



By Skip Forsyth

Perhaps this summer you saw taxis lined up in front of an airport terminal or in a busy city center waiting for the next passenger. It makes me wonder, how is a school like a taxi?

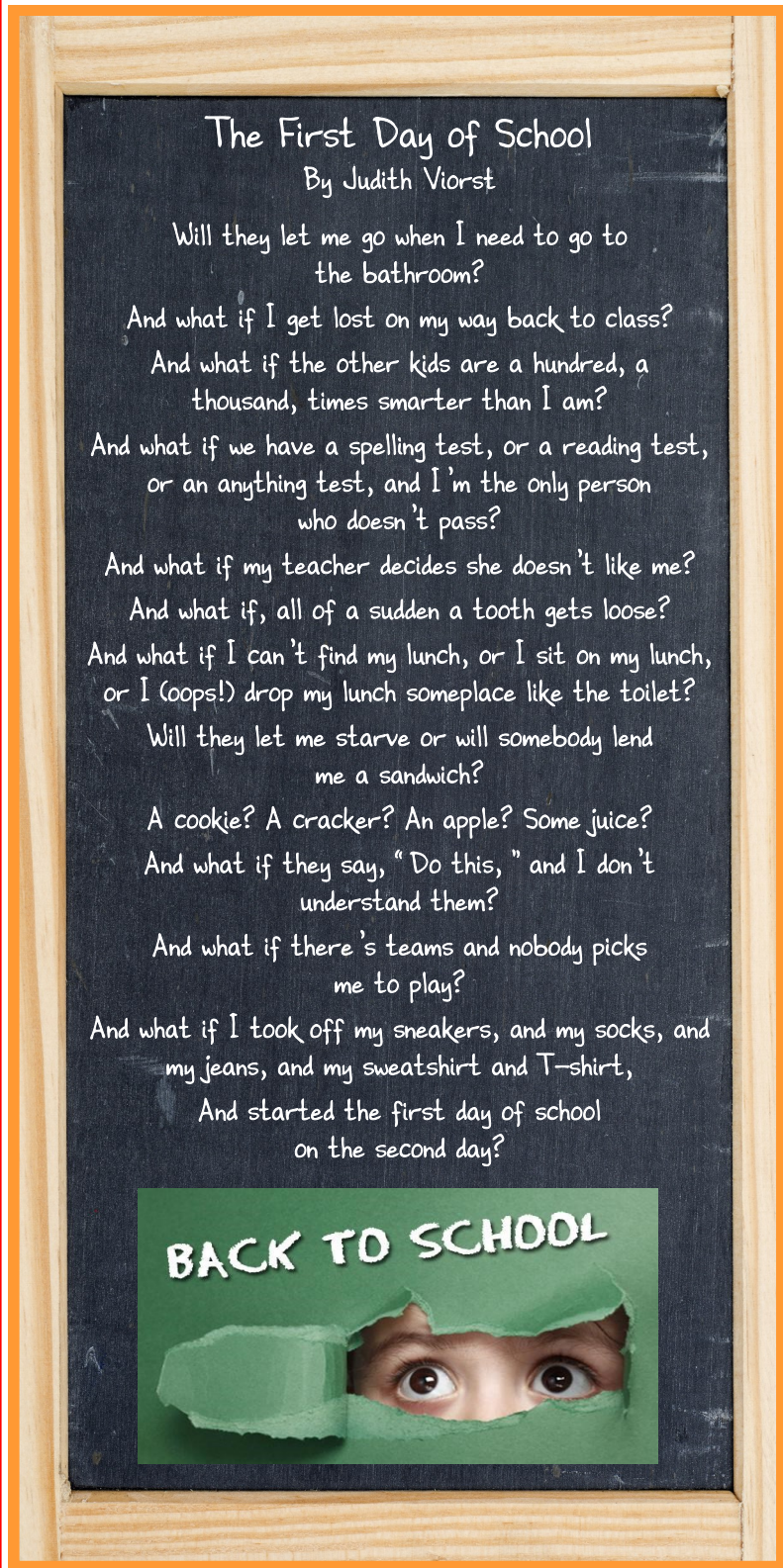
The cabbie needs to be courteous, a good listener, and knowledgeable. The “cabbies” at our schools from principals to teachers to paraprofessionals to custodians to food service workers need to be friendly. Our kids need a smile, a high five, and a hug around the neck. Our school staff needs to have ears that hear and a heart that empathizes. The families in our schools are busy. Some possess language barriers, while others are uncertain of expectations. As a result, educators must become attentive listeners. Parents and students have an idea of where they want to go with college and career, but they do not know how to get there. They depend upon the expertise of the educators. Families trust the educator will be aware of multiple routes to guide their child to the desired destination.

The passengers that step into a cab come from a range of backgrounds. The families and students at our schools are no longer predominantly white middle class. Our schools are very “colorful” with a variety of nationalities, ethnic groups, cultural experiences, language challenges, religious beliefs, as well as high and low income groups. Nevertheless, these families possess one thing in common - they long for their child to develop strong character, advance academically, and be ready to enter the world with confidence and transferable skills for post-secondary education or the work place.

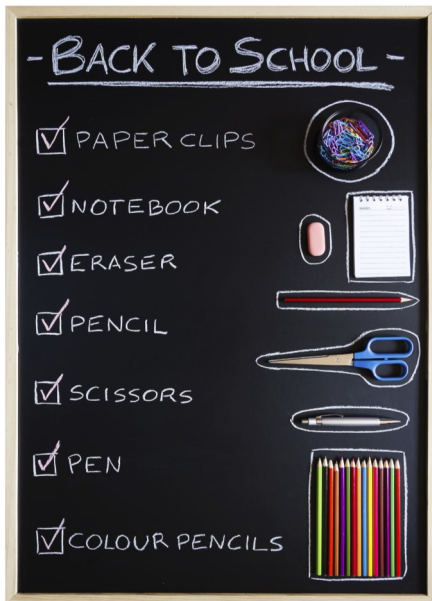
The cab needs to be clean and mechanically reliable. Our schools need to have easy access with clear signage. The facilities, both outside and inside, need to be properly maintained. The hallways, rest rooms, playgrounds, and locker rooms need to be safe for our children. The technology in our classrooms needs to work. We want our schools to say, “All families and students are welcome here.”

Finally, the fare is paid for the cab ride. Families, tip your educators with words of affirmation and appreciation. As much as you are able, work in cooperation with your child’s teacher for the student’s benefit. Frequently remind your school’s “cabbies” how much you value them.

It’s August, and we pursue our educational journey with a new destination nine months away. There will likely be some potholes and detours - be patient, be persistent, and graciously encourage one another. Enjoy the ride in 2016-17.



Back to School Checklist



Beat back-to-school stress. Don't wait until the last minute. Start in early August to prepare for the school year and start the school year with confidence. In most Texas school districts classes will begin August 22.

Get Ready:

- ✓ Schedule any doctor or dental or vision appointments.
- ✓ Make sure your child has all required immunizations.
- ✓ Schedule kids' haircuts as needed.
- ✓ Make sure your child is properly registered for school, particularly if she or he is attending a new school.
- ✓ Visit the child's school - find the classroom or homeroom. Walk the building, if necessary, to locate the student locker, cafeteria, gym, and bathrooms.
- ✓ Notify the school office, the school nurse, and food service of any health problems, medications, or food allergies.

Establish a Routine:

- ✓ Check the school website or call the school for a list of required supplies.
- ✓ Create a designated homework space, and agree with your child when he or she will complete homework (immediately after school or after dinner; with middle school and high school students this may need to be negotiated around extracurricular activities). Work out a plan to balance homework and play.
- ✓ Set rules for time spent on TV, video games, and social media.
- ✓ Set aside time for reading, at least 15 minutes per day.
- ✓ Return to a sleep schedule (about 2 weeks before the start of school try to resume your school routine) and meal schedule that aligns to the school schedule.

Be Prepared:

- ✓ Review the school dress code.
- ✓ Talk with your child about the start of a new school year - any concerns or worries? Peer pressure or bullying? What are the hopes and expectations?
- ✓ Arrange child-care or after-school activities. Make sure your child knows where to go after school every day.
- ✓ Choose extracurricular activities carefully to avoid overscheduling.

Be Involved:

- ✓ Get a copy of the school year calendar, and mark school events on the family calendar - in addition to athletics and arts programs, be sure to include important testing days.
- ✓ Find out the best way to communicate with the student's teacher (phone, email, note, etc.).
- ✓ Attend orientations, back-to-school programs, or meet-your-teacher events.
- ✓ Schedule and attend parent-teacher conferences.
- ✓ Volunteer at the school or participate in the school PTA/PTO.

*Back to school we go running.
We have our supplies and we're looking stunning!*

After-School Snacks

Do your kids come in from school and make a beeline to the kitchen looking for something to eat?

If so, how can you make sure they enjoy a snack while still saving room for a healthy dinner? Kids need less frequent snacks as they get older, but it's not surprising that most are hungry after school. Many kids eat lunch early — 11:30 or even before — and then have an afternoon of classes and maybe even an after-school activity before their next chance to eat.



Figure Out the Timing

Put yourself in your kids' shoes and consider their eating schedules on a normal weekday. Some younger kids may have a mid-morning snack, but most older school-age kids won't. Find out: When is lunchtime? What and how much do they eat at lunch? Do they ever skip lunch? Does the after-school program serve snacks? This will help you figure out how hungry your kids will be when they get home.

You'll also want to think about what time you normally serve dinner. A child who gets home famished at 3:15 and eats a large snack probably won't be hungry if dinner is at 5:30. Likewise, it may not be reasonable to expect a child whose parents work late to go until 7:30 with nothing to eat since lunch. Think about your kids' schedules and plan accordingly.

Create a List of Healthy Options

Next, talk about which snacks your kids would like to have at snack time. Come up with a list of healthy options together and be sure to include a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. While a slice of cake or some potato chips shouldn't be forbidden foods, such low-nutrient snacks shouldn't be on the everyday after-school menu.

If you can, take your kids along to the grocery store and spend some time reading the nutrition facts labels and comparing products. Pay attention to the amounts of protein, fiber, calcium, and other important nutrients, and don't miss the chance to talk about portion sizes. Together, choose snacks that are low in sugar, fat, and salt. Being involved in the process makes it more likely that kids will learn to make healthy food choices.

Make Healthy Snacks an Easy Choice

Don't expect kids — even teens — to cut up their own veggie sticks. It's just too much bother, especially when they're hungry. Kids are more likely to eat what's handy. That's where you come in. Make healthy snacks easily available by packing them in their lunchboxes or backpacks or by having them visible and ready-to-eat at home.



If you're at home after school, your youngster might enjoy helping you make a creative snack like ants on a log (celery topped with peanut butter and raisin "ants"), egg boats (hard-boiled egg wedges topped with a cheese sail), or fruit kabobs. Older kids may enjoy a fruit smoothie, mini-pitas with hummus dip, or whole-grain crackers topped with cheese and pear slices.



Older kids often like making their own snacks, so provide the ingredients and a few simple instructions. If dinner is just around the corner, consider allowing a "first course," such as a small salad or side vegetable while you finish preparing the family meal.

For those nights when dinner is hours away, you could offer a more substantial snack such as half a sandwich or a quesadilla made with a whole-wheat tortilla and low-fat cheese warmed in the microwave and topped with salsa. Nothing too complicated, though. A good snack should take more time to eat than it does to prepare!

Kids Health
<http://tinyurl.com/j8og3wt>



HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD **SUCCEED** IN SCHOOL

Meet the new teacher.

For kids, one of the biggest back-to-school fears is “Will I like my new teacher?” Breaking the ice early on is one of the best ways to calm everyone’s fears. Take advantage of your school’s open house or back-to-school night. Some teachers welcome phone calls or e-mails — another great opportunity to get to know each other before the year begins.

If personal contact with the teacher isn’t possible, try locating the teacher’s picture on a school website or in a yearbook, so your child can put a name with a face. If your child’s teacher sends a welcome letter, be sure to read the letter together.

PBSparents

<http://tinyurl.com/nyqkkea>

Tour the school.

If your school hosts an open house, be sure to go. Familiarizing your child with her environment will help her avoid a nervous stomach on the first day. Together you can meet her teacher, find her desk, or explore the playground.

With an older child, you might ask him to give you a tour of the school. This will help refresh his memory and yours.



Chat about today’s events and tomorrow’s plans.

While it is important to support learning throughout the summer, don’t spend the last weeks of summer vacation reviewing last year’s curriculum. All kids need some down time before the rigors of school begin. For some kids, last-minute drills can heighten anxiety, reminding them of what they’ve forgotten instead of what they remember.

Connect with friends.

A familiar friend can make all the difference when heading back to school. You might try calling parents from last year’s class and finding out which children are in your child’s class this year. Refresh these relationships before school starts by scheduling a play date or a school carpool.

Tool up.

Obtain the class supply list and take a special shopping trip with your child. Having the right tools will help him feel prepared. While keeping basic needs in mind, allow for a couple of splurges like a cool notebook or a favorite-colored pen. These simple pleasures make going back to school a lot more fun.

School supply lists also provide great insight into the schoolwork ahead. Get your child excited about upcoming projects by explaining how new supplies might be used. Let him practice using supplies that he’s not used before — such as colored pencils or a protractor — so he will be comfortable using them in class.








Ease into the routine.

Switching from a summer to a school schedule can be stressful to everyone in the household. Avoid first-day-of-school mayhem by practicing your routine a few days in advance. Set the alarm clock, go through your morning rituals, and get in the car or to the bus stop on time. Routines help children feel comfortable, and establishing a solid school routine will make the first day of school go much smoother.

School Bus Safety Tips to Help Save Your Child's Life



Riding in a school bus is the safest way for your child to travel to and from school. However, the "danger zone" when approaching or leaving the bus poses the greatest risk for children. They should be especially careful in the area 10 feet behind, in front, or on either side of the bus. Children should also respect the bus driver and follow his or her rules while riding the bus and stay quietly seated on the ride to school. Here are a few school bus safety tips you can teach your child if he or she will be riding the bus to school this year:

-  **Do not get on the bus until the driver says it is safe to do so.** The school bus driver takes several steps to ensure the safety of all children on and off the bus. The stop sign folds out, lights flash, and the guard rail expands to alert traffic that a child is boarding. The bus driver will open the doors after coming to a complete stop and will tell the child when it is safe to get on the bus.
-  **Ask the driver for help if you drop something while getting on or off the bus.** If your child drops something while getting on or off the bus, he or she should notify the bus driver immediately and ask for help. A child kneeling to pick up a book can easily go unseen and is at a greater risk for being hit by an oncoming vehicle.
-  **Once on the school bus, go directly to your seat and sit down, facing the front of the bus.** Horseplay and unsafe activity is not often tolerated on school buses. Children should not stand or climb on the seats when the bus is moving. In many cases, the bus driver will not move from the bus stop until all children are seated and facing forward.
-  **When exiting the bus, look around for cars before walking away or crossing the street.** Your child should look both ways before stepping off the bus. If he or she needs to cross the street, instruct him or her to walk 5 giant steps in front of the bus, cross in front of the bus when the driver indicates it is safe to do so, and look both ways for oncoming traffic before crossing the road.
-  **Do not wait at the bus stop alone.** Children should not wait at a bus stop by themselves without adult supervision. Traffic, strangers, road debris - the list of possible dangers goes on and on. Walk or drive your child to the bus stop and wait patiently until the bus arrives and your child is safely seated.
-  **Use the handrails when getting on and off the bus.** To avoid tripping or losing balance, encourage children to use the handrails when boarding or exiting the bus. Keep an eye out for loose clothing, book bag straps, or draw strings that may get caught on the railings or doors.
-  **If you miss the bus, don't run after it!** If your child is running late and happens to just miss the bus, DO NOT encourage him or her to run after it or attempt to flag down the bus driver. Too often, children arriving late for the school bus dart into oncoming traffic and are seriously injured.

As a driver, slow down when approaching bus stops and keep an eye out for children playing near the street. Obey all traffic signs and slow down in school zones to avoid costly fines and legal repercussions. If your child has been injured at a bus stop or on the ride to school, you should seek medical attention immediately.

<http://tinyurl.com/jpv7n2o>

DAY BY DAY* I DRIVE THE BUS
FOR CHILDREN THAT DEPEND ON US
EACH ONE UNIQUE IN THEIR OWN WAY
THEY MAKE EACH RUN A SPECIAL DAY*

Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know



Did you know....

- Marijuana can be addictive.
- Marijuana is unsafe if you are behind the wheel.
- Marijuana is associated with school failure.
- High doses of marijuana can cause psychosis or panic during intoxication.

Why do young people use marijuana? Children and teens start using marijuana for many reasons. Curiosity and the desire to fit into a social group are common ones. Some teens have a network of friends who use drugs and urge them to do the same (peer pressure). Those who have already begun to smoke cigarettes or use alcohol—or both—are at heightened risk for marijuana use as well. And children and teens who have untreated mental disorders (such as ADHD, conduct disorder, or anxiety) or who were physically or sexually abused are at heightened risk of using marijuana and other drugs at an early age.

For some, drug use begins as a means of coping—to deal with anxiety, anger, depression, boredom, and other unpleasant feelings. But in fact, being high can be a way of simply avoiding the problems and challenges of growing up. Research also suggests that family members' use of alcohol and drugs plays a strong role in whether children/teens start using drugs. Parents, grandparents, and older brothers and sisters are models that children follow.

So indeed, all aspects of a teen's environment—home, school, and neighborhood—can influence whether they will try drugs.

How can I prevent my child from using marijuana?

There is no magic bullet for preventing teen drug use. But research shows parents have a big influence on their teens, even when it doesn't seem that way! So talk openly with your children and stay actively engaged in their lives.

If your child is using marijuana, he or she might:

- seem unusually giggly and/or uncoordinated
- have very red, bloodshot eyes or frequently use eye drops
- have a hard time remembering things that just happened
- have drugs or drug paraphernalia, including pipes and rolling papers (perhaps claiming they belong to a friend, if confronted)
- have strangely smelling clothes or bedroom
- use incense and other deodorizers
- wear clothing or jewelry or have posters that promote drug use
- have unexplained lack of money or a surplus of cash on hand



For information on how to talk to your children about drugs, consult your local library, school, or community service organization.



<http://tinyurl.com/hcfxq78>

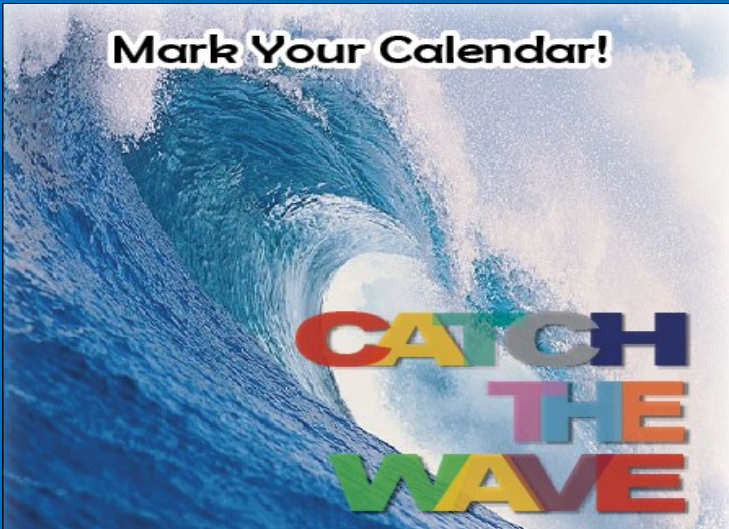
A MULTI-FACETED PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

- ⇒ **COMPLIANCE** - A district parental involvement policy, a school parental involvement policy, and a school-parent compact, these documents must be distributed to parents and families in a format and, in so far as it is practicable, in a language parents can understand;
- ⇒ **COMMUNICATION** - Regular, two-way communication throughout the school year, an informative annual meeting, candid parent-teacher conferences, consultation for meaningful review and evaluation of the parental involvement program, and frequent reports on student progress;
- ⇒ **CAPACITY** - Building the capacity for greater involvement of both parents and staff by providing to parents materials and training about the State standards and State and local assessments, training school staff about the value and utility of contributions by parents, helping parents work with their children to improve their child's achievement, and providing opportunities for parents to volunteer at the school.

When home and school work together for student learning, students enjoy school more (improved morale), do better in school (improved achievement), and stay in school longer (improved attendance and graduation rate). A family engagement program that is intentional, maintaining its focus on student improvement and success, and consistently addresses **COMPLIANCE**, **COMMUNICATION**, and **CAPACITY** will yield positive results. When educators and families work together as partners, students win.

To learn more about developing your parent and family engagement program attend the annual **2016 STATEWIDE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT CONFERENCE**.

2016 Statewide Parental Involvement Conference



Mark Your Calendar!

CATCH THE WAVE

December 8-10, 2016
Corpus Christi, TX

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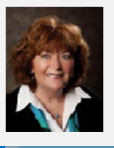
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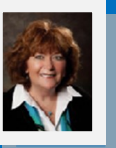
Pre-Conference
Speaker


Conference Keynote
Speakers


Conference Featured
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Debbie
Silver



Ernesto
Mejia



Debbie
Silver


Keith
Davis


Anita
Villarreal


Rod
Pruitt


Lee
Gill


Esmeralda
Rodriguez



The supermom syndrome — that mindset that makes you think that you can bring home the bacon and fry it up in the pan, that you should be all things to all people, always producing nothing but perfect results in your every endeavor—isn't reserved for working moms. Some of us who gave up the fast track pursue full-time parenting with the same competitive spirit cultivated in the

business world. We may believe that full-time mothering should guarantee that we will produce perfect kids. Or, more often, we begin to believe that since we "don't work," we should not only join but run the school's parent volunteer organization, pitch in at the homeless shelter and the March of Dimes, sit on three church committees and direct the nursery, lead a scout troop, baby-sit our working neighbor's kids, hand-craft all our Christmas presents, grow our own vegetables, and design and stencil all our gift-wrap.

Handling this issue might be one of the most difficult problems moms at home face because our self-esteem is so often entangled in the issue of what we do as opposed to who we are. No easy formula can help you determine how much your plate can adequately hold. Use common sense when deciding how much you can handle. And, if you find yourself overloaded, make yourself say, "I can't do this project anymore. It's taking too much time away from my family."

Family Life <http://tinyurl.com/hn3okrh>

Involved dads = Successful children

Studies by the Father Involvement Research Alliance shows that babies with more involved fathers are more likely to be emotionally secure, confident in new situations, and eager to explore their surroundings. As they grow, they are more sociable. Toddlers with involved fathers are better problem-solvers and have higher IQs by age 3. They are more ready to start school and can deal with the stress of being away from home all day better than children with less involved fathers.

At school, children of involved fathers do better academically. A study by the U.S. Department of Education found that children of highly involved fathers were 43 percent more likely than other children to earn mostly A's and 33 percent less likely to repeat a grade. They are also less likely to have behavior problems at school and to experience depression.



Girls with involved fathers have higher self-esteem, and teenage girls who are close to their dads are less likely to become pregnant. Boys show less aggression, less impulsivity, and more self-direction. As young adults, children of involved fathers are more likely to achieve higher levels of education, find success in their careers, have higher levels of self-acceptance and experience psychological well-being. Adults who had involved fathers are more likely to be tolerant and understanding, have supportive social networks made up of close friends, and have long-term successful marriages.

Focus on the Family
<http://tinyurl.com/zw5m7wf>

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is posted on our web site four times a year for parents and educators of Texas.

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<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>

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