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Five Tips to Make a Smooth Transition from Summer Haze to Back to School Days

In three weeks, kids will be heading back to school. [Dr. Sumi Hagiwara](#), Assistant Professor in the Department of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Literacy Education; and Director of epiSTEMic at Montclair State University, and mother of a 9- and 11- year old, offers five tips to prepare children to return to school after the summer months:

- **Structure and Routine:** This is not ground breaking – structure and routine guide our children’s lives at school. After weeks of not having the same school structure during the summer months, you can easily help your child to transition into a routine that makes the most of the waning summer days:
 - Get the kids to go to bed and wake up a little earlier as we get closer to September, even if it means doing so one to two days a week and increase in frequency.
 - Once they are up, set objectives for their day by making a checklist of activities to get them focused. Include items such as complete that summer packet and summer reading book, write a letter to a school friend (yes, the kind with a paper, envelope and stamp), arrange a play date, visit family members, or de-clutter their rooms. Whatever the task, have the kids check off, cross off or draw a star next to items they complete to keep them organized, accountable, and feeling accomplished.
- **Support positive attitudes towards schooling:** In my household, the school months are “the most wonderful time of the year.” Generate positivity by scheduling play dates with school friends (old and new), getting and organizing school supplies, or setting up a sacred space with your child in your home or child’s room where he/she can set up as his/her learning space (and be sure to use it once it has been set up).
- **Make the unknown, known:** Children may be anxious about returning to school. To address their concerns, visit the school, check out the school’s website, email or talk with teachers and school staff, parents and children about what to expect for the coming year and ask for recommendations to support your child. Schools/teachers may send an email to introduce themselves and provide a glimpse of what to expect in the new year. Stimulate curiosity by learning more about topics he/she will learn as a preview of what’s to come. And explore highlights of the school year such as events, activities, and after-school offerings that you can plan for together.
- **Build confidence to make your child better thinkers and participants in their school community.** This doesn’t mean scoring the most points in basketball or having the latest

mobile technology. Rather focus on ways to develop their character and confidence to be independent thinkers and doers: enhance critical thinking skills by encouraging your child to ask and answer: who, what, why, when, and how questions. If they don't know something, encourage them to find the answers on their own or suggest where to go for information; if something breaks at home, ask them how it can be fixed and try to fix it (with supervision); build their listening skills, by asking them to retell in their own words what they heard; foster creativity and imagination with art projects.

- **Besides the children, parents and caregivers also need to prepare: Here are two important items to cross off your list:**
 - Have your schedule in place with up-to-date contact information for pick up, drop off, and in family or school emergency situations. That way you and the school will know what to do and who to contact.
 - Update your child's health records so everything will be in place when they start in September.

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