and start fresh! Walk proud; be friendly; and look forward to everything you will

learn, and all the new friends you will make this year.

2. Get the right “stuff” -- When you shop for your school supplies select the kind you like best -- colors, design, function, and overall usefulness. And, if permitted, customize them with your own artwork, stickers or doodles. If you enjoy looking at your folders and notebooks, you will be more likely to use them!

3. “Homework” matters -- This is actually some of the most important “work” you'll ever do. It might not seem that important...but these assignments will help you set your own personal organizational style, and will also help you set priorities and meet deadlines -- two critically important skills for those who plan a career in the business world. The key is to develop some good time management skills. Keep a convenient record of homework assignments and deadlines -- either in a personal calendar, or on an electronic device -- and keep it with you at school and in your study area at home.

4. Discover YOUR best study style -- Do you know how you learn? Where -- and how -- do you study most productively? Do you work better alone? or with a study partner or group? It may take you some time to figure this out, but keep an eye on the prize: don't just leave this to chance. Experiment with locations, time of day, and partners. Remember, the goal is to facilitate learning, so make everything work FOR you.

5. The BEST you can be -- OK...here's a difficult subject; personal hygiene. Girls might be a bit more “into” style and fashion, but all young people should be concerned not only about their physical appearance, but in establishing good grooming habits, as well. That means bathing and shampooing regularly, brushing your teeth at least twice a day, using deodorant; and wearing freshly laundered clothes. The better you feel about yourself, it is more likely that others will feel good about you, too! 💧

