

# Visit With the Utays

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*School Psychology and Education Specialists*

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## Starting the School Year Right: 8 Powerful Tips

*"You always have great ideas for solving educational problems. How about preventing them in the first place, especially here at the very start of the school year?"*

Immanuel Kant wrote, "Science is organized knowledge. Wisdom is organized life." Three centuries later we can add, "School success is organized resources." You know the importance of organization for your and your children's sanity throughout the school year. We recommend you use the full range of resources to keep the "organ" in your organization healthy enough to ward off the common cold of school frustration. Here are eight ways to build up your child's school success immune system:

1. **Develop a schedule.** Invest the time to develop a firm but flexible schedule.
2. **Don't overextend.** Often, there are simply too many activities to fit homework comfortably into the week. Consider scheduling afternoon study time with a tutor to either efficiently complete homework (without family stress) and/or to remove or "remediate" blocks to learning.
3. **Check for good physical and mental health.** Schedule doctor and dental checkups early. Discuss any concerns you have over your children's emotional or psychological development with your pediatrician. Your doctor can help determine if your concerns are normal age-appropriate issues, or require further assessment. Identify and begin addressing a potential issue now to not compound the problem with another layer of issues once school starts.
4. **Mark your calendar.** Note important dates, especially the school's back-to-school meetings. This is especially important if you have children in more than one school and need to juggle obligations. Arrange for a babysitter now, if needed.
5. **Buy school supplies early.** Get supplies as early as possible and start filling backpacks before school starts. Remember to buy supplies for both school and home use. Older children can help do this, but make sure they use a checklist that you can

- review. Some teachers require specific supplies, so save receipts for items that you may need to return later.
6. **Re-establish bedtime and mealtime routines.** Re-establish routines like breakfast and sitting down to do focused afternoon or evening desk work, at least one week before school starts.
  7. **Get plenty of rest.** Many students simply do not get enough sleep. Eight hours is actually the **minimum** most children need to sleep each night. Do not count on weekends to "catch up" on missed sleep. Adequate sleep is needed each night to ensure optimal school performance the following day.
  8. **Make it a family project.** Prepare your children for these changes by talking with them (not at them) about the benefits of the upcoming changes in not just their but the whole family's routine including everyone's physical, mental, social, educational, and spiritual health.

You may consider some of these notions common sense. Good! Thomas Huxley said, "Science is nothing but trained and organized common sense." So, organize these and your own ways of starting the school year right into an overall plan, start putting it into motion, modify it as needed along the way, and you will inoculate your entire family against the back-to-school blues.

For more information about starting the school year right, including professional assessment of strengths and needs as well as a great list of positive ways to collaborate with teachers, contact Total Learning Center at 724-940-1090 (Wexford, Fox Chapel, and now Murrysville areas).

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