

# Pointers For Parents

## Reducing School Stress

(NAPSA)—Whether before school actually starts or once it's underway, parents and students can develop simple strategies to reduce the stress and anxiety that can come with the school year.

Begin by establishing daily routines. According to Harvard child psychologist Dr. Larry Kutner, a.k.a. "Dr. Dad," this is especially important for young children since they have more difficulty with transitions. One way to do this is to practice your morning schedule the week before school actually starts. Find out how long it takes to get up, get dressed, eat breakfast and head out the door. This will help alleviate any last-minute morning hassles.

Designate a space in your home specifically for doing homework. It may be better if this area is not in the child's room because there are often too many distractions there. Developing good study habits at an early age will help your child improve responsible behaviors long-term.

Discuss how your children might deal with bullies and other situations that concern them. If your children are prepared to deal with difficult circumstances, there will be fewer problems and worry when they arise. For strategies on discussing these issues with your younger children, Dr. Kutner recommends [www.tonystime.com](http://www.tonystime.com), a program developed jointly by Stand for Children and Tony's Pizza. The Web site features tips and activities that teach children about responsibility, respect, rules and relationships.

Review safety and school rules with your children to avoid any



**It's important for children to understand how to safely board and exit a bus, as well as how to cross streets before and after school.**

confusion. Discuss what is appropriate to bring into a classroom and what is not.

Set a time each day to talk with your children about their school day. This conversation could take place during dinner, in the car or right before bed. Have reasonable expectations for what the conversation will be like. Asking, "How was school today?" is likely to get a standard response of, "Fine." Asking more specific questions such as, "What was the most interesting thing you learned today?" may be a better way to start a conversation. Whichever approach you choose, it's important to maintain an open dialogue with your children and be aware of their daily activities and what they are learning.

Most important, be enthusiastic. Acknowledge your children's concerns about the challenges of the school year, but help them get excited about learning and making new friends. All this can pave the way for a successful school year.