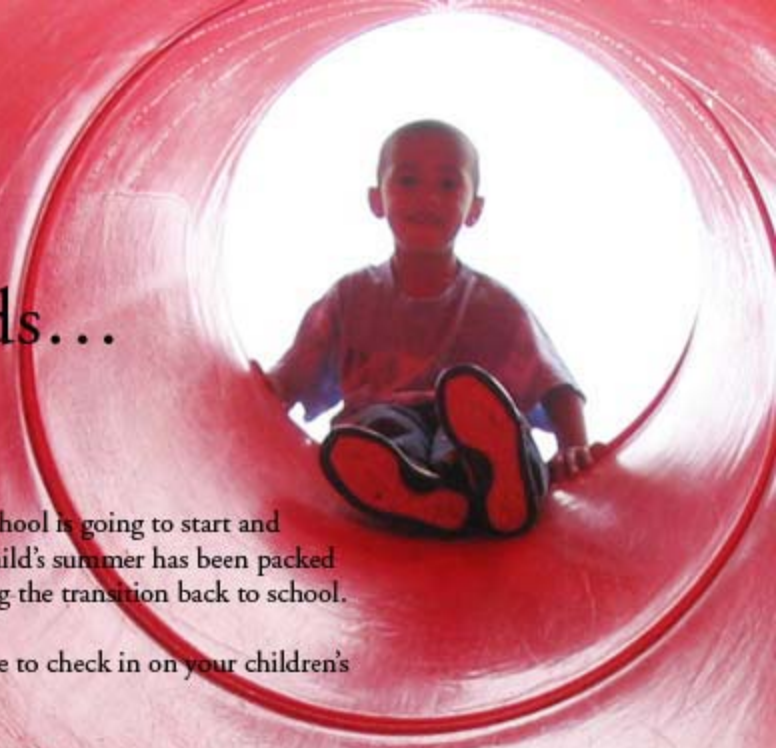


# Back to School: Check in with your kids... and yourself!



The end of summer can bring a mix of emotions – excitement that school is going to start and perhaps disappointment that summer is over. Whether or not your child's summer has been packed with activities, many kids – and parents – have a difficult time making the transition back to school.

So while stocking up on new school supplies and clothes take the time to check in on your children's feelings about going back to school – and your own!

Whether your child is starting school for the first time, entering a new grade or a new school, a new school year brings new pressures for your child to face – both inside and outside the classroom. Ask them how they feel about going back to school. By asking open-ended questions you are allowing your child to explore his or her own feelings. Remind them that everyone feels a little nervous about the first day of school – even you and even the teacher. Also remind them that in no time, it will all become an everyday routine.

Being involved in your child's life can be a bigger factor in his or her success than money or education. So taking the time to listen to your children as they begin a new school year is an essential investment in their futures! Studies show that as children get older, the time they spend talking with their parents drops dramatically. And only a small percentage of youth say they have had conversations with their parents about important issues such as drugs. But with regular communication children are more apt to listen to important parental messages which will improve the quality of parent-child relationships, and help protect against dangerous behaviours such as alcohol use and early sexual activity.

- Make the time to talk to your kids about going back to school. Ask them what they are feeling – and let them know how you are feeling, too.
- Be an active listener - when your children are talking, listen. Be interested in what they have to say and focus on their feelings (rather than yours) when you are talking.
- Emphasize the positive things about going back to school like seeing old friends (or making new ones) and learning new things.
- Try to transition your child into a consistent school-night routine 1 or 2 weeks before school starts.
- Consider adjusting your own schedule so that you are home at the end of the school day for the first week. Many working parents do not have that flexibility so try to arrange your evenings so that can give your child as much attention as he or she needs.
- Resolve to eat dinner together as a family a few times a week. This is a good time to find out what your child has been up to – inside and outside of school.

## TIPS FOR PARENTS:

For more information, contact the **Psychologists' Association of Alberta** at 424-0294 (Edmonton) or (888), 424-0297; the **Canadian Psychological Association** at (888) 472-0657, or [www.cpa.ca](http://www.cpa.ca); or visit one of the following websites:

[http://www.naspcenter.org/home\\_school/b2shandout.html](http://www.naspcenter.org/home_school/b2shandout.html)

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/back\\_school.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/back_school.html)