



Back to School Yields Different Challenges for Parents of Children with Autism

With COVID-19 at the forefront of everyone's mind and back to school procedures being discussed across the state, parents are nervously anticipating what the upcoming school year will look like. Parents of children who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (a disorder characterized by deficits in social skills and communication skills and excesses in restrictive and repetitive behaviors) or other developmental differences may have additional concerns.

Tips for successful distance learning

Many schools are beginning the school year with a hybrid of in-person and online instruction. Some families may utilize online instruction more frequently in the fall. Here are a few helpful considerations to enhance online learning for students.

- Internet access and devices – check with your local school officials, libraries, and advocacy groups for assistance in obtaining devices and internet access if you are in need
- Use daily schedules and calendars for you and your children to help learn new school routines and anticipate “what’s coming next” during the day or the week
- Set up a designated work space for your child
- Use positive reinforcement – frequently and immediately after desired behaviors, deliver your child’s highly preferred items and activities to increase and maintain those behaviors
- Incorporate a homework system and routine in your child’s schedule to allow for independent work and designated study time
- Have highly preferred activities follow less preferred activities
- Incorporate your child’s interests into his or her learning plan
- Allow your child to connect with friends via Facetime, Zoom or other similar platforms contingent on completing schoolwork

What to ask if your child is returning to school

For children with autism and other developmental differences, new behavioral expectations in school may be particularly challenging this fall. Here are a few areas to consider if you’re a parent of a child with a developmental difference:

- Smaller class sizes: Can my child be placed with a friend or in a familiar classroom?

THIS MONTH'S FAMILY MEETINGS

Houma/Thibodaux 8/19 Group Meetings at **9:00am, 12:30pm, & 5:30pm**

New Orleans 8/13 Group Meeting at **9:00am**

Baton Rouge 8/27 School-aged clients at **12:30**,
Preschool clients at **1:30pm**

Hammond 8/20 Group Meeting at **5:30pm**

Lafayette 8/11 & 8/25 Group Meetings at **9:30am**

All group meetings are currently being held online. You will receive an email with a link to join the meetings. **Join Us! If you are unable to attend your monthly meetings, please contact Angie Lanoux at: alanoux@tc-aba.com to set up individual meetings.**

- Desk placement: Can my child be placed in the location that works best for him/her?
- Masks: What are the expectations for my child? How will my child be helped with complying with mask requirements?
- More frequent hand washing: Can my child use a particular hand sanitizer?
- No sharing of toys: Can my child have selected toys with which only he/she can play?
- Transitions between areas: Can my child be accompanied to assist with social distancing? Can my child begin transitions a few minutes earlier?
- Changes in instruction, lunch or break locations: If my child needs a break from the group, is there a safe place he/she can go?
- Outside instruction: Are there any special considerations your child may require if being taught outside (i.e. a familiar blanket to sit on or sunglasses)?
- Less opportunities for physical movement around school: Can my child have extra “movement” breaks?
- Longer toileting procedures: Can my child have priority?
- Teaching new safety and health behaviors: What prompts and reinforcers will be used to teach and maintain behavioral expectations for my child?

All the new school health and safety procedures likely involve behaviors that students who learn differently are unfamiliar with, so adapting and adhering to them may be challenging for some students. Behavioral strategies such as prompting, shaping, and reinforcement have been shown to be effective in teaching and maintaining new behaviors. ***If there is a particular health requirement at your child's school, let your BCBA know! We are here to help your child's transition!***
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