



Start the School Year Off Right

As kids head back to school, it's important to provide them with the necessary resources to succeed. As a parent, you can take steps to put your kids on the path toward a successful school year.

To help your children put the best foot forward, consider these suggestions from The Salvation Army, which operates hundreds of low-cost after-school programs for kids of all ages in low-income neighborhoods across the country and understands the importance of setting children up for success all year.

Get back into a routine. During the summer months, family routines tend to slide, especially morning rituals and bedtime

habits. A few weeks before school starts, begin transitioning your way back to a normal school schedule. A gentle progression toward earlier bed and wake-up times is easier on kids physically and mentally. Try adjusting by 15 minutes each day until you reach the optimal schedule for your family. Remember that routines aren't just about the clock, though. If there are certain steps that are part of the school year routine, such as packing lunches and laying out clothes for the next day before bed, make those part of your transition plan, too.

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The Review

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Set a good example. Kids learn important behavioral lessons by watching the adults in their lives. The back-to-school season provides many opportunities to demonstrate compassion and social responsibility. For example, giving back to an organization like The Salvation Army helps provide funding for programs that support the educational needs of children who otherwise may not have access to the same resources.

Research resources for homework help. Discovering your child is struggling in school can be overwhelming. You'll want to be able to pull in help as quickly as possible, so it's a good idea to research resources in your area that can help provide support outside the classroom. Your school likely has some options available, but it's a good idea to also look into tutoring programs and other community services that encourage literacy and study skills as well as provide one-on-one assistance with homework and school assignments.

Get organized. The first few weeks of school typically bring plenty of change and adjustment. You can help manage the stress by creating some structure. Use a wall calendar to keep track of school start and dismissal times, bus pick-up and drop-off times, after school activities and other appointments. Review lunch menus and plan ahead so you're not finding out at bedtime that you need to pack a home lunch in the morning. Stock up on breakfast foods and make time to catch up on laundry before school begins so hunger and wayward socks don't derail your mornings.

Explore extra-curricular programs. With the new school year comes numerous ways to enrich your kids' social and cognitive development. Extra-curricular activities let kids continue practicing skills even after the school bell rings, but in a fun environment so they may not even realize they're still learning and cultivating healthy, safe relationships with friends. In addition to sports and clubs, a wide array of music and art education activities may be available that focus on everything from choir, band and dancing to drawing, writing and acting.

Set goals. Begin the school year by encouraging your children to take ownership and pride in their learning. Talk about goals like reading a certain number of books each month or earning grades that reflect their highest potential.

Get kids motivated by designing goal boards or charts that can serve as daily reminders and track their progress. For larger goals, consider setting milestones so they can celebrate progress along the way and stay motivated for a big finish.

Learn more about educational and giving opportunities in your community at SalvationArmyUSA.org.





