

## **MAIN STORY**

It's hard to believe another summer is drawing to a close. Educators and parents alike are turning their thoughts to back-to-school plans.

To ensure the smoothest transition for the student, parents and teachers have specific tasks they need to complete. This issue contains short check-lists for all parties involved.

May this new school year be wondrous for all!

## **FOR PARENTS with their kids:**

Getting your child ready for school is critical to starting off the new year. Here are some quick tips:

- Talk to your child about going back to school in a positive manner and chances are the child will begin to share in the excitement.
- Encourage your child to talk about what she or he expects. This provides an opportunity to open conversation about any anxieties your child might be experiencing.
- Create enthusiasm by taking your child shopping for school supplies, back-to-school clothing and let him/her be involved in choosing an item such as a backpack.
- If your child is going to a new school, call the school office to visit the building and staff prior to the opening day, so he or she becomes familiar with the new surroundings.
- Discuss and plan ahead with your child the change in daily routines.
- Begin the new bed times (both morning and night) at least a week in advance.
- Ask your child what additional items might need to be purchased, or if she or he has an idea that could be put in place to ensure the child's success.
- Make sure your child knows what services and accommodations he or she is entitled to receive. This will help develop self-advocacy skills.

## **Parent with teacher**

A parent is a child's most effective advocate and can play a crucial role in making certain that a child's educational needs are being met. By being proactive, parents can increase the likelihood that their child will begin the school year with all the necessary supports in place for a successful year. Before school starts:

- Review your child's IEP or Section 504 Service Agreement. Know what the plan provides for as far as services and accommodations. Be certain that the school and teacher follow the plan and that any additional services are in fact being provided.
- Request an IEP meeting early on if concerns arise or if there are outstanding unresolved issues from a previous IEP meeting.
- When teacher placement has been confirmed, consider sending the teacher an email detailing the child's special needs and indicating a desire to establish a positive working relationship.

- Set up a meeting with the new teacher to; answer questions, discuss the child's unique needs and establish a method of teacher preferred communication in the event issues arise.
- Provide the teacher with a copy of the IEP or 504 Service Agreement.
- Give the teacher a prepared list of the most important pieces of information regarding the child. Include a brief history, strengths, areas of difficulty, child's interests and any relevant summer updates.
- Attend the school's open house to learn more about the teacher, class expectations/rules, and curriculum. Use the opportunity to again meet the teacher and further establish a positive relationship.

## **Teacher readiness**

For educators, the sooner you get a jump on planning for the year, the better for parents, students – and yourself.

1. Make sure your current class roster is up to date and learn as much about your students and families that you can before classes start.
2. Call the parents and introduce yourself; perhaps even share a short biography, your work phone number and email address.
3. Drive through the students' neighborhoods so you get a sense of where the children are coming from.
4. Review all IEPs and other related student records.
5. Determine if you need professional development related to any services listed on the IEPs.
6. Make sure you have all the assistive technology necessary to carry out IEP services.
7. Touch base with your special education support team (psychologist, social worker, consultant, occupational/physical therapists, speech –language pathologist) at the beginning of the year. Establish times for your students who need these services.
8. Meet with your general education co-teachers and share information on schedules, students and IEP services.
9. Talk to all additional school staff who will be working with your students so that they know the students' needs and IEPs before the school year starts.

## ***Intensifying instruction***

## By Sharon Vaughn, professor at the University of Texas, Austin:

Starting this September, we will examine intensifying instruction as researched and written by Dr. Sharon Vaughn of the University of Texas at Austin. Vaughn's work takes into consideration what educators face Educators when providing an intensive instructional program for students with significant learning difficulties. There are four considerations in her work:

1. First, and perhaps most important, educators must consider whether instruction is responsive to the **cognitive processing** difficulties of each student. Many students with significant learning difficulties in reading and mathematics have executive function or self-regulation problems that interfere with their success. Promising research suggests that *integrating strategies that support cognitive processing through academic instruction* may accelerate academic progress.
2. Second, educators must consider whether they are sufficiently **differentiating instructional delivery** to meet the learning needs of students who typically require more explicit and systematic instruction.
3. Third, educators must consider whether they are providing students with **adequate instructional time**. Many students with significant learning difficulties require additional time with appropriate instruction, practice, and feedback.
4. Fourth, educators must consider the extent to which the **learning environment** promotes opportunities to respond to and align instruction with students' learning needs. *Smaller learning groups* and one-on-one instruction can foster this type of learning environment.

### Update your email addresses

Do you have new teachers on staff? Have you transferred districts? Are there new parents whose children will be in your classrooms? It's time to update your email addresses to ensure consistent delivery of *Each and Every Child*. Send your updates to [jim.flansburg@iowa.gov](mailto:jim.flansburg@iowa.gov).