

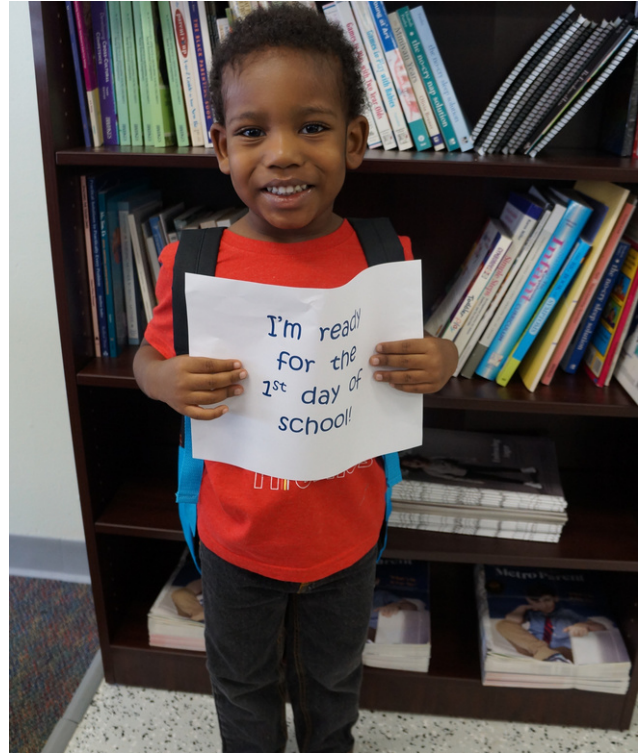


Back to School Prep



WHY PREP?

When children (and adults!) experience new, and unfamiliar things it can feel scary. Children might wonder, "Am I safe?" For children who are going to school for the first time everything might feel new and unfamiliar. Children who are returning to school, might feel scared because they have been at home for a long time and school might look different with people wearing masks. Prepping children helps things feel familiar and helps children feel safe and secure.



START A SCHOOL ROUTINE

Starting or going back to school often means a new routine. August is a great time to begin to transition from the summer routine to the school routine. Begin by changing wakeup times and bedtimes, then change mealtimes and start to create what a before and after school routine will look like. Creating and following routines helps children to feel safe and secure.

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

When children go back to school it often means changes for everyone in the family. Caregivers may need to change their routine and may have their own excitement, fears and concerns about their child going to school. Make time to check in about your feelings, find trusted sources to get your questions answered, and take some time to take care of yourself!

HELP YOUR CHILD BECOME FAMILIAR WITH SCHOOL

Toys, books, and TV shows help your child to understand what school is, learn school routines, and understand that caregivers will say goodbye and then return at the end of the day.

- **Pretend Play:** Children love to learn and express their feelings through play. Use toys to play the school routine, from what drop off looks like, to snack, to naptime, to getting picked up at the end of the day. Include any COVID specific details, such as taking a temperature or wearing a mask.
- **Books:** Reading books and asking children questions is a great way to help them get familiar with school, to identify how they are feeling, and to understand any questions they have. Try *Pete the Kitty's First Day of Preschool* by Kimberly and James Dean, *The King of Kindergarten* by Derrick Barnes and Vanessa Brantley-Newton, *The School Book* by Todd Parr, or *Preschool Here I Come* by D.J. Steinberg.
- **TV:** Watching characters on TV go to school helps children to see what school might look, feel, and sound like. *Daniel Goes to School* is on [PBSlearningmedia.org](https://www.pbslearningmedia.org) and *Sesame Street's First Day of School with Cookie Monster* is on YouTube.



NOTICE, NAME, VALIDATE FEELINGS

Noticing, naming, and validating a child's feelings helps them feel seen, safe, and secure. It may sound like, "You're feeling scared. We haven't been away from each other in a long time."

We may feel uncomfortable when our child is upset and feel a need to fix things by saying, "It's ok. There's nothing to worry about." When we do that, we might accidentally make them feel more worried or scared, and make them question if the other things we tell them are true.

If a child is worried about being away from their caregiver, the caregiver can draw a small heart on the child's hand/arm and one on their hand/arm to be connected during the day. *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn is a great book for children who are worried about being separated.

