

**Back to School:**

Getting into a back to school routine is not only hard on children but also on their relative caregivers. Later bedtimes and later morning wakeups change for the whole family when school is back in session. Some kids have difficulty adjusting to these changes in addition to adjusting to new teachers, schedules, and schools. Here are some tips for back to school routines.

1. Try and establish bedtime rituals and times that both the child and the caregiver can live with and maybe enjoy! Find ways to get kids to relax before going to bed (ie. baths, showers, reading in their room, listening to music vs. active play or sports just before bed). Over time kids will settle into a routine if you try and keep their nightly bedtime similar. Pick and choose your battles regarding bedtime. Be clear what your rules are on phonecalls in the evening or how late and how long he or she can be on the computer. All these things can make it harder for kids to settle down at bedtime. Consider that different ages of kids need different amounts of sleep and, as they get into teenage years, getting up in the morning gets more difficult.
2. Ask your child daily what he has for homework. Some kids do better waiting awhile before jumping into completing their homework after school. Others prefer to get it done and over with so they can move onto something else. Make sure you offer healthy snacks or take the time on occasion to make a snack together with your child after school. This can be a good way to get your kids to talk about their day.
3. Encourage your child to get involved in some sort of after school activity or early evening activity if possible. This can be hard if the children you are caring for also have weekly therapy, parental visits, inhome family supports, etc. already in their schedule. However, it can be good for children to have experiences outside of school with some of their peers (ie. music lessons, scouts, church groups, YMCA activities, etc.)
4. Assist your child at least through middle school in going through their backpack and binders to sort out assignments, school papers and other school related materials. Try and help them develop a system of writing down homework assignments and staying organized. Consider using clear contact paper to cover their daily class schedule and put this on their binder for easy viewing. Some kids need more help than others in learning how to be organized.
5. Develop after school safety plans that may involve your child walking home with a friend. Talk through how to deal with someone coming to the door if your child is home alone or how to answer the phone when home alone.
6. Try and assess early in the school year how your child is interacting with his or her teachers. Call the teacher directly if you have concerns and try and keep an open mind through your conversation.
7. Last but not least, try and find a few minutes for yourself once you've gotten your children to bed at night or off to school in the morning!! A favorite hot drink or listening to music you like can create a mini- vacation. You deserve a break too!

Library books and videos are available at the FACT library related to education. Call us to send a book or video to you. Call Maine Kids-Kin staff for additional back to school ideas.