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Autism Agenda



Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

Back to School – tips for parents of children on the autism spectrum

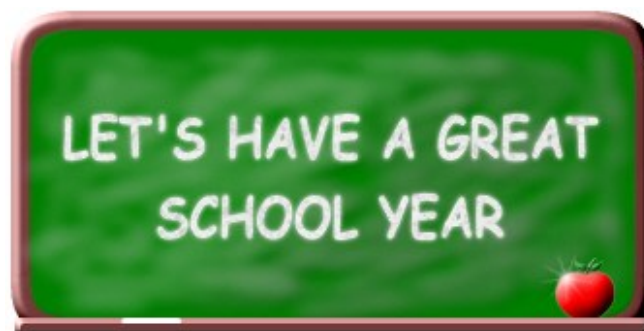
By Lee A. Wilkinson, PhD.

Students throughout the country will soon be making the transition to a new school year or a new grade. This includes an increasing number of special needs children identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Since Congress added autism as a disability category to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students receiving special education services under this category.

The beginning of a new school year is an exciting yet anxious time for both parents and children. It typically brings a change in the daily routine established over the summer months. This transition can be especially challenging for families with children on the autism spectrum. While change can be difficult, the following tips will help prepare a child with ASD for the new school year and make the transition back to school easier.

1. Prepare and reintroduce routines.

Familiarize and reintroduce your child to the school setting. This may mean bringing your child to the school or classroom, showing your child a picture of their teacher and any classmates, or meeting the teacher before the first day of school. If possible, arrange to visit the teacher or the school a week or two before the first day. If this isn't feasible, visit the school building or spend some time on the playground. Driving by the school several times is another good idea. You may also want to drive your child on the first day as well if they ride a bus to school. For many children on the spectrum, riding a bus to school on the first day can result in a sensory "overload." Gradually easing them into the transportation routine will be helpful for everyone.



Continued on page 2.

BACK TO SCHOOL CONTINUED.....

2. Expect the unexpected.

Parents cannot anticipate everything that might happen during the school day. Allow more time for all activities during the first week of school. Prepare your child for situations that may not go as planned. Discuss a plan of action for free time, such as lunch and recess. Use social stories to familiarize your child with routines and how to respond when an unexpected event occurs. Anticipate sensory overload. The activity, noise and chaos of a typical classroom (and cafeteria) can sometimes be difficult to manage. Establish a plan of action for this situation, possibly a quiet room where the child can take a short break. If your child has dietary issues, determine in advance how this will be managed so as to avoid any miscommunication.

3. Review and teach social expectations.

Although many children may transition easily between the social demands of summer activities and those required in the classroom, children on the autism spectrum may need more clear-cut (and literal) reminders. Review the “dos and don’ts” of acceptable school behavior. You can also create a schedule of a typical school day by using pictures and talk about how the school day will progress. Create a social story or picture schedule for school routines. Start reviewing and practicing early. If possible, meet with teachers and administrators to discuss your child’s strengths and challenges. Remember, you are your child’s best advocate. Establish communication early to develop positive relationships with your child’s teacher and school. Rehearse new activities. Ask the teacher what new activities are planned for the first week. Then, prepare your child by performing, practicing, and discussing them. This rehearsal will reduce anxiety when new activities take place during the beginning of school.



In summary, do everything possible to help reduce the stress level for your child and family during this transition time. Don’t forget to prepare yourself! A calm and collected parent is better able to help their child make a successful transition back to school.

Please visit bestpracticeautism.com for timely articles and postings, including topics such as screening, evaluation, positive behavior support (PBS), self-management, educational planning, IEP development, gender differences, evidence-based interventions (EBI), and more.

AUTISM SOCIETY OF OREGON

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TRANSITION TIPS

Getting Ready for School: Transition Tips for Students with Autism

By Paula Kluth, Ph. D.

Adapted from: P. Kluth (2010). "You're Going to Love This Kid!": teaching students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom (Rev. ed.) Baltimore: Brookes.

For many learners with autism, transitions are the toughest part of schooling. Moving from classroom to classroom or teacher to teacher can be stressful enough, but moving from building to building is almost always a process filled with anxiety and trepidation. These four strategies are designed to prepare the learner with autism for a new school or a new schooling experience and can be used days or months before the student arrives as well as throughout the school year.

School Preview

Many students with autism will profit from seeing, experiencing, and learning about the school before they show up on the first day. This is an effective strategy for students who are changing schools or for those who will be going to a certain classroom for the first time. A students can pre-view the school using many different tools. Some learners might appreciate a videotape of the school and its rooms, complete with short interviews with his new teachers. Other students like to tour the school themselves and meet teachers face to face before school officially starts. Still others may want to hear siblings, parents, or friends, tell them about the school. Students may also be interested in reviewing brochures of the school, newsletters from the previous year, and/or the school's website (if one exists).



Surveys

Before the year begins or during the first few days of school, many teachers ask students and their families to complete a survey. The purpose of this tool is to help the teacher become more personally acquainted with students and to make an immediate connection with families. Some teachers may choose to administer different surveys to students and parents while other teachers may design a survey that families and students complete together. While a survey would undoubtedly help a teacher learn more about his student with autism, many teachers choose to use surveys with every student in the class.

When considering using a survey, teachers will want to focus on learning styles, interests, needs, strengths or even on student ideas for classroom. Although questions will vary by age group, possible questions include:

- How do you learn best?
- What hobbies do you have?
- What scares or upsets you?
- What kind of expertise do you have (e.g., skateboarding, karate, collecting bugs, drawing?)
- What do you need to be comfortable in my classroom?
- What do you want to learn this year?
- What is your least favorite part of the school day?
- What is your favorite part of the school day?

If one or more students cannot write, the teacher, parent or support person can allow learners to submit visual surveys. Students might draw pictures, create a collage, or submit photographs or a video in response to the survey questions.

Continued on page 4.

TRANSITION TIPS CONTINUED.....

Routines and Schedules

Some students will profit from the development and implementation of written schedules, picture calendars, or the use of a daily planner. As one of my former students explained to me: “School is very stimulating and a lot of noises and disorganization for me. So I need to get used to new places and have a schedule.”

Teachers should talk often to students about how time will be used in the classroom. They should also try to give students with autism as much warning as possible when they are going to alter the class schedule or when a substitute will be teaching the class.

All students in a given classroom may benefit from knowing more about the schedule. Having information about what content will be taught and what activities will take place in any given day or week can help any student become a better planner and time manager. Teachers can make going over the daily schedule a regular part of the daily routine in any classroom; even taking a few seconds to review this information can make a difference in the learning of some students.

Personal Portfolio

Students who have unique needs and abilities may want to introduce themselves to a teacher through the use of a portfolio. Portfolios may include photographs, artwork, writing or schoolwork samples, lists of favorite things, or even video or audiotapes.



A portfolio can be an especially helpful tool for students who do not speak or use a reliable communication system. I worked with one young man, J. D., to assemble a portfolio he would use as he transitioned from high school to the work place. This young man did not speak and those who met him for the first time often struggled to connect with him. When his teachers first accompanied him to his new school, J. D.'s peers began asking them questions about him: Did he understand them? Did he have any interests?

The teachers decided that J.D. needed a way to represent himself so that they didn't need to serve as his voice and liaison. In order to facilitate this process the teachers worked with J.D. to create a portfolio that he could use to introduce himself to new people and to interact with those he already knew. J.D.'s portfolio included:

- Four pages of photographs (J.D. with family and friends; snapshots of him playing soccer at a community park; J.D. working with peers on a biology experiment, vacation photos from the Rock and Roll Museum in Ohio)
- A short “resume” outlining some of the classes he took in middle school
- A list of his favorite movies and compact discs
- A “Learning About Autism” pamphlet J.D. got at a conference
- A glossy picture of the Green Bay Packers, J.D.'s favorite football team

Portfolios can be in paper, audio, or video form, formal or informal, a few pages or dozens of pages, include only current information and artifacts or serve as a cumulative record of the student's life.

<https://livingautism.com/back-school-tips-parents-children-autism-spectrum/>

BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS

BACK-TO-SCHOOL TIPS

by Jennifer Lingle, M.Ed.

In honor of back-to-school, here are a few tips to get your child on the right track this school year.

Going back to school can be overwhelming for both you and your child.

These reminders will help everyone stay calm, cool, collected, and focused on a successful school year.

1. Every morning on the way to school, you and your child should say aloud: *“Today is a new day. I’ve got this. I am going to have a great day.”*

Starting the day with positivity puts you both in a healthy frame of mind. Everyone will get a lot more done with peace and ease, when they believe they can do it.

2. **Review the class rules with your child every morning.** Set him up for success by explaining class expectations. Different places have different rules, and your child needs reminders of which rules to follow in each setting. Be sure to state the rules positively. So, if *no hitting* is a rule, then be sure to also say, *keep your hands to yourself*.

3. **Make sure that you wake up a little bit earlier** for the first few weeks of school. Nobody likes to be rushed. When you are in a hurry to get somewhere, doesn’t it stress you out? Your child feels the same way, especially if he has sensory challenges and has difficulties getting his energy up and at em in the mornings. Do everyone a favor and wake up at least 20 minutes earlier, until your school morning routine is in full swing.

4. **Use a morning checklist** so that your child knows everything that he needs to complete before school. Include brushing teeth, going to the bathroom, getting dressed, eating breakfast, getting his backpack, and making sure that he has all school supplies and his lunch packed up. Use this time to promote and foster independence. Have your child check off each item as he completes it.

Implement these strategies every day for the first month of school, and you will begin to notice happier, calmer mornings.

Have a great transition back-to-school!

I PAD APPS

Remind: Fast, Efficient School Messaging

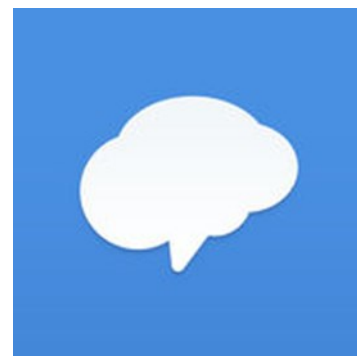
Description

Remind, formerly Remind101, is a free text messaging app that helps teachers, students, and parents communicate quickly and efficiently. By connecting school communities, Remind makes it easy for everyone to succeed together.

- *Real-time messaging for your school, group, or just a single person.
- * Schedule reminders ahead of time.
- * Send text messages straight to any phone.
- * Translate messages into more than 70 languages.
- * See who's read your messages and who's missing out.
- * Plan important activities and collect funds—on time.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/remind-fast-efficient-school-messaging/id522826277?mt=8>

(All apps are suggested, not required or endorsed by LBL ESD)



Help Your Child Be a Mindful Social Observer

As I guide my kids toward a back-to-school mindset, I'm not focused solely on academics. Sure, I've been bringing out the math workbooks and adding more reading and writing to my sons' weekly chores. But at the same time, I'm also thinking about what I consider to be one of the most important aspects of raising my children: their beliefs and feelings about themselves and their social experiences.

The weeks before school begins offer a chance to think mindfully about my children's social interactions and friendships, both past and present, and to plan for the future. Who have they connected with or stayed in touch with over the summer? Who would they like to get to know better or spend more time with? I've been asking my sons to consider how they may have changed and grown over the past year. Do they have new interests they'd like to pursue? Who were their friends last year, and how did those kids treat them and make them feel? Do they tend to make good choices when they're with these friends? What else do they remember from last year about friends or acquaintances?

During the first week or two of school, I urge my kids to play the role of a mindful social detective. This means being mindful (i.e., being aware of the present moment) and pausing before jumping in socially. I talk to them about taking a step back from the social scene and carefully observing the actions that are going on around them. What clues can they pick up by watching other kids and their behaviors? Do the actions they observe make them interested in becoming friends with a particular person or group of people?



You can help your child develop mindful social detective skills by people watching in public places or on TV or videos. Use the pause button to freeze the media and discuss what is going on. Ask your child to observe faces and tone of voice to determine a person's emotion. Look at the context/environment and actions/behaviors to figure out what people might be thinking about or feeling. Your child can make "smart guesses" about mood, emotions, and motivations based on the clues they see. (For more on developing empathy and being a social detective, see pp. 20, 31, 32, and 34 in my book *Make Social Learning Stick!* as well as *You Are a Social Detective* by Pam Crooke and Michelle Garcia Winner.)

My older son will be starting middle school this year, and I'm coaching him to be mindful of the new hidden social rules that will be going on around him. Who hangs out where during break or lunch times? As he observes other kids hanging out, what can he discern about the pros and cons of joining their social circle? Can he rely on executive function skills like planning and mindful observation to determine who might be a good choice as a new friend?

Over the summer, one of my sons had difficulty connecting to other kids at camp. After the fact, I realized that I hadn't adequately primed and prepared him, and I resolved to do better during the transition back to school. Navigating the social scene can be daunting, especially with new schools and bigger transitions. As parents, we can help our children build their social observation skills and prime them for social success as they embark upon each new school year.

<http://makesociallearningstick.com/elizabeths-blog/archives/08-2015>

BACK TO SCHOOL AND AUTISM

The Sun Returns.

Wednesday

It's late August and there's a buzz in the air that's almost palpable. Parents all over town are humming with anticipation of what, for many of us is the most wonderful time of the year. That first day back to school!

In my own family, we just made it through another long summer of not-enough-to-keep-settled, a kid who craves structure and routine. We do our best but school is the sun in her universe and without it, she's a planet wobbling off course.

This week I have my **Parent** hat on, taking unused vacation days from work to prepare. I see ads for notebooks, binders, pencils and such but they aren't on my list. I've done this so many times now that I don't need to write it down – but I do – just for the satisfaction of checking things off as I pack them.

Dora water bottle. Check. Nubby Pillow. Check. Washcloths. Check. Calming Crème Lotion (I'm a sucker for anything named "Calming"). Check. Toothbrush and paste. Check. Stress-free Hairbrush (I'm a sucker for anything named "Stress-free"). Check. Extra clothes. Check. "Getting To Know C" update. Check.

There are 23 items on my list. Some are for goals on her IEP, including self-help skills such as hair and tooth brushing. Some are for her super sensitive skin that breaks out in a rash if the school soap and paper towels are used. Some are to help her focus, such as a nubby soft pillow, ever-present on her lap, that meets her tactile need to stroke. I think to myself how many times I've been told, "she's so sensory!"

The doorbell rings. It's my colleague and blog director, Jana, video camera in hand, here to capture this. "Will anyone be interested in this?" I ask her. Is there anything to be gleaned? Even though I'm a veteran parent now, I often feel that I'm still flying by the seat of my pants, making this up as I go along.

We head off to school where we'll drop off bags of stuff and meet the new staff in her classroom. Thankfully, it's the same wonderful teacher who welcomes our coming a day early to remind C that this is just around the corner. I've been telling her for days, but even with visual schedules and social stories, she has trouble anticipating what is to come.

She walks in the familiar door and beams. She goes straight for her spot on the floor where she sits on her mat and grabs her pillow. This is a classroom with a teacher who knows that learning doesn't always have to happen sitting at a desk.

The new staff seems terrific. They've stayed late just to greet us. They ask many questions about C and gently engage her as I spill forth All There is to Know About C.

I get a bit anxious this first week back as there are always glitches – the bus tends to run late – I inevitably forget something. But this is the stuff of life, my life with autism. And it all works out. We all get back in the groove.

Thursday

We're sitting in the car waiting for that lovely yellow chariot to whisk her off. My mind races and my heart pumps rapidly. C squawks about the wait but soon as she sees it coming down our street, she settles. She practically floats from the car onto the bus. I kiss her and tell her I love her.

I smile. I cry. I breathe.

The sun is back.

And all is right in her world.

A footnote: Fellow parents: you made it! I wish you a good school year.

Teachers, classroom and office staff, therapists, principals, and bus drivers: thank you for your dedication and support and for shining brightly in our kids' universe.

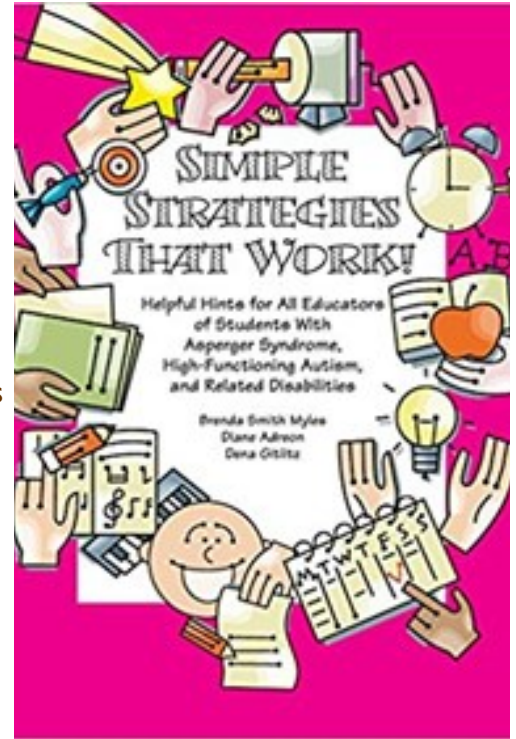
<http://theautismblog.seattlechildrens.org/back-to-school-and-autism/>



Simple Strategies that Work!

Helpful Hints for All Educators of Students with Asperger Syndrome, High-Functioning Autism, and Related Disabilities by Brenda Smith Myles, Diane Adreon and Dean Gitlitz

If your child has a general education teacher who feels unsure how to work with high-functioning students on the autism spectrum, *Simple Strategies that Work* is brief, easy-to-use reference that simply explains ten effective strategies, with visuals and examples: 1) Operate on Asperger Time, 2) Manage the environment, 3) Create a balanced agenda that conserves energy. 4) Share the agenda, 5) Simplify language, 6) Set a calm, positive tone, 7) Live out loud (verbalize your actions), 8) Be generous with praise, 9) Listen to the Words (seek and offer clarification), and 10) Provide reassurance (reduce uncertainty). The book also discusses problems that may arise in the inclusion classroom and how educators can make even small adjustments to accommodate their students with autism, while not interfering with standard classroom routines.

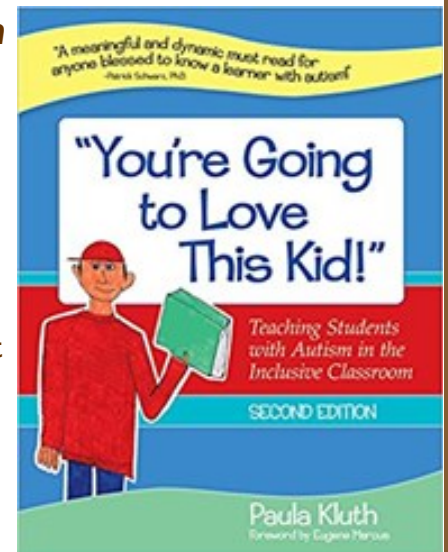


You're Going to Love This Kid! Teaching Students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom by Paula Kluth

Gathering feedback from teachers across the country during her popular workshops, autism expert Paula Kluth targeted this second edition to the specific needs of today's primary and secondary-school educators. Still packed with the ready-to-use tips and strategies that teachers are looking for, the new edition gives readers:

- dozens of NEW photocopiable forms, checklists, and planning tools that make it easy for teachers to implement the suggested strategies (see box)
- photos of curricular adaptations, sensory supports, and classroom scenes
- thoroughly revised and updated chapters on today's hottest topics: improving literacy, implementing positive behavior support, and collaborating effectively with families
- larger 8.5 x 11 format, so the book is easier to read and photocopy
- study guide with challenging discussion questions for each chapter-perfect for pre- and in-service professional development and book clubs
- new ideas throughout the book based on the latest research on autism, inclusion, literacy, and behavior

Readers will also get updates on all of the other topics covered in the first edition, including fostering friendships, building communication skills, planning challenging and multidimensional lessons, and adapting the curriculum and the physical environment.





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VISUALS

no school 	school 	backpack 	miss bus
bus driver 	schedule 	class 	lunch
recess 	breakfast 	cafeteria 	gym class
special activity 	bus 	notebook 	teacher