

September 2026



KID BITS

Together time

Busy school days zoom by in a rush. Keep life from feeling too hectic for your child by making time to connect with him each day. Build with blocks, play a game, or just cuddle and have a conversation. You'll build strong family bonds that will help him feel secure.

I know I can

When your youngster zips her own jacket or pours her own milk, she feels competent and grown-up. Encourage her to stay positive as she learns. If she can't get the zipper lined up, or if she spills the milk, have her say, "I know I can, I know I can" and try again. She'll learn to persist until she succeeds.

Count on a story

Turn read-aloud time into math time with this idea. As you read to your child, ask him math questions about the pictures. For example, challenge him to find three triangles in one picture or to count the cows in another. Have him compare numbers, too. "Are there more ponies inside the fence or outside the fence?"

Worth quoting

"There are not seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million." *Walt Stieghart*



Just for fun

Q: What goes up but never comes down?

A: Your age!

Good morning(s)

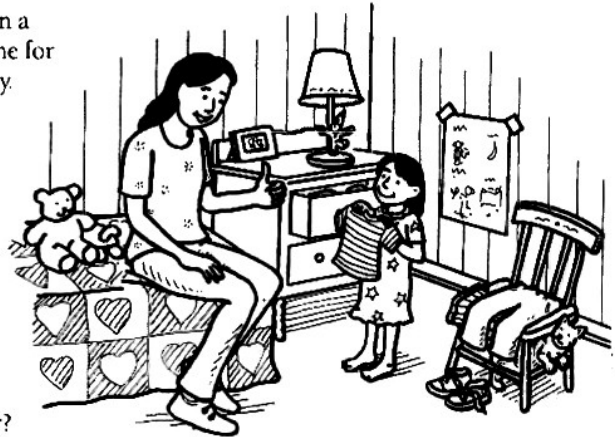
Starting the morning on a happy note can set the tone for your youngster's entire day. Use these tips to build a back-to-school routine that makes mornings flow smoothly at home, which helps days flow smoothly at school.

Before bed

What could your child do before bed to make her mornings easier? She might lay out her clothes and shoes, choose an item for show and tell, and decide what to eat for breakfast. Suggest that she create a poster with her to-do list. She could draw a picture of each nighttime task and tape the poster to her wall where she can check it before bed.

In the morning

Encourage your youngster to do the same things in the same order so they become a calm habit. For example, she can get dressed, eat breakfast, and then brush her teeth. Have her make up a fun



song to sing as a reminder. "First I need to put on my clothes, first I need to put on my clothes, first I need to put on my clothes, and then it's time for breakfast!"

After school

Together, go through your child's backpack. Let her show you her papers and tell you about her day. Read notes and sign field trip permission slips. Then, help her pack items needed for the next day (tissues, change of clothes). Your youngster will love catching up with you, and you'll both get a jump on tomorrow.♥

Let's get acquainted

Making friends at school builds social skills and helps your child feel like he belongs. Give him confidence to meet new friends by rehearsing at home:

- Use toys to practice introductions. You might hold up a stuffed bunny and say, "I'm Rabbit. What's your name?" Your youngster could respond by holding up a plastic dinosaur and saying, "I'm Pete. Do you want to play a game?"
- To get to know classmates better, teach him to "tell and ask." First he *tells* something about himself: "I love dump trucks." Then, he *asks* a question: "What's your favorite kind of truck?"♥



Be an alphabet detective

Every time your youngster plays with letters and the sounds they make, he's building skills that will help him read. Here are fun ways to explore the alphabet together.

Uncover an invisible letter. Use a white crayon to print an uppercase or a lowercase letter on white paper. Have your child slowly color over it with a washable marker. Can he name the letter and say its sound before it's completely revealed? Now have him print a letter for you to unmask.



Solve a mystery. Pretend you are a letter, and give your youngster clues to your identity. "I am the first letter in *boat*." "I make a *buh* sound." When he correctly names the letter (b), it's his turn to give you hints for a mystery letter.

Search for sounds. Help your child write each letter of the alphabet (uppercase and lowercase) on 26 separate sticky notes. Then, he can take the stack and search the house or yard for an item starting with each letter. Encourage him to put the sticky note on the matching object and say the letter and its sound. "P. Puh. P is for picture!" ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

My school bus

Your child can celebrate a new school year—and practice skills like recognizing shapes, cutting, and pasting—by making a school bus that features her.

Materials: colored paper, scissors, glue, small photo of your youngster, crayons



In a school parking lot or at a bus stop, encourage your youngster to look carefully at a school bus. What shapes does she notice? (Round wheels, square windows.) At home, have her draw and cut out a rectangle for her school bus. Then, she could cut out shapes and glue them on to make the wheels, windows, and a door.

Where would she want to sit on the bus? Let her decide and glue her photo into that window. She might even add photos of people she'd like to ride with (a sibling, her best friend). To finish her keepsake, have her write her name and the date on the side of the bus. Now she can display it for everyone to see. ♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.



Q & A

What a good helper!

Q: I'm trying to teach my son to be more helpful. Any suggestions?

A: Try starting with simple chores around the house like folding washcloths or putting away canned goods. Let your son set the table or mix the cornbread you're making for dinner. Knowing he has a part to play in your household will give him a sense of purpose.

Outside the home, point out helpful things he can do, too. For instance, he might remove a large stick from the sidewalk to keep people from tripping or retrieve a dropped toy for a mom with a fussy baby. You'll show him that he can take initiative to help others.

Remember to thank your son for helping out, and soon he'll find ways to lend a hand without being asked. ♥



Parents are learners, too

Your youngster might be surprised to find out that everyone learns—even grownups. Help her understand that learning is something to look forward to throughout her life by sharing your own learning adventures with her:

- Talk about classes you're taking. You could tell her about a training seminar you attended for your job or a painting class you signed up for at the community center.



- Let your child see you working on new projects. For example, show her diagrams for the cabinet you're building or the video on how to make a castle-shaped cake for her birthday.

- Learn about something together. If you both love the birds that sing in your backyard, visit the library to find books about what birds eat or how they care for their babies. ♥



Child Development, Inc.

BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS

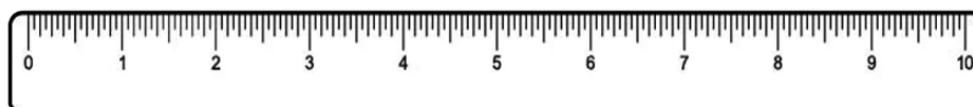
Re-establish the bedtime and mealtime routines . . . About 1 week before school starts plan to re-establish bedtime and mealtime routines. Talk with your child about the benefits of school routines in terms of not becoming over tired or overwhelmed by school activities. Include pre-bedtime reading and household chores if these were suspended during the summer

Turn off the TV . . . By encouraging your child to do early morning activities, such as playing quiet games, doing puzzles, flash cards, and coloring, instead of watching television, you can help ease your child into the learning process and school routine. If you try to maintain this practice throughout the school year, your child will arrive at school better prepared to learn each morning when he/she engages in less passive activities.

Visit school with your child . . . Plan to attend your center's orientation so you and your child can meet their teacher and see their classroom. This will help ease pre-school anxieties and also allows you and your child to ask questions.

Plan to volunteer in the classroom . . . Volunteering, at least periodically throughout the year, helps your child understand that school and family life are linked and that you care about their learning experience. Being in the classroom is also a good way to develop a relationship with your child's teachers and classmates, and to get firsthand exposure to the classroom environment and routine. Our teachers welcome occasional parental help even if you cannot volunteer regularly.

Play, Learn and Grow... Together!



Why Should You Go to Your Child's Back-to-School Night?

Because going to Back-to-School Night allows parents and their child the opportunity to check out their classroom, meet the teacher, and find out what is in store for the upcoming school year.

It is also chance to . . .

- ask questions
- learn how to help your child at home
- gain a sense of the classroom environment
- help build relationships
- give and get important contact info
- create more confidence for your child
- show that you value you child's education

Don't forget to mark your calendar so you can plan to join us for **"Back to School Night"**!

Check your child's *COMMUNICATION FOLDER* and the *WEEKLY HAPPENINGS* for the dates of your child's classroom **BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT—we are looking forward to seeing you!**

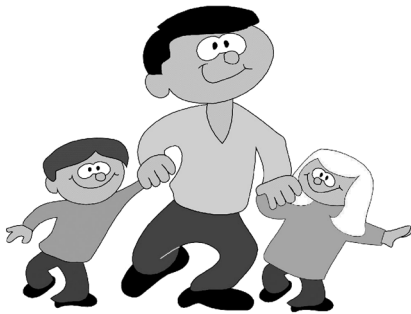
TRANSPORTATION AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

If you are walking your child to school we ask that you follow these Pedestrian Safety Rules.

We will review these rules with your child each day.

We will practice these safety rules when we walk to the playground or when we take short walks around the community.

- ◆ Hold your child's hand and do not allow him/her to cross the street alone
- ◆ Stop at the curb before crossing the street



- ◆ Walk; don't run, across the street
- ◆ Cross at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks
- ◆ Look left, right, and left again before crossing the street
- ◆ Walk facing traffic
- ◆ Make sure drivers see you before crossing in front of them
- ◆ Do not allow your child to play in driveways, streets, parking lots or unfenced yards by the street
- ◆ When walking at night, dress your child in white clothing or reflectors
- ◆ When crossing the street in front of a school bus make sure you are at least 10 feet away from the school bus
- ◆ Always stop at the curb, any driveway, or alley that crosses a sidewalk.
- ◆ Look **LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT** to make sure the road is clear before you cross the street.
- ◆ Always cross at the corner.
- ◆ Cross only on a "green" or "walk" light. This is a good opportunity to introduce and/or reinforce the meaning of STOP signs and traffic signals.

If you are transporting your child to the center in your car, we ask that you follow Pennsylvania's Child Passenger Safety Laws.

Children under 4 years of age are required to use a child restraint device. Non-use is a primary offense. Children 4 to 8 years of age are required to use a booster seat. Non-use is a secondary offense. The fine is a sliding fee up to \$100.00.

It is recommended that any child under the age of 12 sit in one of the rear seats of the vehicle and not in the front.

Please know that when our staff observes any non-compliance with the above laws, they will first talk with you to make sure you know and follow these state laws. We can provide assistance with obtaining appropriate restraints and boosters.

Should non-compliance continue to be observed by our staff, they are required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

We ask that you follow these additional safety precautions when you transport your child to center:

- ◆ Please turn off your vehicle before exiting your car and taking your child into the building.
- ◆ Do not leave children unattended in your vehicle.
- ◆ Do not exit your child on the side of your vehicle facing the street.
- ◆ Please hold your child's hand until he/she is inside the building.



Together, with our team, you can minimize your child's risk of harm by practicing and teaching transportation and pedestrian safety.

Have a safe and happy year.

Early Childhood HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT

SPOTTING THE SIGNS: A PARENT'S GUIDE TO EARLY AUTISM AWARENESS

Recognizing the early signs of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in preschool-aged children can make a profound difference. Early detection opens the door to supportive services that help young children thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Because autism is a spectrum, signs can look very different from one child to another. However, most indicators fall into three core areas: social interactions, communication, and behavioral patterns.

Social Interactions and Play Styles

Preschoolers typically begin to transition from playing *next to* other children to playing *with* them. In children on the spectrum, you might notice:

- **Preference for Solitude:** Frequently choosing to play completely alone rather than engaging with peers or family members.
- **Limited Eye Contact:** Avoiding direct eye contact or using it inconsistently during conversations and play.
- **Difficulty Sharing Experiences:** Rarely bringing objects over to show you or pointing to share interest in an exciting event.
- **Imitative Play Challenges:** A lack of spontaneous "pretend" play, such as playing house, pretending to cook, or mimicking adult actions.

Communication Milestones and Differences

By ages three to five, children generally expand their vocabulary rapidly. Communication differences to look for include:

- **Speech Delays:** Not speaking or lagging behind the language milestones expected for their age group.
- **Repetitive Language:** Repeating specific words or phrases out of context (*echolalia*), or scripting entire lines from favorite television shows.
- **Literal Understanding:** Struggling to understand simple jokes, tone of voice, or body language.
- **Unusual Tone:** Speaking in a flat, monotone voice, or using a sing-song rhythm that sounds robotic.

Repetitive Behaviors and Sensory Responses

Predictability and specific routines often provide comfort to autistic children. Keep track of behaviors such as:

- **Repetitive Movements:** Engaging in repetitive physical actions like hand-flapping, rocking back and forth, or spinning in circles.
- **Focus on Object Parts:** Becoming deeply fascinated by specific components of a toy, like spinning the wheels of a toy car repeatedly, instead of playing with the toy as a whole.
- **Rigid Routines:** Experiencing extreme distress or meltdowns if a minor change occurs in their daily schedule, route home, or meal preparation.
- **Sensory Sensitivities:** Showing intense over- or under-reactions to sensory experiences, such as covering ears at common household noises, resisting specific clothing textures, or refusing foods based entirely on how they feel in the mouth.

Taking the Next Steps

- If you notice several of these signs, it does not automatically mean your child has autism, but it does warrant a closer look. Trust your instincts as a parent.

Begin by keeping a brief daily log of the specific behaviors you observe. Share these notes directly with your pediatrician, who can conduct an initial developmental screening and refer you to specialists for a formal evaluation if needed.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF ASSERT?

ASSERT (Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative) is a statewide partnership, funded through the Office of Developmental Programs, that provides streamlined access to information for Pennsylvanians with autism. The **ASSERT** website has **free** resources covering a wide range of topics for parents, self-advocates, professionals, and community members while also providing information on state-wide [events](#), [support groups](#), and [online training](#) opportunities. You can learn more at <https://paautism.org/>.



Geisinger St Luke's Corner

Healthy Tips that can Help Your Child Prepare for a Successful School Year

BY Dr. Melanie Koehler, Pediatrician at St. Luke's Tamaqua Pediatrics



It is that time again; a new school year is upon us! What can we do to help our children get a good start? It is important to stick to some tried and true practices to keep your child healthy, safe, and successful in the classroom.

It all begins with breakfast. Eating a healthy breakfast makes it easier to learn and pay attention. Be sure to include some protein such as milk, eggs, meat, or yogurt.

Safety begins with the trip to school. For parents who drive their children, age and size appropriate car seats are required for children under 4 feet 9 inches tall. Kids should ride in the back seat until age 13 and tall enough to properly use a shoulder strap seatbelt. Older students should always wear seatbelts. If children ride a school bus, they should remain seated throughout the ride and follow all safety rules in place.

Beginning at age 9 to 11 years, most children can walk to school safely, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). They should always walk with a buddy. Bike riders should always wear a helmet. To keep your child going strong all day, talk to them about the importance of eating a healthy lunch. Whether to pack or buy lunch at school is a personal choice but make sure they are eating something nutritious. Encourage them to drink milk or water rather than juice or soft drinks. Sweetened drinks and snacks can cause big blood sugar variations in children, causing them to lose energy and focus quickly later in the day.

After school, plan a scheduled homework time. Kids thrive on routines, so set up clear expectations. An after-school routine could consist of a snack, homework from 3:30 to 4:30, and then playing outside or catching a cartoon show before dinner.

Although it can be difficult with kids' scheduled activities and parents' work schedules, it is important to eat dinner together as a family. It is a great opportunity to check in with your kids daily, especially with all the stressors that they face today. Also, be cognizant of what the children are exposed to in the home, whether it be news stories or adult conversations. Parents who are concerned about their child's level of stress or anxiety should reach out to their health care provider.

Finally, to maximize your child's success and wellbeing, make sure they get plenty of sleep. Preschoolers need 10-13 hours of sleep (including naps), children in grade school need at least nine hours of sleep, and teenagers may need more. Ironically, many teens need as much sleep as toddlers.

A regular bedtime and sleep routine that starts with unplugging – turning off all electronic devices – at least an hour before bed is recommended. This time can include getting ready for bed, bathing, reading, listening to music, coloring, or any non-screen activity. Most kids do not get enough sleep, especially active teenagers with after-school activities and lots of homework. To help your child have the best school day possible, and at the end sleep is crucial.



For information on community resources or Geisinger St. Luke's services, contact Angela Morgan, Community Health, Geisinger St. Luke's 1-484-658-4022, or email at angela.morgan@sluhn.org.

DR. MELANIE KOEHLER, MD - ST. LUKE'S TAMAQUA PEDIATRICS
143 NORTH RAILROAD STREET, TAMAQUA, PA 18252
570-645-1540



Things you need to know—all in on place!

Getting Started with ChildPlus: Communication App

To keep our families informed, Child Development uses the **ChildPlus App** to communicate with you when we are closed due to a holiday, the weather and it how it will affect your child's center, as well as for reminders or other information about program-wide and/or center events, and meetings.



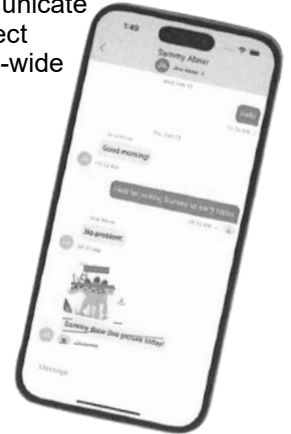
If you haven't already done so, please download the **ChildPlus App** by scanning one of the QR codes below with your mobile phone:



App Store®
(iPhone users)



Google Play™
(Android users)



TROUBLE SHOOTING TIPS FOR THOSE THAT ALREADY HAVE THE APP:

- **Matching Email:** Use the same email address you provided at enrollment.
- **Forgot Password?** Reset it using the "Having trouble signing in? Tap here" option on the login screen.

**TO HELP PREVENT
UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY
PLEASE DO NOT
HOLD DOOR FOR
OTHERS**

*This is the only time when we
will encourage bad manners!*



MEETINGS

Policy Council

Mon., Sept. 28th at 9:30 AM
In-Person Meeting

*(a ZOOM link for the meeting
will also be emailed to members)*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
WE ARE CLOSED
for Labor Day!
September 7, 2026

We will re-open on Tuesday, September 8

Child

Development, Inc.

Ready for school and a lifetime of learning

FREE
GRATIS

Preschool Education
Educación pre-escolar

Providing quality preschool services to children ages 3-5 years and their families for over 60 years

Ofrecer servicios preescolares de calidad a niños de 3 a 5 años y a sus familias durante más de 60 años



PA pennsylvania
PRE-K COUNTS



- Extended hours at some locations
- Assistance with fees for parents
- All centers are Keystone STAR 4 Designation
- Horario ampliado en algunos lugares
- Asistencia con las tasas para padres
- Todos los centros tienen la designación Keystone STAR 4



CENTER LOCATIONS

UBICACIONES DE CENTROS

- Fountain Springs • Mahanoy City • Pottsville • Saint Clair
- Schuylkill Haven • Shenandoah • Tamaqua

CALL
Llame al

570-544-8959

Ext. 212



MISSION STATEMENT

We work with families and the community to provide high quality, comprehensive early childhood education with an emphasis on family involvement and supportive services that prepares each child for success in school and a lifetime of learning.

Child Development, Inc.
Families * Head Start * PreK Counts
Child Care * Early Intervention * Community

Early Years, Child Development, Inc.'s newsletter is distributed monthly. If you are a non-profit Schuylkill County agency that is offering a free service that you feel our families might be interested in or benefit from and would like an announcement placed in our newsletter please let us know by the 10th of the previous month. You can send your event to:

kwolfe@childdevelop.org