

GETTING INTO THE SWING OF THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Adapted from: Help Your Students Adjust to School after a Long Holiday

For many students, returning to school from the long summer break is not an easy transition. Staying up late, sleeping in, unstructured time, family stresses, or travel can all make it hard for students to return to school ready to work productively. They may be tired, cranky, and just not as cooperative as usual because their normal schedules have been disrupted.

Experienced school day and afterschool teachers know helping students readjust to their school routines requires understanding, patience, and a solid plan to make that first day back as pleasant as possible for everyone involved. Here are a few suggestions to smooth the reentry process.

Let your students know that you are glad to see them. Take the time to connect with each child so that they know that they are a valued member and that their well-being is important to you.

Have extra books, papers, pens, and other materials on hand for those students who may not have them on the first day.

If your students are old enough to communicate well by writing, pass out small slips of paper or note cards and ask students to tell you about their summer. You can gain some valuable insights into their time away from school with this brief activity. Younger children can draw pictures of what they did during the summer.

Have students use a checklist to work through the normal routines on the first day. This will not only remind them of what they need to do, but will also get them back into the habit of working in a purposeful manner. Delivering a flurry of verbal directions will only stress everyone out.

Plan fun, but fairly low-key activities. Brief games, review activities, pair shares, small group discussions, and other similar strategies are ones that can gradually and successfully reintroduce students to routines without creating more stress.

Photographing or videotaping students on the first day of class in the new school year is also a good way to celebrate the milestone together. Print on ordinary copy paper and display in a special area or share on your website or newsletter.

Take advantage of the new school year as you plan the day's lessons. You could even help them set goals for homework completion, improved study habits, attendance or making sure the room is tidy at the end of the day.

Allow time for students to visit with each other and to catch up with each other's personal news. While this can be done as a whole group activity, small groups really work best as children can engage meaningfully with each other. You could offer open-ended questions for everyone to discuss as conversation starters: What is your memory from last school year? What do you want to do this year?

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