

**Getting Geared Up For School**

August 2008

# Parenting *Rules!*

**"Can you believe they are already starting  
"back-to-school" sales, it's only July!"**

I overheard a mother say this at the local office supply store a few weeks ago.

I agreed with her as I was taking advantage of the sale to buy new notebooks, folders, pens and pencils for my kids.

As I thought more about it, I realized that you can never be too prepared when it comes to getting your children geared up and excited about school.

Kids love the lazy days of summer with later bedtimes and less structure. However, when it comes to the school year, they thrive on routines and schedules. The focus of this issue of Parenting Rules! is on getting our children ready to begin school again in September. Over the month of August, we hope you will have many conversations with your children about school routines, safety, homework and nutrition. Getting a head start on re-establishing routines and schedules will help the whole family slowly ease back into the school year and start you off on a positive note.



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### School Can Seem Scary....



While every child and family situation is different, many children will be a little nervous at the beginning of a new school year. Being consistent and following set routines will help your child overcome anxiety about attending school in the first few weeks.

In some cases a child may develop a stronger resistance or dislike to attending school. With patience and perseverance most families are able to overcome this resistance. However, if your child's fear does not seem to be decreasing you should enlist the help of the school counselor.

Several sources indicate that 5% of children will develop what is called "school phobia or school avoidance". If you feel that this is what is happening for your child you should seek guidance from your child's pediatrician.

To help your child overcome his/her anxiety about attending school:

- Talk with your child and try to **identify his/her specific fears** about attending school. Remember to be sympathetic and understanding; don't discount your child's feelings as being childish or silly.
- **Insist that your child attend school.** She/he will most likely resist, but you must remain determined to send your child to school.
- Your child may complain of being ill as a way to stay home. **Only allow you child to stay home if he/she is truly sick.** Take your child to the doctor every time he/she stays home sick.
- **Discuss your child's fears with the teacher and school nurse.** They may be able to give you and your child guidance on overcoming the behavior.
- Although the situation can be frustrating for a parent, try to **remain calm and patient.** Gently but firmly enforcing school attendance will pay off in the end.

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### Routines Are Important....

Children thrive when they have routines and guidelines that are clear and consistent. During the school year you should establish routines for bedtime, mornings and homework. When kids know what is expected of them they feel more secure and less stressed. A child who is relaxed and well rested will do better in school and have less behavior problems. The transition from lazy summer days to a structured school schedule can be a difficult and stressful time for families.



Start early by planning and enforcing a more structured schedule **at least two weeks** before the start of school to ease your children back into a school schedule.

Begin following these tips **at least two weeks** before the start of school to get your kids back into a regular routine:

- **Gradually start sending your kids to bed earlier** until they are back to a "school night" bedtime.
- **Set the alarm clock** and have your child get up and get ready to practice for school mornings.
- **Establish "homework" time** by having your child read or practice math skills, so he/she will get in the habit of doing school work at home.
- Have your child set out clothes, take a shower/bath, and pack a backpack **the night before** to make mornings easier and less rushed.
- **Have a positive attitude** and try not to get angry or frustrated if your child resists at first. He/she will begin to follow the routine after a few days if you keep at it.

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### Getting There Safely....



National data has recently shown that 17,000 children are injured each year in school bus accidents. Nearly 1/4<sup>th</sup> of those injuries occurred when the child was boarding or leaving the bus, slip and falls, or being bumped around when the bus suddenly stops or turns. If your child is one of the 23.5 million children who ride a school bus, you need to talk with him/her about riding safety.

The following are safety tips to go over with your child:

- **Wait at the curb** until the bus comes to a complete stop and wait for the driver to open the doors before stepping off the curb.
- **Stay seated at all times** while riding the bus, never walk around the bus or play/rough house with other kids.
- Wait for the driver to come to a **complete stop** before leaving your seat to exit the bus.
- **Never** put any part of your body outside of the bus windows.
- **Check for loose drawstrings** or other objects that could get caught in the bus doors.
- Only cross the street **10 feet** in front of the bus when the driver signals it is clear to do so.

To find out more information on bus safety  
or to enter the bus safety poster contest, contact:  
DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES - School Bus Safety  
100 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860  
401-722-4297 [eparker@dmv.state.ri.us](mailto:eparker@dmv.state.ri.us)  
[www.napt.org](http://www.napt.org)

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### **Breakfast = Brainpower....**

The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion reports that eating breakfast greatly improves memory and the ability to retain new information. Children who eat breakfast earn higher grades, exhibit better behavior, and are absent less than children who do not eat a morning meal.



**As parents, we need to set a good example by starting our family's day with a nutritious breakfast.**

Mornings are a busy time and it may be a challenge to fit in breakfast. The following are some tips to making breakfast easy to serve. The extra effort will certainly be worth the rewards.

- **Set the alarm 15 minutes** early to give you extra time to eat without rushing.
- **Have easy things available** to eat like; nutritious cereals, yogurt, fruit, instant oatmeal or whole wheat toast and peanut butter.
- If your children don't like breakfast, try **offering them "non-breakfast" foods** like; sandwiches or dinner leftovers.
- Be sure to have **on-the-go items**, like cereal bars, fruit smoothies, or dried fruits, for morning that you find yourself in a rush.
- Do some **preparations before you go to bed** to leave extra time in the morning for breakfast.

**For fun and interesting breakfast ideas and recipes, go to:**

[http://familyfun.go.com/recipes/family/specialfeature/backtoschool\\_start\\_sf/](http://familyfun.go.com/recipes/family/specialfeature/backtoschool_start_sf/)

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## Resource for Parents

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### Prevent Child Abuse Rhode Island

500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, RI 02860  
401.728.7920      [www.preventchildabuse-ri.org](http://www.preventchildabuse-ri.org)

### Rhode Island Parent Information Network

175 Main Street Pawtucket, RI 02860  
401.727.4144      [www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org)

### Mental Health Association of Rhode Island

500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, RI 02860  
401.726.2285      [www.mhari.org](http://www.mhari.org)

### The Providence Center

520 Hope Street Providence, RI  
401.276.4020      [www.provctr.org](http://www.provctr.org)

### Parent Link RI

(401) 222-5927      [www.parentlinkri.org](http://www.parentlinkri.org)

### Rhode Island Initiative for a Healthy Weight

Stacie Bowman, RI Department of Health,  
3 Capitol Hill, Room 409, Providence, RI 02908  
[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

## ABOUT PARENTING RULES! E-NEWS...

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Prevent Child Abuse  
Rhode Island

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Prevent Child Abuse Rhode Island  
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[www.preventchildabuse-ri.org](http://www.preventchildabuse-ri.org)

Please share this information with the  
families in your programs. Thank you!

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