

Preparing Your Family for School

By, Margaret Stephens-Reed

As the summer winds down, parents and children are once again entertaining thoughts of school. With advance planning, families can more easily transition into a “back to school” routine. The following timeline may provide some suggestions for both easing this adjustment and starting the school year out on a positive note.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE

Sleep Schedule

- If your child has been staying up later during the summer, move bedtime back gradually until you reach the desired time.
- Get children accustomed to waking early and getting dressed in a timely fashion. Discuss and agree on acceptable clothing choices before bedtime.

Medical

- Schedule medical appointments. Make sure all immunization and medical records are up-to-date.

Mental Stimulation

- Set aside time daily for reading, doing crossword puzzles, or playing card or board games.

Shopping

- Shop for necessary clothing and supplies.

Nutrition

- This is an especially good time to reinforce your child’s ability to make good food choices. Have conversations about what foods make up a balanced meal. Read food labels with your child and discuss the nutritional content of foods. Encourage your child to eat a variety of foods.



ONE WEEK BEFORE

School Orientation

- If your child is new to school or a newcomer to a particular school, call the school and ask if you can do a walk through with the child. Practice walking to the bus stop or school with your child.

Personal Identification and Safety

- Secure your child’s name and school name inside your pre-schooler’s coat, backpack and other belongings.
- Make sure your elementary school-aged child knows his/her address and phone number.
- Talk with your child about safety issues such as crossing the street, not talking to strangers, walking to and from school, and proper bus etiquette.
- Develop a family emergency plan and acquaint all family members with the plan.

Goals and Expectations

- Set realistic and age-appropriate goals and expectations with your child for the school year. Use praise and encouragement to support your child’s efforts.

ONCE SCHOOL BEGINS

- Arrange to meet your child’s teacher or write a note of introduction. Provide important details about your child (interests, talents, learning style) and contact/schedule information.
- Try to attend “Back to School Night” and other events during the year at your child’s school.
- Address concerns as they arise with your child and your child’s teacher. This will foster positive family as well as home-school communication.

Margaret Stephens-Reed is the Community Outreach and Special Projects Coordinator for Arlington Public Schools and the creator and facilitator of the Win-Win Parenting Program, an interactive parent/child workshop offered in Arlington County.

Keeping Kids Safe Online Requires Parental Communication

Iris Beckwith, Director of Abuse Prevention Programs
Childhelp USA / Virginia

It's a simple reality. Kids today are spending more time online. The Internet has always been part of their world and is a comfortable and familiar place. Communicating with them about the dangers and benefits, allowing them expanding Internet opportunities as they grow and mature, and talking with them frequently about their online activities will reinforce the fact that their safety is your primary concern.

Parents are often unaware of the problems and pitfalls that may exist for their children in cyberspace. The Internet is a wonderful and fascinating tool if it is used in a safe, respectful and legal way. To insure children's safety, it is crucial that adults teach their children the following Internet rules and codes of conduct.

➤ **Rule 1: Don't Talk To Strangers**

A stranger is someone a child has not been introduced to in person by someone they know and trust. Just because a child has "chatted" or "im'd" with someone, does not make that online contact the child's friend. Children should never meet an online contact in person without the knowledge and permission of a trusted adult.

➤ **Rule 2: Don't Give Out Private Information**

Using Member Profiles, web pages, giving out their phone number, address, and school location can potentially put a child at risk from online predators who know how to use that information to their own advantage.

➤ **Rule 3: Don't Use The Internet to Spread Rumors or Gossip**

Children are being bullied online by other children who forget that this technology creates a permanent record of the things they say. The instantaneous nature of the Internet limits the amount of time children spend thinking about what they send and makes that information potentially available to millions of people.

➤ **Rule 4: Tell Someone If You Are Being Hurt**

Most kids are embarrassed about inappropriate things that they come across or scared when they are approached in an uncomfortable or frightening manner. However, they often don't tell anyone because they don't want to get in trouble about their Internet usage or think that it isn't "cool" to say they are upset.

➤ **Rule 5: Don't Believe Everything You Read!**

Kids often think that whatever they see online is true or real. We need to help them understand that anyone can post information online. They need to check resources, read information from several websites and form opinions based on multiple sources of information. Giving credit to their sources when using this information for school projects is very important. Also, just because information can be found online, doesn't make it theirs. Downloading copyrighted material without paying can be illegal.

For more information about Childhelp's AOL-sponsored Internet Safety Robot Assemblies for Grades 1 – 6th, classroom presentation for grades 7-9 and Parent Internet Safety Seminars, Contact Iris Beckwith at 703/208-1531 or ibeckwith@childhelpva.org.

Check out these great Websites:

Tips, advice and suggestions to make a family's online experience fun and productive. For parents and kids.
www.safetyclicks.com

A fun and informative resource for both parents and kids about online safety.
www.wiredkids.org

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) sets limits on how companies can collect, use and disclose children's personal information.
www.ftc.gov/kidzprivacy

CyberTipline handles leads from individuals reporting the sexual exploitation of children.
www.missingkids.com

GetNetWise is an industry wide online resource for families that aggregates an extensive collection of safety resources into one convenient Web site. The site features more than 120 online safety tools, including software to filter explicitly mature and violent content.
www.GetNetWise.org

Net Family News is a nonprofit public service providing Net news for families - parents, teachers, and other caregivers of online kids.
www.netfamilynews.org

Children's Corner

Six Online Safety Tips for Kids

1. Never give out your name, home address, age, phone number or school name – or any personal information to strangers online.
2. Don't give out your password to anyone, either online or offline.
3. Never agree to meet an online friend in person without one of your parents.
4. Don't e-mail pictures of yourself to strangers online.
5. Never accept things from strangers online, such as e-mails, files, pictures, or Web links.
6. If someone says or does something online that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, tell an adult right away. www.safetyclicks.com



FALL

**The fun doesn't have to end because you are going back to school.
Check out these Websites for activities near you.**

- Arlington County Dept. of Parks and Recreation www.co.arlington.va.us/prcr/default.asp
- Arlington County Libraries www.co.arlington.va.us/lib/
- Smithsonian Institution www.si.edu
- Smithsonian National Zoological Park <http://natzoo.si.edu/>
- Listing of area events www.our-kids.com
- Wolf Trap www.wolf-trap.org

COMMUNITY CONNECTION



Parenting Classes Sponsored by the Parent Education Program

S.T.E.P. Teen

Description: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting for parents of children 12 – 18 years.

Open to any Arlington County Resident.

No childcare

Day / Time: Mondays - 7:00-8:30pm

Dates: Fall 2003 – September 8 – November 3

Location: Arlington County DHS

3033 Wilson Blvd. 7th Floor, Arlington

Cost: FREE Program

Contact: Coreen Urbina at 703.228.1551 or

E-mail: curbina@co.arlington.va.us

Language: English

Win-Win Parenting - “Putting an end to power struggles”

Description: For parents with children ages 4 – 9 years.

This is a joint parent and child program in which parents discuss effective child discipline and asset building techniques while their children engage in education and recreational activities. Open to all Arlington County Residents.

Location: dates and time TO BE ANNOUNCED.

Cost: FREE Program

Contact: Coreen Urbina at 703.228.1551 or E-mail:

curbina@co.arlington.va.us

Language: English

Our Children / Nuestros Hijos

Description: Program for parents with children ages 0-18, see schedule for age groups. Open to all Arlington County Residents

Childcare Available

Day / Time: Thursdays 7:00-8:30pm

Dates: Fall 2003 – October 2 – November 6

• Our Children – Teenagers 12 – 18 years

Location: Arlington Mill Community Center
4975 Columbia Pike, Room 135 B

Cost: FREE Program

Contact: Daiana Bañales-Dorman at 703.228.1547 or E-mail:

dbanales@co.arlington.va.us

Language: Spanish

MORE PARENTING CLASSES

The Parent Education Program also offers *the Powerful Parenting* and *STEP Spanish/Crianza Eficaz* programs. Families must be referred to these programs. Call Coreen Urbina (703) 228-1551 or Daiana Bañales-Dorman at (703) -228-1547 for more information.

Additional Parenting Programs and Announcements

Program: *Assuring Better Children*, for parents of preschoolers and kindergartners

Location: Fairlington Methodist Church, 3900 King St., Alexandria, Va. 22302

Day and Time: Tuesday from 6:00-8:30pm

Start Date: 09/09/03 (English)

10/14/03 (Spanish)

Cost: Free, light dinner is served

Childcare available

For Information: contact SCAN at 703-836-1820.

Respite Care Day

A respite event for families who care for children with disabilities.

Day / Time: Saturday, September 13 – 11am-3pm

Location: Annandale United Methodist Church

6935 Columbia Pike, Annandale

Cost: Registration fee of \$10. Siblings are \$5 each.

Contact: ARC Program Staff at 703.532.3214.

Language: English

Are you a separating or divorced parent?

You may be interested in attending a *TransParenting* seminar, an educational program that focuses on separation as seen through the eyes of children.

Northern Virginia Family Services (NVFS) offers an educational program that is designed to teach effective parenting during the transitions of divorce or parental separation. Class locations are in Fairfax and Prince William Counties. Call the NVFS *COPE/TransParenting* information line at: 703-219-2107 (English) 703-219-2199 (Spanish)

The class fee is \$35 per person. Pre-registration is required.

Foster Care

Foster Care is a temporary living arrangement, providing parenting for children who cannot stay in their homes because of abuse, neglect or other severe family problems. These children need foster families for a few days, months or years. A foster parent can be any adult, married or single, living in a house or an apartment, who is able to accept a child who needs a lot of patience, understanding, love and guidance. There is especially a great need for Black and Hispanic foster families to serve Arlington County.

To become a foster parent, or for more information, call the Arlington County Foster Home Coordinator: Leslie Bishop-Joe at 703.228.1557.