

SPECIAL EDITION

A Newsletter for Families Supporting Students with Disabilities



From the Director

I hope you are enjoying a wonderful summer, and your students are relaxed, recharged and ready to start a new school year. Our amazing learning community is preparing and excited to start the year with positive energy and a dedication to excellence.

This can be a time of many emotions for your family. This edition of the newsletter is intended to help foster a smooth transition for you and your students. The Special Education Department is committed to supporting parents and working together to achieve strong outcomes for children, in the spirit of **Collective Greatness for Every Child**. We welcome your feedback about how this newsletter, or the department can serve you better. Contact the Special Education Department at 713-251-1700.

[Visit the Spring Branch ISD Back-to-School page here](#)

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Photo by Scott Webb on Unsplash

First Day of School Rituals

The first day of school is often a mix of excitement and anxiety for children. There is a lot to look forward to, like making new friends, meeting new teachers, and getting to participate in school activities. But there are also many unknowns, too, like wondering if your teacher will like you, feeling uncertain about the academic workload, and stressing about making the adjustment to a new environment.

Making the back-to-school transition a positive and nurturing experience means starting school on the right foot. The Back-to-School Planning Guide from verywellfamily.com recommends starting the year off with a back-to-school ritual.



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How Back-to-School Rituals Help Kids

Back-to-school rituals help our kids stay grounded as they make the transition from the carefree days of summer to the more structured days of school. These traditions can help ease anxiety by framing the experience as something welcoming and special. Many back-to-school rituals also provide a space for children to sort out their feelings and express themselves. If you are looking for traditions to add to your list, consider these ideas adapted from verywellfamily.com.

Collect First Day Photos

Almost all of us take photos of our kids on their first day. It has become a common practice to share these pictures on social media and watch our social media feeds light up with other parents' photos as well. Try adding a special twist on the first day of school picture tradition, by adding a first-day interview alongside the pictures. Use the same questions each year, and keep all of them organized together. This is a great way for kids to look back on how much they have grown and achieved and gives a sense of familiarity to a new start.

Throw a Back-to-School Party

Back-to-school parties are a great way to ease back-to-school tension, and to reconnect your kids with friends or classmates they have not seen over summer break. Because kids may not have interacted socially, it's a great time to create a sense of connection and to foster excitement about seeing each other again before the school year starts. This doesn't have to be grand or over-the-top; it can just be a small get-together, like "Popsicles on the Porch."

Back-to-School Rituals (continued)

Set Goals Together

Set a time to look at the [Spring Branch ISD Grade Level Guides](#) together. This is a great opportunity to get excited about the learning ahead and to set goals together. You child might set learning goals, as well as other goals, like making three new friends or earning Student of the Month. Write down the goals and put them in a special envelope. Then follow-up during the year and on the last day of the year to reflect on the goals. Goal setting is important at any age and it really helps set a tone and purpose for a new school year.

Prepare a First-Day Lunch or Snack Together

They say that food is the way into the heart, and that is definitely true for our children. Working together to pack a special or traditional snack or lunch that adds excitement to a new start is a great way to make them look forward to the first day at school. Try adding some notes or affirmations to keep the good feelings going through the day.

Get a Night-Before-School Treat

Everyone wants to promote healthy eating habits for their kids, but getting them a treat on the night before school starts is a fun way to usher in the new school year and say goodbye to summer fun. Consider adding a tradition of a back-to-school ice cream run, or hosting a make-your-own sundae bar on the last day of summer break. Life and career coach, Stefania Baita, shares that making a night-before-school-starts ice cream run is a tradition that has been handed down through several generations of her husband's family. She is continuing this tradition with her own family.

Additional Strategies for Students with Disabilities

While all students may experience anxiety about returning to school after summer break, some disability conditions may add to the stress. Consider the following strategies to support your child for a smooth transition.

Prep Your Child's New Clothes, Shoes, and Other Items

Many neurodivergent children have a tough time saying goodbye to old items and an equally hard time getting used to new things. Clothes and shoes can create sensory issues, and emotional attachments can be hard to break. As early as possible (at least a few weeks before school starts), begin the process of sorting through older items and buying any necessary clothes and backpacks for the upcoming school year. Help your child to break in new clothes well before the start of school.

Create a "New School Year" Calendar and Schedule for Your Child

Most people are less anxious when they know what to expect; children with disabilities are no exception. In fact, many neurodivergent children really need schedules to lower anxiety and prepare for transitions. Help your child preview the new year by creating calendars and schedules to help your child acclimate to the new year and look ahead to events, vacations, etc. Use the Meet-the-Teacher opportunity to plan where they will eat their lunch, where the restroom is located, and who to anticipate as their classmates.



Every Child



Collective Greatness



Collaborative Spirit



Limitless Curiosity



Moral Compass

CORE CHARACTERISTICS

of a T-2-4
Ready Graduate



Academically Prepared



Ethical & Service-minded



Empathetic & Self-Aware



Persistent & Adaptable



Resourceful Problem-solver



Communicator & Collaborator