

Preparing yourself and your child/children for back to school.

Are you and your children ready for school? It seems like summer never came. June and July were hot and rainy! It looks like August is starting off the same way and then school will be starting! Below are a couple of ideas to help prepare for the start of a new school year.

- **Organize that Paperwork!!**

In the world of special education, there are lots of meetings, paperwork, and documentation to keep track of. If you can, do your best to keep a family calendar of school events, special education meetings, conferences, etc. Setting up a binder to keep your child's special education documentation, meeting notices, and IEPs in sequential order can also help you stay organized.

- **Start a Communication Log**

This can be added to your Binder or have a separate notebook. Keep track of all phone calls, e-mails, notes home, meetings, and conferences is important. Create a "communication log" for yourself in a notebook that is easily accessible. Be sure to note the dates, times, and nature of the communications you have.

- **Review your child's current IEP**

The IEP is the cornerstone of your child's educational program, so it's important that you have a clear understanding of it. Note when the IEP expires and if your child is up for reevaluation this year. Most importantly, be sure that this IEP still "fits" your child's needs! If you're unsure, contact us at The Arc and we will be happy to help.

- **Relieve back-to-school jitters**

Just talking about the upcoming year and changes can help reduce some of that back-to-school anxiety! Talk to your child about exciting new classes, activities, and events that they can participate in during the new school year. If attending a new school, try to schedule a visit before the first day. With older students, it is sometimes helpful to explain the services and accommodations in their IEP so that they know what to expect when school begins.

- **Keep everyone informed**

It's important that you and the school communicate early and often! If there is anything (concerns, changes, questions about the IEP) that you feel is important to share with the team working with your child before school starts, or during the year, don't hesitate to contact them! The more proactive and honest you are, the better the school staff will be able to meet your child's needs.

- **Establish before-and after-school routines**

Discuss and plan the changes in you and your child's daily routine that will happen once school starts. You can even begin practicing your new schedule, focusing on morning and evening routines, and begin implementing them well in advance of the first day of school.

- **Stay up to date on special education news**

Being knowledgeable about your child's IEP and their disability can help you become a better advocate for your child. Try to keep up to date on new special education legislation, news, and

events. The more you know, the more prepared you will be to navigate the world of special education and successfully advocate for your child!

- **Attend school events**

Take advantage of Open House, Back-to-School Night, and parent-teacher conferences to help you and your child get a feel for the school and meet the teachers, other staff, students, and families. Share the positives about working with your child, and let the teacher know about changes, events, or IEP concerns that should be considered for children in special education.