

## **Counselor's Corner- August 2009**

Welcome back to school! I am looking forward to an exciting year and to working with all of you. Getting a new school year off to a good start can influence children's attitude, confidence, and performance both socially and academically. The transition from August to September can be difficult for both children and parents. Even children who are eager to return must adjust to the greater levels of activity, structure, and pressures associated with school life. You can help your child manage the increased pace of life by planning ahead, being realistic, and maintaining a positive attitude. Here are a few suggestions to help ease the transition and promote a successful school year:

### **Before School Starts**

**Review all of the information-** Review the materials sent home and information posted on the website as soon as it is available. Check on-line frequently for updates.

**Mark your calendar-** Make a note of important dates, especially back-to-school-nights. This is especially important if you have children in more than one school and need to juggle obligations.

**Buy school supplies early-** Try to get supplies as early as possible and fill the backpacks a week or two in advance. Make sure you do this with your child and use a checklist that you can review.

**Re-establish the bedtime and mealtime routines-** Plan to re-establish the basic routines at least one week before school starts. Prepare your child for this change by talking with your child about the benefits of school routines in terms of not becoming over tired or overwhelmed by school work and activities. Include pre-bedtime reading and household chores if these were suspended during the summer.

**Designate and clear a place to do homework-** Older children should have the option of studying in their room or a quiet area in the house. Younger children usually need an area set aside in the family room or kitchen to facilitate adult, monitoring, supervision, and encouragement.

**Select a spot to keep backpacks and lunch boxes-** Designate a spot for your children to place their school belongings as well a place to put important notices and information sent home for you to see.

### **The First Week**

**Clear your own schedule-** To the extent that it is possible; postpone trips or meetings and extra projects. You want to be free to help your child acclimate to the school routine and overcome the confusion or anxiety that many children experience at the start of the new year.

**Make lunches the night before school-** Older children should help or make their own. Give them the option to buy lunch in school if they prefer and finances permit.

**Leave plenty of extra time-** Make sure your child has plenty of time to get up, eat breakfast, and get to school. Rushing will raise the stress level.

**After school-** Review with your child's school books. Share your enthusiasm for the subjects and your confidence in your child's ability to master the content. Don't forget to focus on their effort rather than final outcome when building confidence.

## **Overcoming Anxiety-**

**Let your child know you care-** If your child is anxious about school, send personal notes in the lunch box or book bag. Reinforce the ability to cope. Children absorb their parent's anxiety, so model optimism and confidence for your child. Let your child know that it is natural to be a little nervous anytime you start something new but your child will be just fine once he or she becomes familiar with classmates, the teacher, and school routine.

**Do not overreact-** If the first few days are a little rough, try not to over react. Young children in particular may experience separation anxiety or shyness initially but teachers are trained to help them adjust. If you drop them off, try not to linger. Reassure them that you love them, will think of them during the day, and will be happy to see them after school.

**Remain calm and positive-** Acknowledge anxiety over a bad experience the previous year. Children who had a difficult time academically or socially or were teased or bullied may be more fearful or reluctant to return to school. Reassure your child that the school will work with him/her to prevent further issues. Contact the teacher or the counselor if you need assistance.

**Arrange play dates-** Try to arrange get-togethers with some of your child's classmates before school starts and during the first week of school to help your child re-establish positive social relationships with peers.

**\*\*If your child demonstrates problems that seem extreme or go on for an extended period, feel free to contact Mrs. Averill, the school counselor. The school can offer support to ensure your child feels comfortable and safe in school.\*\***