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# Parents can ease their kids' jitters about heading back to school

Going back-to-school in September can be the biggest transition of the year, say education specialists. Children may experience a lot more anxiety about the approaching change in routine than is readily seen— and without doubt, the pressures of back-to-school schedules impact the whole family.

"Children struggle with the thoughts of change and unknown demands the same way adults do," says Dr. Donna McGhie-Richmond, educational specialist with Kumon Math and Reading Centres. "We've all experienced that dreaded shift from vacation to work and it's the same feeling for children heading back-to-school. Transition anxieties are normal and to be expected."

Parents can help by taking the fear out of the unknown. Prepare children well in advance, says Kumon's expert, and be explicit. With young children, for example, create a schedule and post it on the fridge. The structure will give them comfort because they'll know what to expect. Consider these guidelines too:

"Re-instate bedtimes and begin to wake children earlier at least a week before school begins. It's important for them to be fresh and well rested.

"Talk about how they feel heading back-to-school and that nervousness is to be expected.

"Talk about what they will do on the first day, such as meeting new teachers, entering a new classroom, and catching up with friends and making new ones.

"Involve children in purchasing and organizing back-to-school items, from



school supplies to clothing.

"Ensure you are available after school, or on that first evening, to talk about the experiences of the first day. Plan a special dinner, or dessert. Make it an event to celebrate.

"Talk about learning goals for the year. Negotiate a regular study time and establish a regular place for homework.

"Encourage and display confidence in your child. Your confidence will produce confidence in him or her.

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