

Tips for Starting the School Year Right

by Diane Trautman

The school year is rapidly approaching and you want to get your children off to a good start from their first day of class. What is the best way to prepare them for school?

I posed this question to Bob Kerman, a School Counselor at Placerita Junior High School. Bob is a born educator who has taught his children that education never stops. In keeping with that philosophy, Bob has returned to school for his administrative credential.

If you haven't already done so this summer, Bob says you should encourage your children to start reading every day. They should read anything — book, magazine, newspaper — that provides reading practice and challenges their minds. Playing games with kids is another way to awaken their thought processes. By promoting active learning in these ways, your children will be ready to engage in the classroom process.

Another important part of preparation is getting kids reacclimated to the school schedule. Return to the standard school-year bedtime routine so that when they step into their new classrooms, their bodies and minds are fully awake and prepared to participate in their education.

While you are in the process of acquiring and organizing the necessary school materials, work with your children to set up their study areas and study schedules. Ask them where they think they study best and at what time they can be most focused? Is it best for them to work in the living room or kitchen right after school? Or would they be more productive working in their rooms after a snack and a brief break?

Should you allow music to be played during study or should you insist on quiet? Music can be conducive to studying, particularly if it is primarily instrumental such as classical, jazz, or new age. Music with lyrics can be a big distraction, especially when children are studying word-intensive subjects such as English or history. Bottom line: If your child is doing their work and maintaining good grades, let them listen to the music.

Getting organized and staying that way is one of the biggest challenge for students. Help your children develop organizational skills by helping them set up their backpacks so that they'll be able to successfully store and locate school assignments. Then check back with them to make sure they'll maintaining that system.

Next month: Helping your children stay on track throughout the school year.