



# Children's Consultation NETWORK

## Beating Those Back-To-School Blues

If you are a busy parent, you might be dreading back-to-school, or the first day of kindergarten, as much as your child.

Let's face it, adding homework and after-school activities to an already packed evening can be challenging – but with planning and consistency, it

doesn't have to be *dreadful*. This issue will offer some tips at overcoming some of the most common school struggles, including developing a good morning routine that will get you out the door on time, helpful homework hints and habits for all ages, nutritious snack options, and an evening

routine that will promote good sleep habits and set the stage for an easier morning.

Whether you have a pre-school age child not yet in school or a 5-year-old who will just be starting kindergarten this year, these tips will help all age children be successful!

Fall 2011



## Kindergarten Countdown

he wanted to be home-schooled in order to avoid facing his fear of the unknown!

I realized my husband and I had some work to do, in order to ease this transition. Here are some of the strategies that we have found useful:

With a background in early childhood, I have always known that the transition to kindergarten can be a difficult one. But when my five-year-old told me that he wanted to be home-schooled, I realized just how scary the thought of kindergarten can be for kids!

I am not implying that there is anything wrong with home-schooling. Certainly, there are plenty of capable parents who provide a great education for their children without entering public or private school settings.

But my son wasn't suggesting (or *demanding*) homeschooling because of its great educational value,

- Visit the new school and the playground. This will help your child become familiar with the new surroundings before the first day of school.
- Talk about your routine and practice it, walk to the bus stop, or drive to the school and practice walking to the front door.
- Attend back-to-school-night.
- Meet with your child's teacher, principal, and / or counselor ahead of time to increase familiarity with the new faces and ask for help with drop-off routines, if

needed.

- Include your child in shopping for school supplies and let him or her choose some items from the shopping list.
- Listen to your child's concerns, but don't dwell on them. Assure your child that it will be just fine, and speak about school and school staff in a positive manner. Remind them of how strong/courageous they are.
- Read children's books about kindergarten.
- When the big day comes, be brave! Remember the routine that you practiced, and stick to it, even if your child is upset. Praise them every step of the way for their own bravery.
- Make good bye brief and don't look back. If your emotions run strong save your tears until you are out of your child's sight. Check in with your child's teacher through email later in the day.
- Remember: It will get easier! Stay positive and consistent!

## Sleeping for Success

Research indicates most children are not getting the sleep they need. Lack of sleep can impact all areas of a child's life, including their ability to fight infection, pay attention, follow directions, handle frustration, learn and even grow. How much sleep does your child



need? Below are the sleep recommendations for the average child:

**Babies:** 14-16 hours

**Toddlers:** 12-14 hours (with nap)

**Preschoolers/Early Elementary:** 11-12 hours (some nap others do not)

**School age:** 10-11 hours

**Adolescents:** 8-10 hours

### Bedtime Tips:

- Keep a regular and consistent bedtime routine.
- Make sure the bedroom is

cool, dark and quiet.

- No caffeine for young children and limit for older children.
- No electronics within 30 minutes of bedtime.
- Do quiet activities before bed (board games, coloring, books, etc.)
- Go to sleep at the same time each night.
- Get daily exercise!

**“Sleep impacts all areas of a child's life.”**

## Magnificent Mornings

A great morning gets its start in the evening. Before going to bed, get yourself and your family organized. Set aside outfits for everyone the night before. If your child likes to choose an outfit, involve him or her in the process, but don't offer too many choices, and then stick with the one selected.

The same can be said for breakfast. Limit the options and set the table before going to bed.

While a healthy breakfast is important, it doesn't have to be fancy. Whole wheat toast or fruit with milk and cereal is a great way to start the day.

Make sure backpacks, shoes, and all the necessities are ready and in your child's reach and near the door.

Even with the best planning, there will be unforeseen events. Wake your children early enough to

allow for these last minute needs.

Make getting ready fun by racing the clock or each other. Add creative incentives, such as popcorn/movie party on Saturday for a successful week.



## Helpful Homework Hints

Even if your kindergartener or early elementary-aged child doesn't always have homework, it is a great idea to build a solid homework routine now!

Turn off the TV and find a quiet area that is supplied with all the necessities. Every day, you and your child



should empty his or her entire backpack, throwing away trash and old papers. Acknowledge graded papers, and stack up the pages that still need to be completed. If there aren't any assignments, make a habit of practicing math facts, reading, or focus on a specific area of need. This will establish good work

habits and send the message that you, as a parent, value education. It might also prevent your child from avoiding homework by "forgetting" to bring it home.

Once you have checked over the work, return it to the backpack in a folder. If your child has questions that you can't answer, provide the teacher with a handwritten note requesting clarification or email them.

Remember to notice and acknowledge all efforts and a job well done every step of the way!



## Notching Up Nutrition

Good nutrition is essential for brain and body development as well as social-emotional health. Starting early provides your child with good eating habits that can last a life time, promoting long term overall health and well-being . How do you do that with a picky eater? Here are some tips:

### Make Food Fun

- Have your child pick out new foods at the grocery store.
- Serve veggies with sauce/dip.
- Make funny faces on the plate with fruit/veggies.
- Use a cookie cutter to cut out foods into a fun shape.
- Pair foods up—graham

crackers with yogurt , celery or apples with peanut butter are examples.

- Make homemade popsicles or smoothies with favorite fruits, frozen yogurt or 100% juice.
- Serve bright colored foods.

### Other Nutritional Tips

- Don't buy junk—if they don't have it they can't eat it or whine to have it.
- Use whole grains.
- Set a good example yourself.
- Limit juice for meal time only and water the rest of the time.
- Don't force food and don't

bribe them, which can set up poor eating habits.

- Use portion control by placing food in bowl.
- Avoid sugar treats except for special occasions.

\*Recent studies have linked certain food dyes to cause hyperactivity and behavior problems in some children. The top 3 dyes causing the most concern are:

1. Red No. 40 (Allura Red)
2. Yellow No 5 (Tartrazine)
3. Yellow No. 6 (Sunset Yellow)

These dyes are found in many foods from candy to baked goods.

## Essential Evening Events



With so much packed into your evenings, remember to take time for family fun!

Before jumping right into homework, let

the kids take a short break to relax and reset. Even 10-15 minutes of free time can refresh the mind and help them refocus.

By including the children in things like meal preparation and clean up, you can increase your opportunities for fun conversations and stay informed on the important things happening in each other's lives. There are a lot of important things to squeeze into just a couple of hours, but

keep it light and fun. Here is an example:

- 5:30 arrive home and take a break with a healthy snack
- 5:45 kids work on homework while parents prepare dinner (remind kids to put their backpacks by the door when they are done)
- 6:15 visit together as the kids set the table
- 6:45 family cleans up the kitchen together
- 7:00 quiet family activity — play cards, go for a walk, talk about the day.
- 7:15 set out clothes for tomorrow and start bath time
- 7:30 bedtime snack
- 7:45 brush teeth
- 7:50 tuck in with a story

**“There are a lot of important things to squeeze into just a couple of hours, but keep it light and fun.”**

8:00 lights out

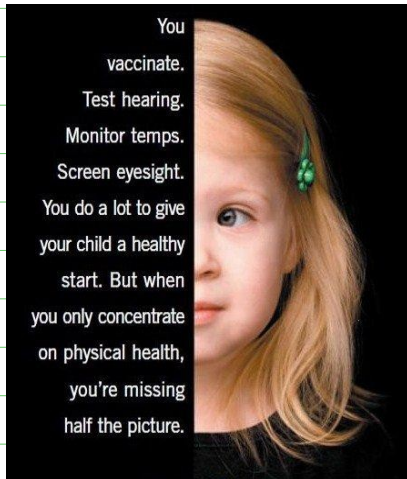
Stay consistent from day to day so kids know what to expect. This will decrease complaints and increase cooperation.

When the kids get to bed early, they are much more likely to cooperate in the morning — and it provides some peace and quiet for parents after a busy day!

Remember to take a couple of minutes to think through the morning to see if there is anything that you could prepare tonight. Finally, take a deep breath and *relax!* If you are rushed and anxious your children will be also.



# Children's Consultation NETWORK



[www.halfachild.com](http://www.halfachild.com)

The Children's Consultation Network provides early intervention and prevention services for children ages birth to 5 years and their families. Services include social-emotional screening and assessment, short-term therapy, and specialized community referral. We also offer observations and recommendations for child care centers and home care providers in an effort to support the healthy social and emotional development of youth in our community. All services are currently provided free of charge, with grant dollars from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Dakota Medical Foundation.

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### Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

The Federation of Families will hold parent support group the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month at 1104 2nd Ave S Fargo ND 7:00pm on the 2nd floor.

The Federation will advocate for your child at school IEP meetings or anywhere else in the community where such a service is needed. Please call 235-9923 for more information.

### Clay County Local Advisory Council

The Clay County Local Advisory Council for Children's Mental Health meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 8:30 am at the Family Service Center at 715 11 St. N. , Room 2 in Moorhead.

The council is comprised of parents and professionals who advise the Clay County Board of Commissioners on the state of children's mental health services, including gaps in services, needs of the family and child, and the strengths of our current service delivery system. We invite parents of children with mental health needs and other interested parties to attend our monthly meetings.