

# How Students Support Success at School

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My first days back at school were incredible as I watched students help each other overcome their daily challenges. Although students have had limited time to be with others this past year, the kindness and compassion I witnessed with the students each day was overwhelming. When a student was sad or frustrated, many students expressed concern and tried to talk with the frustrated student to help her calm down. Other students will take the time to be a mini tutor and help their classmates when they were having trouble completing an assignment. And many students love to help me as the substitute teacher by providing me guidance on what I should be doing at a given time or where I can find a specific supply for teaching. I have learned more from students on how to use a piece of technological equipment even after I passed a competency exam on various software computer applications. And finally, the gratitude the students have expressed for my teaching efforts has been overwhelming. I have received many thank you notes and handmade gifts as expressions of love and support.

# How Teachers Help Students Succeed

When I consider what makes my substitute teaching experiences so successful, I find that an effective temporary teacher must:

1. Be prepared with an engaging lesson plan that has been coordinated with the full-time teacher and complement the teacher's overall lesson plans.
2. Be compassionate and patient with the students and view them as the experts as to how their classroom is managed and how they can best learn.
3. Engage the students in relevant project-based learning activities that ensure that they have gained new skills during this short duration.
4. Encourage students to reflect daily on what they have learned and how they will apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to their daily lives and other lessons.
5. Meet and debrief with the regular classroom teacher to ensure increased continuity and learning successes.

May your children benefit from a variety of talented educational leaders this school year!

Mary Ann

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## Going Back to School During

# Wildfires

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After a long hot summer and expanded lockdowns in California's schools, students are excited to return to school. Some are in shock as they learn to navigate through the daily schedule. Many younger students have never been to a public school. Older students may have lost nearly two years of middle school and now must attend a large public high school. Many retired teachers are returning to help these challenged students and their teachers overcome these many obstacles.

## Plan for Wildfire Safety

As I return to school this coming week as an elementary substitute teacher, I am prepared to share engaging units of study for children to read, write, and discuss with their classmates. My second graders will learn about how wildfires can be started in California's wooded fields. Then we will discuss what they can do as a family to protect their homes from wildfires and how they should plan for a fire in their community. Next, we will learn about how to read the Air

Quality Index. In our area, many students had to stay inside for two days last week because of the unhealthy air quality in the community. We will learn when to open windows at home and how we can protect our health if we must be outside.

## **Create a Wildfire Action Plan**

Finally, we will write an action plan that we can share with parents on:

1. How to prepare their home for a wildfire
2. What supplies should be collected ahead of time for a wildfire that may include important papers, money, medicines, clothes, valuables, photos, and family heirlooms
3. How the family can escape from their home in an emergency
4. Where the family will evacuate to in case of an emergency
5. How the family will communicate with each other during an emergency
6. What emergency contact information parents should collect for an emergency

## **Share Fears About Scary Events**

As we discuss and create this safety plan, the students will be able to share their fears about other scary events that have occurred in the past year. For example, many students know folks who have survived Covid infections, lost jobs, or are living in poverty this past year. As students discuss current challenges in their community in relation to other scary events, they will feel more confident that they can share their feelings with classmates. Through these activities, students will learn how we overcome many emotionally challenging times in our community by supporting each other with relevant learning activities.

Happy new school year with your children!

Mary Ann

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## **How to Set Boundaries that Support Our Children's Growth!**

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It is the start of a new school year and we are busy trying to help our children organize themselves for success. The warm autumn days beckon our children to play outside until the family dinner. After dinner, there are new television shows to watch. Our children want to play with their toys, look at books, and play on the family computer, phone, or tablet.

# Setting Boundaries



Many parents ask us how we can set household boundaries and rules to curtail these distractions and complete homework and prepare for a new school day without arguments and negotiations. We recently asked family members for their best suggestions on setting boundaries. Summarized below are some great tips:

1. Plan ahead for distractions with a weekly evening schedule that defines the time for afterschool play, eating dinner with the family, completing homework, independent reading, discussing the day with parents, getting ready for bed, and preparing for the next school day.
2. Identify an alternative schedule when there are special events at school, dentist or doctor appointments, sporting events, and family obligations on a school night.
3. Work with the school to plan ahead for homework assignment completion. Most schools send out homework packs once a week for students with their parents support to complete within several days. Other schools provide an afterschool homework club that you can have your child attend for added support. Other parents plan homework sessions with friends where children can rotate their homework assignments at different households to enlist the support of an expert parent in reading,

writing, arithmetic, history, performing arts, and science projects.

4. When children fight with others and siblings, it is important to be clear about household rules with consequences for misbehavior. When siblings hit or hurt each other, they should be removed from a situation and sit with a reflective timeout. Typically, a timeout is a minute per age. For example, a five-year old's timeout will be for five minutes. After the timeout, discuss with the child what has happened and have them make amends with the sibling or other child.
5. If children continue to misbehave, they may need to return home or stay away from others as they are probably tired, overstimulated, or upset about a situation.
6. Limit screen time to no more than an hour a day unless it includes homework assignments. It is important to give your children time to relax and play outside.
7. Keep your children on a regular meal time and sleep schedule to ensure that they are well rested and ready to learn and enjoy life.
8. Schedule regular times that your child can play with neighborhood and class friends even if it includes scheduled afterschool activities. This ensures that your child has a support system.
9. Be there for your child when they are under stress or are sad and support their problem-solving skills.
10. Be a role model of personal healthy growth and development.

Happy first weeks of personal growth during the new school year!

Joyce

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# Get Your Kids Organized for School Success!

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There are so many virtues of being organized but how does organization lead to school success for your kids? Here's the connection: first, being organized helps your child to establish good habits. Completing household tasks efficiently will help your child to feel confident and accomplished. Second, once good habits are established, stress is reduced. Without distractions, your child is free to concentrate on her academic studies. So what does that look like in my household?

## Set Clothes Out the Night Before

It's frustrating for kids to find clothes to wear when they are groggy in the morning. To avoid struggles, I have my kids choose their outfits the night before and set them out at a designated location. This may be at the foot of the bed, on the chair at their desk, or even hanging on hooks in the bathroom.



# Use an Alarm Clock to Wake the Kids Up

I used to go into the kids' bedroom each morning to wake them up by softly saying their name while rubbing their backs. And what did I get for my efforts but whining, complaining children who would accuse me of waking them up from a pleasant dream! A simple alarm clock solved that problem. Now my kids wake up on time and have to get out of bed to turn the alarm clock off. The alarm clock is merely doing its job and mommy is no longer the bad guy. That's a "win" for Mom!

## Prep the Backpack

The backpack is essential for my kids. At the beginning of the day, they go to school wearing a light jacket and place their homework folder and lunch bag inside the backpack. As the day proceeds, the jacket inevitably comes off, lunch is eaten and the bag emptied, and new homework is distributed. Where is all this stuff supposed to go? A backpack is a great way to ensure they have a place to put their belongings while at school so everything is sure to make its way home at the end of the day.

## Stock Up on School Supplies

When it comes time for my kids to do their homework, I make sure all their school supplies are stocked and in a central location, whether that be at their own desk or a shared work space. Look for Back-To-School clearance sales or pick up basics at bargain stores. Give your kids the opportunity to say they are ready to complete their homework and learn something new!

Once these basic routines are mastered, your kids will be well on their way to success! What other routines and procedures do you practice at home? Please share!

Wishing you success!

Jaime

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# Raising Culturally Sensitive Children

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The current political climate in our country continues to challenge families with how to teach their children about cultural sensitivity. Some children love having friends with different backgrounds and cultures. Others have little exposure playing with diverse populations of children. Still, other children are from families who are afraid of (or do not wish to interact with) other ethnic groups or cultures.

# 10 Considerations

Parents often ask us how they can raise culturally sensitive children. Summarized below are 10 considerations for parents wishing to raise children with empathy and respect for cultures other than their own:

1. Parents can model acceptance and appreciation by becoming friends with families from other cultures.
2. Parents should seek out social networks with interests common their children. These networks can be found by participating in team sports, performing arts, and through hobbies or clubs.
3. By sharing common interests with diverse community members, our children can become comfortable playing and working with people from cultures other than their own.
4. Parents must ensure that the groups they form or join are inclusive of all cultures, religions, and ages.
5. When families become active in community services for people in need, their children have the opportunity to develop empathy for those who are less fortunate.
6. Church communities can invite leaders of other faiths to speak to their congregations as part of an interfaith activities program.
7. Suburban schools can partner with inner city schools to share resources, community activities, and field trips. These partnerships can raise children's social and cultural awareness of their community.
8. As various cultural communities form networks, they can learn that they share many similar values and needs because they are all human beings.
9. When talking with a friend or colleague who expresses elitist or cultural superiority, it is important to remind them that you are not comfortable with specific remarks. It is vital to set a clear expectation that all cultures are to be treated with respect.
10. When inviting a child from another culture to your home

for dinner, it is helpful to provide a meal that is traditional to your culture. This will allow them to share a cultural experience with your family.

## **Respecting Different Cultures**

As we consciously help our children become accepting of people from different cultures, our children will become “richer” human beings who have a sense of connection to people throughout the world.

Warm wishes,

Joyce

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