

Parent eBulletin – *Bringing School Home* August 2011 edition



Simcoe County
District School Board



The Simcoe County District School Board produces this e-bulletin to help parents support children on their journey of lifelong learning. We know positive connections between home and school support student achievement. In each edition you'll find practical tips and strategies to help your child achieve success in those important years of learning from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Bringing School Home is available through the Simcoe County District School Board website (www.scdsb.on.ca). As well, parents, guardians and other interested members of our school communities may [subscribe through our website](#) and have the bulletin e-mailed directly to their e-mail accounts (readers may also unsubscribe at any time). Please click [here](#) to submit your comments and feedback.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: How can I help my child adjust to the new school year?

Welcome back! The first day of school in the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) is Tuesday, September 6 (*although all SCDSB schools re-opened in August for student registration and Ernest Cumberland ES started on August 22 as per the modified school year calendar*).

No matter what their age, the start of a new school year can be a stressful time for children and their parents. Fortunately, children and teens are extremely capable of coping with change and parents can help by providing a setting to foster resilience and encourage everyone to share their feelings about returning to school.

To make the transition to the classroom as smooth as possible, it is important to acknowledge your child's feelings of nervousness or anxiety and then help them manage their emotions. Often the fear of the unknown—classmates, new adults, the school building—is stressful for family members, whether it's the children hopping on the school bus or their parents who are waving goodbye.

Here are some back to school tips:

1. Talk to your child: Take time to talk to your children about going back to school. Ask them what they are feeling and let them know how you are feeling. Inquire as to what they liked about their previous school or grade and incorporate those positive thoughts into the new experience.
2. Empathize with your children: Remember, change can be difficult, but also exciting. Let your children know that you will be there to help them through the process. Nerves are normal, but remind your youngsters that experiences that are new or different are not always bad.
3. Be an active listener, focus on their feelings and encourage your children to face their fears.



4. Consider adjusting your own schedule so that you are home at the end of the school day for the first week or arrange your evenings so that you can give your child additional attention as needed.
5. Resolve to eat dinner together as a family at least a few nights a week. This is an excellent time to learn about what your child has been doing at school and to share ideas.

Organization & Preparation: The Key to success!

The first few weeks of school is the time to establish routines that will make the year more enjoyable and set your child on the right course for success:

- *Encourage the use of a master family organizer.* Along with your child's SCDSB student agenda (provided to all elementary students), use a calendar or organizer at home to list all family commitments, extra curricular activities, important dates, and major events at home and at school. Remind your child to add their activities on the master organizer or calendar.
- *Designate a study space and time.* Encourage your child to use a consistent homework space where they can keep school supplies and that is quiet and free from distractions. Set a designated study time that works for you and your child. Suggest starting with assignments that are not long or difficult, but avoid saving the longest or most difficult assignment for last. Even if there is no homework, the reserved time should be used to review the day's lessons, read for pleasure, or work on an upcoming project.
- *Make lunches the night before school.* Older children can help or make their own. Give secondary students the option to buy lunch in school if they prefer, and finances permit.
- *Prepare for the day ahead.* Encourage children to pack school work and books in their backpacks and pick out the next day's clothes.
- *Set alarm clocks.* Have school-age children set their own alarm clocks to get up in the morning. Establish a regular bedtime for your children before school starts. Praise them for prompt response to morning schedules and bus pickups.
- *Leave plenty of extra time.* Make sure your child has plenty of time to get up, eat breakfast and get to school on time.

Starting school for the first time: The Kindergartner

What an exciting time – your child's first day of school! It can also be a time of anxious feelings and fear of the unknown for new students. Kindergartners need to know what will happen on that first day. You can help prepare them by doing the following:

- Read books about school life to help children understand what to expect;
- Tuck a small reminder of home, such as a favourite family photo, into your child's backpack on the first day or week of school;
- Talk about the new teachers you child will have and the new friends he/she will meet at school;
- When saying goodbye, give your child a "magic" kiss on his or her hand. These kisses don't wash off and can be used whenever the child feels lonely or misses a parent. Reassure your child that you know he or she will be fine;
- Convey a sense of optimism and excitement about school!



Click [here](#) for a PDF version of SCDSB's parent information booklet on kindergarten.

Starting high school: helping your teenager adjust

Beginning high school can be a very exciting time for an adolescent. It can also be a challenging experience for some teens. For a student entering Grade 9 there are many social and physical changes to cope with.

Parents can help ease their teen's transition pains by being open and understanding. Often, sharing parental experiences will help.

- Reassure your teenager that it is normal to feel confused and unsure at first and that most others will be feeling the same way.
- Help your teenager keep in touch with old friends and be welcoming to new friends.
- Create and support a homework routine.

- Be a good and supportive listener, but try not to give advice too quickly. Problems that young people can solve for themselves help to build confidence.
- Encourage your child to join school activities – this can be a great way to make new friends.
- Do not forget that teenagers still need parental affection, love and support.



Whether it is the first day of Junior Kindergarten, the start of Grade 12 or a new grade in between, even children who are eager to return to class must adjust to greater levels of activity and structure associated with school life.

The degree of adjustment depends on the child, but parents can help their children and the rest of the family manage the increased pace of life by planning ahead, being realistic and maintaining a positive attitude.

LINKS

We invite you to visit www.scdsb.on.ca often for news, facts, school information, Board highlights and hundreds of other pages about Simcoe County's public education system.

Some useful links on the SCDSB public website include:

SCDSB Student Agenda Information

Here you will find general school information for the 2011-2012 year, including information on report cards, homework, code of conduct, health and wellness, parental involvement, and SCDSB policies and procedures: <http://scdsb.on.ca/parents-corner/general-school-information/>

2011-2012 School Year Calendars

The 2011-2012 school year calendars are available on the website at "Schools" --> "School Calendars". The calendars are available for printing in PDF format for kindergarten, elementary, secondary and modified school years. Click on <http://scdsb.on.ca/schools/school-calendars/> to view the calendars.

Transition to High School

In an effort to retain more youth in secondary school and promote success for all students, the Ontario Ministry of Education implemented Phase III of the Student Success strategy. One main focus of this Phase is the transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9. For more information on the transition, please visit: <http://scdsb.on.ca/student-street/student-success/transition-to-high-school/>

Our Internet surfing this month leads to two resources from the Ministry of Education about back-to-school:

Ontario Ministry of Education – 10 tips to get your child ready for school

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/eng/tips/ready.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education - More Ways to Succeed in High School - Grades 7, 8, 9 Transition

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/transition.html>

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Full-day learning is part of our overall plan to help more children get a strong start in school, so they can go on to have successful, rewarding lives. By giving them more opportunities at a young age, we’re giving our children a brighter future.”
 ~ Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Education, speaking on Full-Day Kindergarten

About the SCDSB

The Simcoe County District School Board is deeply committed to ensuring all learners have the opportunity to realize their dreams within a vibrant and successful public education system. We are very proud of our 50,000 students who are learning and achieving in more than 100 schools and seven adult learning centres throughout our urban and rural communities. Working with school communities, our dedicated and skilled staff members provide quality programs to help students develop lifelong learning skills in safe, caring environments. Our schools are located in the Huronia and Georgian Bay regions of south-central Ontario.