

Easing back into school routine takes preparation

FROM PAGE 15

well. The straps should also be well sewn to the pack — they take a beating throughout the year.

If the back has a front pouch, designate it as the place where notes to the teacher, permission forms and lunch money goes. This will help both you and your children remember to keep communication between home and school organized.

Lunch packs should be as compact as possible, with as few pieces to lose as possible.

Count on having to buy at least five juice containers during this school year. It helps to inscribe your child's name on everything they own, but that is not absolute guarantee the stuff will come home once it has gone to school.

If you are sending yogurt or pudding in school lunches, invest in a package of plastic spoons. Ask your kids to bring them home, but if they forget (and they will), at least you haven't lost any of your flatware.

Cold packs, which can usually be found at discount or dollar stores, work well to keep things such as juice cold. They have also come in handy in soothing injuries sustained at recess. Again, remind the children to bring these home.

Paper is available at good prices at this time of year. Stock up on it now. It never hurts to have it on hand.

There is nothing so frustrating, or inhibits a positive learning experience more, than having an angry parent prowling late-night stores looking for paper so that someone can finish a book report.

In our house, the children are given a package of colored pencils, a package of markers, about 10 pencils and two erasers. All of this is packed into a generously sized pencil case. We use a dot of color to identify these items. Sticker dots, available in the filing section of a business supply store, work well. It is faster and easier than writing your child's name on all their stationery items.

We have found it necessary to check the state of the school supplies by the first school open house (usually at the beginning of November).

Despite our pleas to look after their things and be responsible for their use, it is a good bet that the kids have lost or misplaced almost all of these items in two short months.

Helpful tips for lunch

Parents get really tired of making school lunches. Kids get really tired of eating them. But, while you gotta eat, you don't have to be boring about it. Here are some ideas to liven up school lunches:

— Vary the kinds of bread used. Bagels, flat

bread, buns — even switching to rye or sour-dough breads make a change from white or whole wheat breads.

— Mix a little French or Russian salad dressing into mayonnaise or salad spread. This adds both extra taste and color to bland-looking fillings such as tuna, chicken and egg salad.

— Offer crackers, cold meat (like salami), sliced cheeses and cut-up fruits. In larger quantities, these could be the main part of lunch. In smaller portions, they would also make great additional snacks.

— Include a water bottle in the lunch bag. This could even be left at school. School buildings can be dry places.

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