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Raising kids can be tough. If you need help . . . **JUST ASK**

A Word from Our Director

We assist families and their children who have mood, emotional, and behavioral challenges to understand and navigate services, advocate effectively, and achieve their potential.

It's Back to School Time!

September is synonymous with going back to school! This is the first year where "Back to School" doesn't apply to me and I have to say it's a bittersweet feeling. Both of my sons are now graduated so there will be no back to school shopping for my family.

I always looked forward to the summer and the casualness of it. Not having to get the kids to bed at a certain time, no mountain of paperwork to sort through at the end of each day and no homework meltdowns!

In this edition of our newsletter, our very knowledgeable Family Support Partners have put

together some helpful tips for returning students, self care strategies to deal with stress, and a delicious recipe for a healthy after school snack.

Kaley, our Youth Involvement Coordinator, and the members of C.A.Y. M.O.V.E. have great advice for incoming freshman, and Patti, our Parent Educator, explains what the Seeds for Success program can do for families with children 0-3.

While heading into the "Back to School" season, always remember....raising kids can be tough, if you need help....just ASK!

Shellie Bosma, Executive Director

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Anxiety Free Tips for Back to School

Going back to school after summer break can be difficult. Here are some tips for helping kids manage fears and get a good start to the new school year!

1. A week before school starts, get back on the school year bedtime. All electronics should be turned off for the night an hour before bedtime, as it helps them settle down and go to sleep easier.

2. Since attending school isn't an option, letting kids make some of the smaller decisions like what to wear and what to have for breakfast, or letting them shop for and pick out their school supplies can help them feel more in control.

3. Make sure your child is eating a healthy breakfast each morning. It helps their brain function better and they will not get cranky and ravenous before lunch.

4. Give students a chance to express their anxieties about their new teacher and classmates. Validate their feelings, but let them know you are confident they can handle the changes.

5. When you find out the name of their new teacher

arrange a meeting with them so your child can check out the new room and meet the teacher. This will help ease the uncertainty.

6. Remember to focus on the positives, ask only neutral questions. Worries aside the start of school can be a very exciting time. Most kids can think of things they are looking forward to: new clothes, activities, playing sports, and meeting new friends.

7. Don't expect smooth sailing. There will be ups and downs, show that you are not rattled and that will help make them have more confidence and be better at overcoming the setbacks.

8. Help kids manage their commitments. The first few weeks are slow and kids tend to take on a

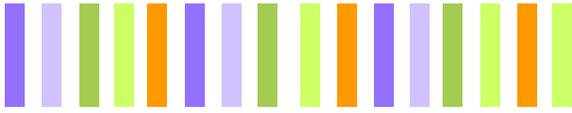
lot of extracurricular activities that can become overwhelming. Its best to wait until mid-October to sign up for activities so there is more time for adjustment.

I hope these tips help you and your child have a great school year!!



Pam Waterman, Family Support Partner





Advice for Incoming Freshman

The first year of high school can be really scary, especially if you are going to a different school than most of your friends. “Where are all of my classes?”, “What will I wear?”, “Who will I sit with at lunch?” are just a few of the questions all new freshman ask themselves. The members of C.A.Y. M.O.V.E. have some advice to make the transition from middle to high school a little easier.

- “Pick a sport! Or join a club like Spanish or Drama. It will help you make connections with other people.”
- “Get to know your teachers so you’re comfortable going to them for advice.”
- “Don’t be scared to ask questions.”
- “Say no to peer pressure, not everyone is your friends.”
- “Pack a snack or water because some days will feel longer than others.”
- “Be ready for things to change because high school is a step up from middle school and can be overwhelming at times.”
- “Know what you do in high school affects your future.”
- “Getting to your senior year may seem like it will take forever but, it will come in the blink of an eye.”
- “You may lose some friends but, you will always make new ones.”
- “Choose your friends wisely.”
- “Don’t skip school.”
- “Pass your classes so you don’t have to repeat them.”
- “Keep in mind what kind of job you want to have. Your grades should reflect that.”
- “It may seem cool to be a troublemaker but, a hard road is made from it.”
- “You are not your family member and the school should know that. If you are being treated a certain way based on your family’s history, speak up!”
- “If you are having trouble with classes know your options. Explore IEP’s or 504 Plans.”
- “Stay connected to your guidance counselor.”
- “Know your boundaries.”
- “Go to school events.”
- “Buy yearbooks.”
- “Always remember, you have a voice, use it wisely over the next four years.”

Good luck class of 2019!

Kaley Ford, Youth Involvement Coordinator

Seeds for Success Program at ASK

As part of the Seeds for Success program, I provide service to families in Kalamazoo County with children 0-3 years of age. As a certified Parent Educator, I conduct home visits, which include family activities as well as developmental screenings.

My goal is to help families increase their knowledge about early childhood development and parenting practices, provide early detection of developmental delays, and increase school readiness. Parents are children’s first and most important teachers, and I am here to support and work along side parents as they perform this important task.

As we enter into the “back to school” season, remember that younger children may need help with transitioning for

themselves, starting something new, or having an older sibling return to school.

- Talk to your child about what is going to happen next
- Establish routines for transitions that occur daily or weekly
- Allow child to use a transitional object

If you would like more information regarding the Seeds for Success program and how this service may benefit your family, please contact us and ask for Patti.

Patti Quackenbush, Parent Educator





Self Care Strategies for Stress

Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and demands. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Stress isn't always bad. In small doses, it can help you perform under pressure and motivate you to do your best. But when you're constantly running in emergency mode, your mind and body pay the price. You can protect yourself by recognizing the signs and symptoms of stress and taking steps to reduce its harmful effects.

Be thankful. Make a gratitude list. When under stress, sit down and make a list of all the things you are grateful for.

Eat healthy. Eating properly can help to reduce stress.

Enjoy the weather. Get outside and enjoy the sunshine,

take a walk, and enjoy the benefits you get from the sun.

Find peace. Meditate. Use deep breathing, relaxation, and mindfulness skills.

Think positively. Smile. Be able to laugh at yourself. Practice positive self-talk.

Have a plan. Make a daily schedule and stick with it. Prepare and rehearse a positive way to respond to a particular stressor. Get a healthy amount of quality sleep – not too much or too little.

Do not isolate yourself. Keep in contact with positive people who know you and will give you the support you need.

Pam Waterman, Family Support Partner

Bullying: A Mom's Perspective

While thinking about our Back to School edition, Corrie and I were collaborating to figure out what was missing in the newsletter. Corrie's talented mind said, "We should do something about bullying. Not a step by step guide, but a story. Kara, do you have one?" As a matter of fact, I do!

One fall afternoon during my daughter's elementary days, she seemed distant. She would come home from school withdrawn, not eat or have anything to say about her day. She would always tell me how great she did on a test or what she struggled with during an assignment. Lately all I got was "I'm fine."

After a week of "I'm fine" from a visibly not fine child, I contacted her teacher to see if she had noticed any of the same behaviors in school. She stated that she had and that she would also receive the "I'm fine" response. We both knew that a once happy and vibrant girl was indeed not "fine".

I sat my daughter down again with determination to see her happiness return – a task that was similar to uprooting a tree with your bare hands. She eventually opened up and told me that another student was "being mean" at the bus stop. She was called names and threatened daily. I asked her if she'd told anyone, she said she told her bus driver but he didn't help her. She felt like there wasn't a reason to tell if it didn't help. I was saddened by her discouragement.

After reading the code of conduct from the school website, I wrote a letter to the Administration building to notify them of the situation. The teacher followed up as well. During the process of resolving the issue, I have learned that sometimes my children weren't ALWAYS able to verbally tell me what they were thinking and feeling. I had to observe subtle changes to know what questions to ask.

According to stopbullying.gov, some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

Kara Bailey, Family Support Partner





Raising kids can be tough. If you need help, just ASK!

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- Patti Quackenbush, *Parent Educator*
- Alex Cicalese, *Youth Engagement Specialist*
- Jamie Hotrum, *Peer Mentor*

Healthy After-School Snacks

Every day around 3:45pm I hear a loud crash, see a blur of flying colors, and hear "Mom?!?! Can I have a snack?!?!"

Of course my kids go for the prepackaged cookies, chips, or crackers and I, like most moms, wish I could offer them some better choices.

Pam, one of our FSP's, is quite handy in the kitchen and gave me a yummy recipe for a healthy alternative to those prepackaged afterschool snacks.

Three Ingredient Cookies

- 1 small jar of applesauce
- 1/3 c flour
- 1 tsp baking powder

Mix everything well, roll into little balls, and place on a baking sheet.

Bake for 20 to 30 minutes depending on the size of your cookies.

These cookies are soft and chewy, without all the extra calories that butter and sugar bring to a more classic cookie recipe.

Feel free to add chocolate chips or dried fruit (like cranberries or apricots) if you want to jazz them up a little bit. You'll get all the flavor and none of the guilt!

Recipe by Pam Waterman



Corrie Petersen, Family Support Partner

