



## Start Strong: Parents, Ensure Your Children are Prepared for the First Day of School

July 15, 2022 by Educator Barnes

By August 4, all Indianapolis students who attend school in one of the 11 traditional public school districts will be back in school. Summer went by fast, and I feel sympathy for students whose parents are checked out and unprepared for the upcoming school year. Students should start school prepared with all the essentials, and parents should care enough about

their kids to ensure they are prepared. Below, I have identified key steps all parents should take.

### **Ensure school communication is being received**

By now, all parents should have been bombarded with information from their children's schools. If parents have not received any information, they need to contact the school. It could be as simple as human error, and an email address was entered incorrectly. Most school districts use an app such as ParentSquare to send communication. Parents must also ensure they receive communication from the chosen school district app.

### **Know details for transportation**

Parents should know the transportation plan whether their children walk to school, ride a bus, or are dropped off in a car. If parents allow their children to walk to school, they should review the route, practice walking it with them, and remind them to be mindful of the traffic and cross the street at stop lights or intersections and not dart across the middle of the street.

If students are riding the bus, parents should not assume the bus stop will be the same. For the last three school years, my children's bus stop was our house. I knew this convenient arrangement couldn't last forever. They will have to walk down the street to the bus stop for their first year of middle school. Additionally, many school districts use the Here Comes the Bus app. Even though you would think my sons would not have trouble being ready on time in the past with the bus stop being their front door, using that app has helped my husband, and I yell out the street names in our neighborhood to let them know the bus is getting closer ...which is a non-direct way to tell them to hurry.

If parents are dropping off their children, they should follow the car rider drop-off and pick-up directions. School districts typically send this information out in advance, have signs and staff out to direct parents, and yet, there is at least one parent who doesn't seem to know how early they can arrive to the car line or where to drive their car. Don't be the parent who holds up traffic.

Last, have a safety plan for children who walk or ride the bus. Students should know safe neighbors or places they can go if locked out of their house.

### **Attend before school back-to-school events**

Most parents attend the back-to-school night that takes place after the school year begins, but they should also attend the events that take place before the school year begins. This is a perfect time for elementary students to meet teachers and bring in school supplies. For middle schoolers and high schoolers, this is a perfect time to pick up class schedule, practice locker combination, organize their lockers, practice walking from class to class, turn in athletic physicals, and purchase gym uniforms or other school swag. Last, if parents need to verify residency or bring in a copy of vaccination records, this is a good opportunity to do this.

### **Obtain ALL school supplies**

Although I have had varying views about school supplies over the years, I know students need to have supplies. This may be harsh, but not being able to afford supplies is not an excuse. Parents chose to have their children and need to find a way. Parents who know they can't afford school supplies have known this for a while. They should reach out to the school for recommendations on where to get free supplies or ask around. There are way too many free back-to-school giveaways for parents to allow their children to be unprepared.

### **Complete the background check form to become a school volunteer**

Not every parent can pass a school background check, but if they do not have a criminal history, they should get the background check out of the way. If the parents cannot pass, a grandparent could get their background check completed instead. Parent/teacher conferences and back-to-school nights should not be the only time parents enter their children's school buildings. With COVID-19 resulting in parents being prevented from showing up unannounced to observe or visit their children at school, being a volunteer is one way to give back to the school community and show their children that they will be at the school from time to time.

### **Share the importance of school and give encouragement**

Some students do not care about school because they do not see that their parents care about it. Parents should positively tell their children why their children's success at school is important. They should also encourage them. Even if children had a difficult school year last school year, it does not help to throw it in their faces when school begins.

Student success starts at home. Parents should ensure their children start school prepared.

Below, I have included the start dates for 11 Indianapolis school districts:

**Indianapolis School Districts Start Dates**

Wednesday, July 27	Beech Grove, Perry, & Wayne
Thursday, July 28	Warren
Monday, August 1	Decatur, Franklin, & IPS
Tuesday, August 2	Speedway
Wednesday, August 3	Pike
Thursday, August 4	Lawrence & Washington