



## Starting the School Year off Right!

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In addition to the “normal” stresses of beginning a new school year, children with learning differences, especially those who use assistive technology devices and/or specialized software, face additional stresses related to their unique needs. Transitional years, (from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school) are especially difficult. As parents, educators and therapists, there are things we can do to make the beginning of the school year a successful and positive experience!

- Prior to the beginning of school, be sure that any equipment and software that your child needs (as outlined in the IEP) are available in your child’s new school/classroom and working properly. If the equipment has been in storage over the summer, make sure to replace the batteries or charge the device fully. Check out operations to make sure the device works as it should. If you are unable to do this prior to September, meet with your child’s teacher or team as quickly as possible to get the equipment ready for use in the classroom.
- It is important that common and realistic expectations are established early on. Parents and teachers should review the student’s IEP and past AT use/performance to determine how the technology and strategies previously used will integrate into the new classroom and tasks. It is also critical to insure that the hardware and software required by the student are compatible in the new educational setting and everyone knows how and when the equipment will be used.
- Identify a “go to” person to contact with any technology questions or concerns. This is important to do BEFORE something happens. Keep the software, manuals and chargers together in a safe and accessible place.
- If you are unsure how to use any assistive technology device, seek out help. Begin with the student. They are often willing and able trainers. If you need further assistance and the manual just isn’t helping, contact the company directly. Most AT companies provide free telephone technical support. In many cases, last year’s teachers and therapists may be available to help you. Specific or advanced training for the student, support staff and family can be written into the IEP as needed.
- For most children with learning differences, it helps to begin the year ORGANIZED! Help your child or student pick out backpacks/binders/agendas/calendars that can support their specific needs (i.e. binders with pockets that zipper, colored folders for easy identification, larger spaces in agendas to write assignments). Also, developing a “Homework Box” for home can be a great tool... simply buy duplicates of items your child needs for school and keep them all together in a plastic bag or box. That way, at homework time, they have everything they need.

**Remember...assistive technology is a tool... BUILD A GREAT YEAR!**

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