Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc.

Essentials for Returning to School: Parents

- Build New Routines
- Create Safe Places
- Reframe Behaviour
- Connect With School Staff
- Activate Learning

Stressed brains are not ready for learning!

Returning to school after a closure is a major adjustment for children and youth, who may struggle with the academic and social demands of the change. As well, they may carry experiences with grief and uncertainty worsened by COVID-19.

Because academic progress depends first on mental and physical well-being, recovery learning will require calm and predictable transitions. Here are some essentials to help support a successful return to school experience.

Build New Routines

- **Limit use of electronic devices** (e.g., two hours a day for school-age children and youth)
- **Gradually resume earlier bedtimes for adequate rest based on age** (e.g., 10 - 12 hours of sleep for children ages 6 to 12 and 8 - 10 hours of sleep for youth aged 13 to 18)
- **Establish before and after school meal routines** (e.g., breakfast, snack)

Create Safe Places

- **Prioritize predictability and follow through** (e.g., keep routines and avoid sudden changes where possible)
- **Validate feelings and listen to concerns** (e.g., "You're not used to getting up for school and that's hard.")
- **Use calm body language and tone** (e.g., model appropriate responses under stress)
- **Offer genuine praise and feedback individually** (e.g., avoid comparing to siblings)
- **Use timers and clear cues for transitions** (e.g., one more game or 5 more minutes)

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Reframe Behaviour

- **Expect an increase in stress behaviours** (e.g., refusal, tantrums)
- **Don't take stress behaviours personally**
- **Encourage school attendance positively** (e.g., emphasize seeing friends)
- **Allow for flexibility without giving up boundaries** (e.g., negotiate alternate activity and still keep the limits set on screen or bed time)
- **Use restorative, calming, and grounding strategies proactively as well as reactively** (e.g., check in after school, or following a meltdown)
- **Have a transition object to help young children manage being at school** (e.g., pack a small toy or book that the child can use at school when missing home)
- **Where possible, enjoy land-based experiences together to build confidence**

Connect With School Staff

- **Meet with teachers to share the strengths and needs of your child or youth**
- **Meet with school Elders and leadership proactively** (e.g., offer to help with a new initiative)
- **Engage with school events and notices** (e.g., social media notifications)
- **Ask for additional help when needed** (e.g., resource, clinicians)
- **Where possible, volunteer at or attend land-based experiences**

Activate Learning

- **Focus on the well-being and safety needs of children as primary**
- **Engage children and youth with stories and teachings**
- **Read short stories to children and youth** (e.g., borrow from school library)
- **Review homework and ensure it is suitable for each child's needs**
- **Plan for possible future closure** (e.g., have some materials ready)
- **Where possible, attend land-based or community experiences as a family**

Find more ideas at: https://bit.ly/2MoOQa4