



## CLIPPINGS a weekly column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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**For Immediate Release**

### **Preparing for School May Be Different This Year**

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As we all prepare to go back to school - whatever that may look like for you - I thought it was a good time to share the below article written by my colleague Joy Rouse, a human sciences specialist in family life with ISU Extension and Outreach.

Children aren't the only ones wondering what going back to school will be like this fall. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, parents and caregivers are beginning to find out when children may be at their school buildings, whether learning online at home is an option or whether to plan for a hybrid of the two.

Back-to-school planning is an ever-changing environment this year. But there are things parents and caregivers can do to prepare children for the possibilities.

Here are some tips and ideas:

**Shop for needed clothes and supplies.** If shopping online, remember that because of the volume of orders, delivery could be delayed. Get the supply list from the school to buy the correct supplies. Look around the house and see if you already have some supplies on the list. Do you have an option to purchase supplies from the school or parent organization? It could be less expensive, and then you know you have the correct supplies.

**Plan a school routine for your children.** When will they have to get up in the morning? When should they go to bed if they get up at that time? When will they have to be ready to leave for school or begin online instruction?

**Practice the routine for a week before they are to attend school.** This would include getting up, getting dressed and eating breakfast to be ready to head out the door or to the computer. Prepare as much as you can the night before. Put out clothes, make lunches so they are easy to grab from the refrigerator and pack backpacks.

**Attend an orientation or open house if available** so your child can see the new room and meet the teacher. This will also give you the current information about the school plans.

Once school has started, watch your child for signs the school transition is not going well. Teachers and counselors can help with advice to deal with the child's stress or concerns.

Because of COVID-19 concerns and extra safety precautions, below are some additional tips to consider as the school year starts.

**If your child will be asked to wear a face covering, obtain a supply to meet the needs of your child.**

Cloth coverings will need to be washed, so have extras if one is left at school or does not make it into the laundry. Fit the face covering to your child so it is comfortable to wear. Practice putting it on and wearing it, so your child is not distracted at school.

**Practice good hygiene** by teaching your child the steps for washing hands and how to cover a cough or sneeze. Explain we are not able to see the germs, and these are things we do to keep ourselves and others safe.

**Have a conversation with your child concerning how they feel about returning to school.** Listen carefully and validate their feelings. This is a scary time – for children and adults. Tell your children that safety measures are in place to keep everyone at school healthy, and their part is to wash their hands and cover a cough or sneeze.

**Watch for updates from the school to know the most current plan.** Stay calm and flexible so children can adapt to the changes in the plan with less stress. Check in with your children to see how they are handling the situation emotionally. Engage children in creative activities to help them express any negative feelings they may be having. This will be a positive way to express difficult feelings.

Parents and caregivers are not experienced in sending their children to school in a pandemic. We are all learning how to deal with the requirements and emotions of the situation. Children look to the important adults in their lives for help. Being calm, listening, sharing the proper information for their age and giving them positive ways to express their emotions are all ways to support them as they return to school, no matter what form that takes.

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