

# 7 Strategies to Support Your Child's Special Education Needs

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Each spring, I say goodbye to the family I built. But it's the work each fall that brings that family together. This year will mark the beginning of my 19th year as a special education teacher in Colorado. Parents are always asking me what they can do to help make the transition from summer to returning to school a little easier.

Here are 7 practical ways you can help your child get ready for a new school year.

## Maintain Open Communication

Maintaining open lines of communication with your child's school and teachers is essential. Take the time to introduce yourself to your child's teacher, attend orientation meetings, and exchange contact information. Regularly check emails, newsletters, or any other communication channels used by the school to stay informed about important updates, events, and expectations. If your child has an IEP, make sure the new classroom teacher knows.

# Establish Routines and Healthy Habits

A well-established routine can provide stability and structure, contributing to your child's overall success. Before the new school year begins, gradually adjust bedtimes and wake-up times to ensure sufficient sleep. Set regular schedules for meals, homework, and recreational activities to create a sense of predictability. Encourage healthy habits such as balanced nutrition, regular exercise, and limited screen time.

# Review the Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The IEP is a crucial document outlining your child's specific learning needs, goals, and accommodations. Take the time to thoroughly review the IEP and familiarize yourself with its contents. If needed, schedule a meeting with the school's special education team to address any questions or concerns you may have. Ensure that the IEP is up-to-date and accurately reflects your child's current requirements.

# Encourage Independence

Fostering independence in your child is a valuable skill that will serve them well throughout their academic journey. Encourage your child to take responsibility for their school-related tasks, such as packing their bag, completing homework, and organizing their materials.

Teach them problem-solving and time-management skills, gradually allowing them to take ownership of their learning.

## Nurture a Positive Attitude

A positive mindset can significantly impact your child's motivation and enthusiasm for learning. Encourage your child to embrace new challenges, view mistakes as opportunities for growth, and maintain a positive attitude toward school. Celebrate achievements, both big and small, to boost their confidence and reinforce their love for learning.

## Get Involved

Active parental involvement in your child's education can make a tremendous difference. Attend parent-teacher conferences, join parent-teacher associations, or volunteer at school events. Engage in conversations about your child's school day, listen attentively, and offer support when needed. By actively participating in their educational journey, you demonstrate the value you place on their education.

## Advocate for Your Child

As a parent, you are your child's strongest advocate. Familiarize yourself with your rights and your child's entitlements under special education laws. Stay informed about relevant policies and procedures. If you have concerns or questions, communicate them clearly and proactively with the school's special education team.

Collaborate with the team to ensure your child's needs are met and their educational experience is maximized.

Preparing for a new school year requires proactive involvement and collaboration. By implementing these strategies, you can help create a positive and supportive environment that fosters your child's growth and success. Remember, your involvement and support play a crucial role in their educational journey.