



# Back to School: Tips for Parents

---

Going back to school can be tough on any kid (and their parents!), but for kids with disabilities, this can be a truly traumatic experience. Some of our Parent Mentors shared their tips and advice on how to make this transition easier.

Bibb County Parent Mentor, Terri Goodridge's elementary school aged son has difficulties learning and paying attention. He does not like school, and, as Terri puts it, "a frustrated child means a frustrated parent." Here are some of the things she put in place to make this school year a more positive experience.

- Do some research and find a good professional who can do a thorough assessment on your child. Medications could be considered – this can be a trial and error process so be prepared
- Talk with your child about school in a positive light, but also allow your child to tell you about his/her fears and frustrations
- Include your child in making decisions about school supplies, clothing, etc to help him or her feel excited and engaged
- Organize your child's work station/homework area, weed out old supplies and replace with new. This helps your child become a participant in preparing for the new year
- Attend the Open House so your child has a sneak peek at the classroom, teacher and friends who will be in class with him/her

Another Mentor, whose son has High Functioning Autistic Spectrum Disorder (HFASD), reaffirmed the importance of parental involvement and communication. She spoke about the 3 C's: Communication, Consistency and Collaboration.

These are her suggestions for making the transition easier:

**Communication:** Constantly communicate with your child. Speak about his teacher, his friends; deal with his concerns

**Consistency:** Make sure that everyone who deals with your child knows him and is aware of his needs/"accommodations" as defined in the IEP (Individual Education Plan), or BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan). This helps in eliminating suspensions, detentions, etc. However when discipline is required and agreed upon with the teacher, be consistent at home.

**Collaboration:** Any child who has an IEP has a "team." It is important for parents, school personnel and your child to have a go-to person at your child's school. When there is a problem, this is the person to contact. Listen to your child and act fast to resolve the issue. When the child has an issue at school, this go-to person (usually a teacher) should be called to attend any meetings.



*Editor's note:* These ideas will work throughout the school year. If your child has a rough first day, first week, or first month, many of these strategies will work over time. The key is parental involvement – talking about school at home and letting your child see you in his/her school for special occasions, or when there is a problem, makes a big impact on your student's success.