



# MCEC<sup>®</sup>



# Back to School TOOLKIT



IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN, time to head Back To School! Planning for the coming year can be overwhelming, especially for military families with multiple children in various grades or after a PCS move. We dove into many resources to provide you with tips and tricks to help you make this school year (and every school year) a success!!





### 10 Back to School Tips

- 1 GET BACK ON TRACK**  
Get back on track for back to school. Make sure children are getting eight hours of sleep and that bed and waking times are consistent with upcoming school schedules.
- 2 BAN STRESSFUL MORNINGS**  
Get organized every school night. Take time every evening to put school clothes out, ready backpacks, prepare lunches, and gather homework. Place everything your child needs in consistent locations to help build a routine.
- 3 SET TIMERS**  
Digital appliance timers, egg timers, and even an hourglass can help children focus for a certain length of time. Encourage older students to try the Pomodoro technique by breaking projects into 25-minute intervals. With younger children, approximate time with activities like, “We need to work on writing the alphabet for about as long as an episode of Sesame Street.”
- 4 SCHEDULE**  
Get the entire family organized with a family calendar. Track events and happenings for children and adults alike, and keep the calendar in a central location for everyone to reference. Encourage children to use planners, calendars, and phone notifications for school work and events as well.
- 5 HELP PRIORITIZE**  
Teach them to break work up into subtasks. Categorize what is easy and hard. Tackle challenging tasks first when energy is high and minds are alert. Create “To-Do Lists” in portable notebooks.





### 10 Back to School Tips (continued)

- 6 GET INVOLVED**  
Get to know your children’s teachers, and mentors. Understand class rules and expectations. Sign up for school webinars, meetings, and events whenever possible. Prepare for parent teacher conferences with the preconfigured Parent Teacher Conference checklist in [SchoolQuest](#). Parent involvement fosters academic success and shows children that they are supported.
- 7 TEACH SELF-ADVOCACY**  
Applaud your children when they reach out for help and communicate their needs. If you have a child with accommodations, let them know their legal rights. Help them learn how to self-advocate in a positive and productive way. Register for [SchoolQuest](#) and gain access to resources to better help you prepare to advocate for your child with special needs.
- 8 SEEK HELP**  
Support your child’s academic needs by reaching out to teachers and counselors as quickly as you are able. Help your children find tutoring sessions or after-school help. Make overall well-being a priority. Understand the [resources available](#) to your family. If your child needs emotional support, reach out to Military OneSource for free counseling services: 800.342.9647 or live chat 24/7.
- 9 SET LIMITS**  
If your son or daughter seems to overcommit themselves, reassure them that it’s okay to set boundaries. Saying “No” and making informed choices is a part of growing up and prioritizing.
- 10 PLAN AHEAD**  
Track your student’s progress toward graduation with an academic plan. MCEC developed a six-year recommended course program available on [SchoolQuest.MilitaryChild.org](#) that keeps students on track, even with multiple transitions. Additionally, it solidifies your child’s ability to attain their goals after high school, whether that is to attend college or start a career. Register for [SchoolQuest](#) and help your students achieve their goals.

\*Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children gives an overview of the challenges military families face including enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility and graduation. Learn more: [www.mic3.net](http://www.mic3.net)



### Tackling Homework

HOMEWORK IS GIVEN FOR A variety of reasons. Often, the goal of homework is to reinforce the material covered in class, expand understanding of a new subject, or help children apply new learning skills. As an added benefit for parents, homework can give visibility to what children are learning and what is expected of them.



Many teachers establish tougher policies in middle school about how homework should be submitted and how it affects final grades. When rules aren't followed, those stricter standards can equate to lower grades. It's important for parents and teachers to work together to manage expectations and to create a positive learning environment to combat homework distress.



### Homework Tips

#### BE POSITIVE

Speak to your children about the benefits of learning through classwork and homework. Set an example by following through with parent assignments—and by speaking favorably about teachers and staff. For more information on homework motivation strategies, check out [MCEC<sup>®</sup> Parent Webinars](#).

#### MAKE A SCHEDULE

Work with your children to establish a routine for homework. Try to maximize your child's energy by encouraging them to focus on homework when they are alert, which might be right after school.

#### WORK ON WEEKENDS

When children need to tackle big projects, capitalize on fresh-faced weekend mornings and afternoons — especially for group work that involves classmates.



#### GUIDE THE WAY

Help your children think through problems rather than providing them with answers. Guide them toward identifying solutions on their own in order to build self-esteem.

#### TAKE BREAKS

Make sure to encourage children to take breaks throughout homework time to help them restore focus and stay engaged.

#### CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Remember to reward hard work with praise or even a special event like a walk, pizza, trip to the park, or time with friends.



### Create a Homework Tote



Homework assignments can range from worksheets and reading to art projects and essays. Work with your child to prepare for homework on the go with a portable homework tote. Grab a bag or bin with a lid, and together fill it with everything your children need to complete homework (see suggestions on the list to the right). As a bonus, the fact that it's portable means your child can do homework virtually anywhere!



#### ITEMS TO INCLUDE

- Pencils
- Pencil Sharpener
- Erasers
- Pens
- Notebook
- Loose Leaf Filler Paper
- Markers
- Crayons
- Highlighters
- Calculator
- Protractor
- Ruler
- Index cards
- Dictionary
- Thesaurus
- Almanac
- Tissues
- Water Bottle
- Snacks
- Stapler
- Staples
- Paper Clips
- Tape
- Glue
- Scissors
- Cell Phone Charger
- Battery Back-Up Pack for Cell Phone
- Stress Ball



### Talking to Your Children

Now that you have a plan for Back to School success, you may wonder how you'll learn more about your children's daily lives during the year. Children in middle and high school are often busy with schoolwork, homework, activities, and even jobs that take up a lot of time. As children get busier, it can be harder to connect. This is also a time when parental support is essential: teen life can be challenging. Often, questions like, "How was your day?" are met with shrugs and grunts. Use some of these open-ended questions to get the conversation started.



1. What was the best thing you did at school today?
2. What did you like at school today?
3. How was it getting to your locker between classes?
4. What activities would you like to participate in?
5. What is your favorite class this year?
6. What are your thoughts on (a particular current event or story)?
7. How are your friends?
8. What could I do to help you this week?



The GAB-on! App also helps connect school and home conversations between parents and students. Students can use the app to enter GABs about an activity during their day, which then serves as a prompt for parents to spark conversation at home.

<https://gab-on.com/>



### STARTING THE SCHOOL YEAR OFF RIGHT

is the first step to a successful school year. By following these helpful tips you can make every year a success and create a firm foundation for you and your child as they venture into yet another school year.

This MCEC<sup>®</sup> Back to School toolkit was created to support the MCEC<sup>®</sup> SchoolQuest initiative, a free organizational tool that makes transitioning easier for students, parents, and educational professionals. With SchoolQuest, you can keep track of important documents, school credits received and those still needed for graduation, and requirements for starting a new extracurricular activity. With checklist templates and everything you need in one place, it makes a PCS move a little less stressful for you and your family.





# Resource Library

## MCEC® Resources

### MCEC® PARENT SUPPORT RESOURCES

Find MCEC® Parent Support webinars related to this topic at [MilitaryChild.org/Webinars](https://militarychild.org/webinars). Contact your local Community Coordinator for workshops and events offered in your community. You can find all locations with points of contact at [MilitaryChild.org/communitycoordinators](https://militarychild.org/communitycoordinators).

Military Student Consultants: This program is the portal for all questions student and parent related. You can submit your specific questions concerning transition barriers and receive specialized support. To contact a Military Student Consultant, email [MSC@MilitaryChild.org](mailto:MSC@MilitaryChild.org)

[The MCEC® Podcast](#) series covers an array of informative and important topics with guests from all walks of life. Visit Podbean, Google Playstore, or iTunes.

## Other Resources

### EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- [Military Family Life Counselors \(MFLC\)](#) provides confidential short-term, non-medical counseling to service members and their families.

### ONLINE LEARNING AND TUTORING

Child Youth and School Services (CYSS) Homework Centers provide teacher-led after-school programs in School-Age and Youth Services facilities.

- [Educational Netflix Shows](#) — watch over 60 educational shows grouped by grade level.
- [Khan Academy](#) contains multiple learning tracks for children
- [PBS Kids](#) provides educational videos, games, and more — sign up for daily activities and tips.
- [SKIES Unlimited](#) — instructional program offering everything from academics to fine art classes.
- [Sylvan Learning](#) offers tutoring tips, homework help, test prep, and more for all grade levels.
- [Tutor.com](#) is a free tutoring resource for eligible military-connected families.
- [We Are Teacher's list](#) of over 60 educational Netflix shows grouped by grade level.



### Resource Library

#### MATH

- [ABCmouse.com](#) offers games and educational lessons for ages 2-8 in math, science, and art.
- [Math Practice and Games](#) Access games and worksheets from K-8 on reading, math, science, and more!

#### NOTE TAKING APPS

Here is a selection of free apps that can help with note taking:

- [Evernote](#): organize notes by notebook, embed photos, create “To Do” lists and more.
- [Google Keep](#): note-keeping app, allows you to pin notes, lists, photos & voice memos.
- [Remember the Milk](#): get reminders, and sync devices.

#### PARENT INFORMATION

- [Milestones](#) free online collection of videos that help children understand K-12 grade-level expectations.
- [Learning Heroes](#) provides a K-8 readiness check.

#### READING TOOLS

- [Reading Rockets](#) reading tips from the baby years through the third graders
- [United Through Reading App](#) is a free tool for military families to connect through reading aloud

#### SCIENCE AND SPACE

- [GreatSchools.org](#) offers worksheets on multiple subjects.
- [Space Racers](#) allows you to engage in science-based lessons and activities to help kids learn

#### SELF-ADVOCACY

- [Understood.org](#) resources for empowering and encouraging self-advocacy in children.



# Resource Library

## STUDY HABITS

- [Department of Education's](#) back to school resources
- [Helping Your Kids with Their Homework](#) (video)
- [Kids Health](#) gives homework help, study tips, and a wealth of educational resources for children.
- [National Education Association's Homework Solutions Guide](#)
- [Understood.org article](#) providing guidance on study habits for youth.

## TIME MANAGEMENT

### TIME MANAGEMENT APPS

Here is a selection of free apps that can help with time management:

- [RescueTime](#): weekly reports that tell you what is stealing your time.
- [TimeTree](#): Share multiple calendars and appointments.
- [Trello](#): allows you to track projects and assignments in stages of completion.

### TIME MANAGEMENT VIDEOS

- [Learning and Thinking Differences That Cause Trouble With Time Management](#)
- [Teaching Your Kids Time Management](#)
- [The Age-by-Age Guide to Teaching Kids Time Management](#)
- [The Instant Guide to Time Management for Kids](#)
- [Time Management Important for Kids](#)
- [Time Management for Kids](#)
- [What is Pomodoro Technique?](#)