



THE CATHOLIC ACADEMY
OF STAMFORD

Tips for Back to School

Hi everyone, and welcome back to a new school year! I am feeling thankful to begin a new school year with my colleagues, students, and you, parents. I am certain that this school year will be filled with many faith-filled moments, health, laughter, learning, and a lot of fun for the kiddos. With a new school year beginning, we are seeing and feeling a variety of emotions, and they can vary day to day or even hour by hour.

For my first newsletter I wanted to support with some tips for a successful first couple of weeks of school and overall school year to best support the students academically and emotionally.

I will be referring to a resource I reference often, Child Mind Institute. Child Mind Institute is a credible and evidence-based organization that supports parents, educators, psychologists, doctors, and just everyone with best practices when it comes to supporting youth overall well being.

Elementary Students

- Prioritizing sleep for about 10 to 13 hours of sleep a night. A good night's sleep will reflect for the following school day, reflect in behavior, interactions, and positive learning.
- Introduce group activities before school begins. Going over expectations, what it means to work with others, and following adult directions are simple but little ways to slowly prepare students for a busy school year and a great way to support our teachers.
- If students are feeling a little nervous or sad about school, perhaps visiting the school in advance can help. On the weekend, take a drive in and assure them to feel safe and that school is a fun and safe place to be.
- No matter the age, looking at a family photo soothes anxiety. Students may bring a small family photo, and letting the teacher know can be helpful as well.
- Some students are very excited about school starting and do not need help with their emotions but maybe need some support on staying on task academically. Then there may be some students who are very nervous or worried about seeing their friends and teachers again and for those students it is important to remind them that it is ok and their feeling is completely acknowledged. For example: validate the feeling, remind them what happens next, and follow through. You're sending an important message without having to say: "I know this is hard AND I trust that you can

handle it". Strategies like deep breathing exercises, role playing, and practicing real scenarios can support both kinds of learners.

- Creating visual checklists, having a calendar on the refrigerator, to do lists, chores, responsibilities, etc - can support students for a successful school year while building confidence, accountability, and responsibility.

Middle School Students

The middle school team is wonderful in helping and supporting students during the entire school year. But at the beginning of the school year, a couple of moments can make students feel a little nervous. First is opening their lockers, second keeping track of their class schedule, third traveling between classrooms in a short amount of time, and lastly sometimes storing their things in a locker can be a lot to handle. In no time, the students will find a rhythm to managing their time and getting to know their teacher's teaching style, but if you find that your child may need a little extra hand, please feel free to reach out to me by email, and I would be happy to help!

Some tips to be ready for those first couple of days can be:

- Organization - a plus to becoming a middle school student is that this is the very beginning of children managing multiple subjects at once, which is a life skill that we carry into adulthood.
- Getting different colored folders for each subject will support. And getting the same notebook and/or other materials for the same subject in that color as well. Labeling each notebook and folder for each class will also support their executive functioning skills.
- Establishing a solid routine for homework will support student success. Can be right after school, or it can be two hours after school ends, but having a dedicated workspace and time for homework can ensure comprehension, understanding, and build lifelong study skills.
- Getting involved, joining a club or community sports team can allow students to take that breath in between managing their academics with a hobby or sport that they enjoy.
- Encourage honest conversations about boundaries, personal changes, family values, how to navigate new friendships, academic challenges, and overall checking in can create a healthy bond and relationship.

I hope that some of these tips will help you and your family start getting ready for a successful and fun filled school year. If you would like to speak further about any of these topics, please feel free to reach out to me by email, and I would be happy to support you! Thank you and see you soon.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Grijalva



My favorite first day of school read: The Day you Begin by Jacqueline Woodson

Reference

Resources for Going Back to School - Child Mind Institute. (2026). In *Child Mind Institute*. <https://childmind.org/resources/back-to-school/>