

AUGUST 17, 2018

BACK TO SCHOOL

SIGNAL TRIBUNE

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Kids mentoring program seeking volunteers

Power 4 Youth, an academic mentoring program for middle-school students, will be hosting a no-obligation information meeting for prospective volunteers on Tuesday, Aug. 28 at 6:30pm at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 370 Junipero Ave., one of five community sites the program operates.

The program is seeking community members "to act as champions and make a difference by mentoring our youth for only one and a half hours each week." Mentors meet with their students, one-on-one, at a supervised Power 4 Youth site, assisting with academics while building a caring, consistent relationship, according to the program's officials. Free training and support is provided for all mentors throughout the year.

"Mentoring provides youth with the opportunity to develop a caring, consistent relationship with a non-parental adult who shows them that they are valued and assures them they can achieve their highest potential," said Maryam Diaab, Power 4 Youth's executive director. "We always have students who are seeking leadership, support and guidance in their lives and know that our community is full of adults who can fill that role."

Samana Budhathoki, the program's match supervisor, said the mentoring allows students to start the new year with new hopes, new joy and new beginnings.

"This is the time students really need you to help them thrive— not only in school, but in life in general," Budhathoki said. "This is the time for you to make the difference in the life of a young person."

More information is available at (562) 386-2428 or info@power4youth.org.

Source: Power 4 Youth



COMMENTARY

Back-to-school tips for parents and caregivers

by Valerie Wilson-Lindberg, LCSW
The Guidance Center

Are you counting down? Maybe counting down the days, hours and minutes until the chaos ends and you have your house back! Or are you counting down the hours until you have to give up the lazy days of summer, have to navigate the wake-up routine and become the "homework police" once again?

Whatever your feelings are, chances are you are not the only one "counting down" for better or for worse. Your child feels it too. It is hard to get away from all the ads about back-to-school Sales, which began the end of June! If you are lucky, you have a child that enjoys school, feels good about their academic abilities and can't wait to see their friends again. But many children do not have such good feelings about going back to school. And for most of us, transitions and new experiences can bring up mixed feelings.

Everyone's back-to-school experience is different. Maybe your child is in kindergarten and going to school for the first time? Maybe your child is transitioning from elementary school to middle school, or middle school to high school? Or maybe your child is in the same school but going to the next grade, which might mean increased expectations and pressures. Whatever your particular situation is, there are some basic tips you can use to help both you and your child have a smooth return to the school year.

Start now

Don't wait until the last minute. Plan ahead for buying supplies and school clothes/uniforms. Find out information about your child's school or new class before school starts, which can help you and your child feel less anxious and more prepared for the first day.

Let your child or teen help

Involve your child in back-to-school shopping. Let them help you pick out their school supplies. Make finding items on the back-to-school supply list a game. The more fun the experiences and the more of a choice your child has about what color pencil box or what color notebook they will have can help them feel some control over their situation and feel more excited about school.

Teens especially will feel less anxious if they feel they are "cool enough for school" and feel good about the colors/designs they pick out for supplies and type of clothes/uniform they will be wearing the first day.

Practice makes perfect

Do your homework, find out about what teacher and class your child will be in. You have a right to orient your child to their new school. Some schools are good at scheduling formal orientation days and allowing you to bring your child to visit the campus, meet their teacher and become familiar with their school.

If not, you can! Most schools will welcome parents who want to bring their child for a tour a few days ahead of the first day. If teachers are in their classroom setting up, they are usually happy to say hello for a minute to make their new student feel more comfortable. You have a right to call your child's school and make sure they have the information they need, whether that's the name of their teacher and where their classroom will be, or, if they are in middle or high school, what their daily schedule will be.

Walk around the school campus with your child and find their classroom(s), bathroom, cafeteria, etc. Sometimes one of the biggest worries when starting a new school is, "What if I get lost?" Heading off these fears and worries can help both your child and you feel more settled and ready for the new school year.

Sleep, sleep, sleep!

A good night's sleep is the key to a good day at school. We all enjoy not having to fight with our kids to get them to bed on time or having to drag a groaning kid out of bed in the morning. To ensure a smoother transition to the school schedule, start changing your family's sleep schedule at least one week before school starts or two weeks if you have a child with ADHD, an autistic spectrum disorder or other learning differences that might make transitions harder. Begin shifting your child's bedtime and wake-up time by 10 to 15 minutes a day.

To help get them back into the sleep routine, try having your child start a quiet time but not sleeping, turning off electronics earlier and reading a book or reading together. Young children who are growing need 10 to 11 hours of sleep a night, and teens whose bodies and minds are developing need at least 9.5 hours of sleep. If both you and your child are rested, you will all be able to manage emotions and stress more easily.

Dress rehearsal

If you have a young child and they are just starting school, take some time to pretend. Play out with them how a day at school will go. Let them be the teacher, pretend to get on the bus, sit in a desk, go to lunch and end the day. If you have an older child or teen, spend some time just talking about what the first day of school might be like, what time things will happen and where they will go.

And allow your child to ask questions they might have about what will be happening on their first day of school. If your child is older, help them to find the answers to their questions, support them in problem-solving or call the school to get information for them.

Flexibility

Last but probably most important, be flexible and gentle with yourself and your child. Acknowledge that change is hard, allow time in the weeks ahead for your child to talk about how they feel about going back to school. Give yourself permission to have your own mixed feelings. Talk positively about school with your child, help them to get excited about school and what fun things will happen in the fall.

Hold appropriate expectations, accepting that it may take up to a month for your child and you to settle into the new school routine. Allow children who have learning differences and other special needs even longer to adjust. Do what you can to plan ahead by making lunches, setting out clothes, etc. the night before to make the morning calmer, but be prepared and open to the fact that things might not always go as planned. And that's OK.

If you notice your child is struggling for longer than usual, it may be time to meet with their school counselor. Many schools have great resources, like support groups, or they can refer you to a school-based mental-health provider, like The Guidance Center. It's important to know that asking for help doesn't mean that your child is different or weak. Children respond differently to situational stressors, and that's OK too.

So, as you are counting down, take some steps that you can count on to make going back to school a smooth experience and milestone moment you want to remember.

Wilson-Lindberg, LCSW is a clinical supervisor in The Guidance Center's Long Beach Outpatient Program, where she helps guide children and families struggling with mental-health conditions or abuse toward positive and productive futures.