

HELPING CHILDREN TRANSITION BACK TO SCHOOL



In today's busy world, it is more important than ever to intentionally connect with your child. Building strong loving connections at home is the most important step in helping a child prepare for school and all the adjustments that go with a new school year. When children feel loved, at peace and accepted unconditionally they are able to adjust to school with more success. Dr. Becky Bailey, the founder of Conscious Discipline, states, *"Encouragement allows us to deeply connect with others, fully appreciating their unique qualities. Relationships are the motivation and cradle of all learning."*

Attunement is key. It means you are listening and responding to your child's emotional needs, which results in feelings of being understood and valued. Talking, asking questions, and listening to your kid's feedback about their day makes you a safe place for them to process feelings and events of the day. So many of the kids today just want a safe place to talk and connect.

Creating family rituals also fosters relationships. Enjoy the benefits of eating dinner together, having meetings where each member can communicate, and having family outings where you laugh and learn more about each other. Inviting your kids' friends to the meal and events helps you learn about and facilitate bonds with other kids in the school.

Facilitate bonding with your child's teacher to transfer their focus to their teacher and school family. Contacting the teacher or counselor to give them any helpful information about your child is a great step for a parent to take. When you do, teachers will often make a special effort to make your child feel more at home. Strong school connections create a school family atmosphere which promotes healthy relations.

Routines in the home create a sense of safety, structure, and consistency. Consider developing routines around after-school time, dinnertime, evenings, bedtime, wake-up time, and before school. If your students are in early elementary, you can help them remember their routines by creating a visual schedule. For older students, have them give input into what they should be doing at each of the designated times. The schedule can be posted on the refrigerator.

Create a "Homework Hub" from elementary school until the end of high school to promote structure. Kids can choose the location, and it can be tested out. If they can maintain grades and organization, then it works. If not, you can renegotiate terms and find a better location. When setting up a homework and study area, pay attention to what conditions help the student work or study best.

Does listening to music help him concentrate? Make sure he has access to music in his study space. Does she get easily distracted? Designate a place away from video games and other distracters so the focus can stay on homework and studying. Cell phones can be placed in a kitchen basket during study time to prevent social distractions.

Part of creating success in developing connections and routines is to set your goals and stay accountable. Following through with your plan can be a challenge with all the distractions in the world. Creating a family accountability plan with the school counselor can help school families set a goal and follow through to create success in relationships and routine.

For more information or a free phone consultation, contact Cana Counseling at Catholic Charities, (316) 263-6941, or visit CatholicCharitiesWichita.org.



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