

Pointers For Parents

Mobile Learning Key To Balancing Work And Play

(NAPSA)—Kids today are busier than ever. More than 50 percent of children ages 7 to 17 are jam-packed with after-school sports or extracurricular activities. Involvement in after-school activities improves a child's self-esteem and helps children develop important skills, but balancing these activities with schoolwork can be a stressful challenge. Mobile learning may be the key to balancing work and play.

"All of my children have a schedule full of activities," says Maria Bailey, Office Depot's Family Organization Expert and working mother of four. "By dinner time, school is the last thing on their minds. My trick is to get them to do their homework while we are on the go."

Bailey suggests keeping a "mobile homework station" in the back of the car so children can catch up on their studies anywhere, at anytime. She recommends the following tips for successful on-the-go learning:

- **Write Steady.** The Smart Lap Desk, available at Office Depot, is a great base for the mobile homework station. The durable plastic provides a steady place for kids to lean on while writing. It comes in cool shades and has a top that flips up to hold essential supplies.

- **Travel-Friendly School Supplies.** The Folding Ruler from It's Academic (\$1.50) and Swingline's No-mess Hole Puncher (\$3) and Advancer Self-Advancing "Smart" Pencil (\$2.50) store easily and help prevent a homework headache.

- **Get Organized.** PDAs are great for both moms and kids. The Palm Zire 21 (\$100) acts as an address book, calendar, appointment book and notepad all in one little gadget. Tech-savvy kids can



For families on the go, a "mobile homework station" in the car can be a smart way to ensure that schoolwork gets done.

cut down on clutter in their backpacks, while moms can find a teacher's phone number at the touch of a button.

- **Keep Coloring Neat.** Crayons have a tendency to go missing and the lifespan of markers is short because caps disappear. Sanford Retractable Markers (\$4) come in a variety of non-bleed colors that your budding artist will love.

- **Easy Snack Storage.** The Pop Up Lunch Tote from California Innovation (\$9) is a smart substitute for brown bags. Snacks stay put until kids are ready to eat and it can be stored easily in the car.

- **Remember the Basics.** A survival kit with first aid supplies such as band-aids, mini-Kleenex soft packs and peroxide can be assembled easily and cheaply.

"Teaching your kids to multi-task effectively is one of the most important lessons of modern family life," says Bailey. "If your kids have the right tools to learn outside of the classroom, they will have the best shot at success."