

Easing Transition: Tips for Parents of Students with Special Needs

A new school year means a new grade, new teachers, new goals, and maybe even a new school. In order to help you and your child be successful, here are a few helpful back-to-school tips to make the transition easier.

- **Visit the new school site with your child.** Point out the bathrooms, cafeteria, office, playground, etc. Older students may benefit from printed maps with time schedules. Talk to your child about exciting new classes, activities and events he or she can participate in.
- **Help your child reconnect with schoolmates.**
- **Review Individual Education Program (IEP) goals.** Ensure the goals are still relevant and note the date of the annual review. Remember, you can request an IEP review anytime.
- **Connect with the teacher.** Write a brief introduction about your child (including a photo) with his or her likes and dislikes, social/emotional set-offs, motivators, methods of communication, pertinent medical information and any other important information. The more proactive and honest you are, the better the school staff will be able to meet your child's needs.



- **Help plan an ability-awareness training.** If your child is in a general education class, consider helping to plan an ability-awareness training with the class. Make sure to get buy-in from your child first. Write a story for the other kids so they can understand what makes him or her unique, and things that may be difficult for your child.
 - **Keep paperwork organized.** Create a family calendar of school events, special education meetings, conferences, etc.
 - **Continue learning.** Stay up-to-date on special education news and legislation, so you can become a better advocate for your child.
 - **Create a communication log.** This will help ensure you and school staff are on the same page. Be sure to note the dates, times, and nature of the communications you have.
 - **Attend school events when possible.** School events such as open house, back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences offer a great opportunity to meet staff and other students/families.
 - **Offer to help – either in the classroom or at PTA-sponsored events.**
- Transition can be challenging. Hopefully these tips will help you and your child ease right into a successful school year!

Additional resources for parents

For additional information about PTA's work to advance education about and support the concerns of those students with special needs, visit <http://www.capta.org/sections/parents/special-needs.cfm>.

Additional information

is also available from the California Department of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/>.

Do you have ideas or suggestions to support students with special needs?

Contact:

California State PTA
Special Needs Committee at
specialneeds@capta.org.