

Daily Union Article

Saturday, July 29, 2017

Title: School Daze is Here

Can you believe that we are only a couple of weeks from the first day of school? Successful transitioning from summer to school schedule can leave you and your children in a daze! However, with intentional planning and preparation you can minimize any of the challenges this change brings to your life and family.

Perhaps you are reading this and thinking "I don't have any kids, so this doesn't apply to me." However, if you live within a 60 mile radius of a school, this transition can affect you in several ways, too. Traffic patterns change, busy times at the grocery store are modified, and pedestrian traffic increase are just a few of the ways this change can affect you.

Changing your summer routines can help you adjust to these changes without becoming frustrated or overwhelmed. Some of the same steps parents can take with their children can be helpful to everyone living in the community.

1. **Reset your alarm:** If you have school-aged children, you will need more time on weekday mornings to get them ready for school. At the very least they will need to brush their teeth, comb through their hair and pick out clothing appropriate to the school environment. I would also suggest a substantial breakfast rooted in good nutrition with an ample amount of protein.
2. **Reset your family's breakfast habits:** Your body takes much longer to process protein (meat, poultry, beans, and/or dairy) than carbohydrates (breads, breakfast cereal, pancakes, waffles, etc.) Your kids need enough energy to restore what they have used during their sleep as well as what they will need for their body before lunch. Think about how you can ramp up breakfast to meet these energy demands and ensure the calories consumed are also packed with nutritional value. For example, instead of sending your kids out the door with a squeeze tube of fruit-flavored yogurt and a muffin (about 681 kcal and 8 grams of saturated fat), have them fix a yummy parfait with plain yogurt topped with fresh berries, granola, and nuts (about 356 kcal and 3 grams of saturated fat!) Too often we are rushed to get out the door and think a fast food breakfast burrito is a good alternative. The truth is, this option is not so fast and not so good. Instead of a fast food burrito (about 629 kcal and 14 grams of saturated fat), set your alarm to ensure you have time to fix them a healthier option. Two breakfast tacos on corn tortillas with egg, black beans, cheese, and salsa is a great protein-packed option without the high levels of calories and fat (356 kcal and 4 grams of saturated fat.)

3. **Consider traffic pattern changes:** I don't claim to know all the bus routes in Geary County, but well within the first week of school I have a good idea about the timing of rural bus stops that I might encounter while driving my kids in for school. Typically, delaying my departure by 10 minutes or leaving 15 minutes earlier than my summer departure time will help me avoid the bus traffic on our way to school. Rural and city bus routes alike have a relatively predictable and tight schedule. Take time to determine what your departure time should be based on this awareness coupled with the "traffic dam" that builds up before and after school. If you don't have kids to take to school, stay clear of the areas around schools during these heavy traffic times. Not only are you avoiding the delay to your destination, you are also helping the bus route drivers stay on schedule by lightening the traffic load they have to navigate around. Less traffic makes it safer for our student pedestrians to walk to school, as well.
4. **Focus on full court press weekends:** In the first couple of years I taught high school, I learned quickly that the best defense is a good offense. With a family, job, church, and farm I had to make every weekend a full court press. For example: making sure all the laundry was caught up, folded up and put up was a priority – and still is. Everybody in my home does their own laundry. With three boys in the home, laundry gets piled up pretty fast. By making it a habit to do laundry each weekend, they are sure to have clean clothes to wear each morning when they get ready for school. Use your valuable weekend time to keep your family on the offense by preparing for the known morning challenges. Plan out how you will handle the morning "crunch time." This will help you enjoy your morning time with the kids before school as well as get them off to a good start in the classroom.

With school just around the corner, it's time to consider what you can do *now* to make the transition to a school schedule a smooth one. Avoid the challenges of "school daze" and plan a good offense. For more ideas on how you can tackle transitions in your family, contact me at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!