

## School Daze!

Can you believe in 3 ½ weeks, school starts in our school district? If you are a parent of school-aged children or a teacher in the classroom, this reality puts us in a daze! With everything else that is going on in your summer schedule, you may not be thinking about what preparations you need to make to get the school year off to a good start. In an effort of self-preservation and perhaps helping my readers as well, I thought I would share some of the preparations I have researched and used to start getting ready to send my boys back to the classroom.

**Appointments:** Getting your child in for an annual physical or eye exam may be a bit tricky this late in the summer. However, it is an important task to attend to. Double check the immunization requirements for the grade and age of your children. You may be asked to provide paperwork that verifies your child's immunizations are up to date. Making sure they are healthy and can see what's happening in the classroom will only help in getting their year off to a good start. If at all possible, make appointments that occur before the first day of school.

**Schedule:** It's not too early to start backing up their bed time. My kids get to stay up later during the summer months, in part due to baseball and 4-H activities. However, once their ball season and fair is over, it's time for us to start backing it up. The National Sleep Foundation recommends that preschool aged children sleep 11 – 13 hours at night. For children age 5 – 12, the recommendation is 10 – 12 hours of sleep. For teenagers, 9 – 10 hours of sleep per night are recommended. During the summer months, our kids may have the opportunity to sleep later in the morning than during the school year. Begin now to move toward a school-friendly sleep schedule. Their sleep schedule should resemble their school schedule at least a week before school starts.

**Calendar:** Check out your school's website to find out when pre-enrollment activities and/or online registration begins as well as the date for the first day of school. If you work outside the home, you may find it helpful to print the school district's calendar for the upcoming year. This will help you know far in advance of dates when school is not in session or there is a planned shortened schedule.

**Expenses:** The beginning of school is an expensive season in the family with school-aged children. Not only do you have registration costs and/or various fees, you often find yourself buying school supplies, multiple sets of shoes, book bags, and various other needed items. Start making purchases now. Use the supply list provided by each school and/or classroom to begin a master list, add any of the other items you know you need to purchase and purchase them in increments. For example: If you get paid

weekly, you may want purchase everyday school shoes and a book bag one week and notebooks, writing utensils, and PE shoes the next. If you start now, you won't have to drain a single paycheck to cover these expenses. Be aware of the help you school may offer to provide classroom supplies to children. The United Way is hosting their annual "Stuff The Bus" campaign over the next several weeks. They will be accepting donations that will be passed on to all the USD 475 school locations to help families in need with this expense.

**Breakfast:** Skipping breakfast may have become a habit during the summer – especially if kids are sleeping late into the morning hours. Research shows that children can concentrate more and achieve better grades if they get started off with a nutritious breakfast. Prepare nutritious meals at home, and, if you need extra help with this expense, find out if your family qualifies for any Child Nutrition Programs such the National School Lunch Program.

**Study Spot:** Children need to be able to focus and concentrate on their work with they bring assignments home from school. Create a study spot for them to do homework or school projects. Arrange the location to be away from distractions such as the television or phone. If possible, keep the study spot away from high traffic areas in your home, as well. Ask your child for help in setting up the study spot – this will add to their comfort in using it for school work. Help them understand the value you place on learning and being successful. Praise their hard work and efforts for achieving success at school.

**Read, Read, Read:** Reading allows your child to expand on their existing vocabulary as well as open their mind to so much more than the environment immediately around them. Read with your young child or listen to your advanced reader for at least 20 minutes a day. Reading daily offers a great opportunity for you to share quality time with your child and connect with their interests and ideas more effectively.

**Communicate:** Communication is critical for families. Discuss daily schedules at the dinner table or breakfast table. Keep a calendar out for everyone to see to help communicate the many activities and remind family members of what is going on. If you have teens going many different directions, keep a notebook/family journal by the door to record notes on. Ask everyone in the family to log where they are at and what they are doing if they are leaving the house.

Contact the Geary County Extension office at 238-4161 if you have questions or need resources about getting ready for the school year. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!