



Santa Barbara County Education Office

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Welcome back to school

By Dr. Susan Salcido, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

Starting in Guadalupe on August 8 and ending in Carpinteria on August 26, schools throughout Santa Barbara are welcoming students back into their classrooms. The beginning of the school year can signal optimism, wonder, and a fresh start for students, families, and the entire education community.

This year, the start of school may even bring needed comfort as it reminds us that despite tumultuous and challenging events in our nation, there is a rhythm to the year upon which we can rely. The beginning of the academic year arrives just like clockwork and provides continuity and sense of promise for all of us.

Classroom walls get redecorated to feature new student artwork, cafeterias are stocked with nutritious food for our children's meals, and boxes that are piled in offices during the summer months are emptied and put away to signal that students are arriving. Our children are greeted by principals, teachers, school secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, crossing guards, support staff, parent volunteers and fellow students all crackling with the almost electric first-day-of-school excitement. It is a tribute to our professionalism, our resilience, and the optimistic human spirit.

Educators and school staff make these openings appear seamless and effortless but, of course, they are not. Starting a new school year requires a great deal of preparation, elbow grease, and skill. While the summer break offers a time of renewal and refreshment, we also know that the vast majority of administrators, teachers, and staff members spent time planning for and working on the coming school year so that all will go as smoothly as possible for students and parents.

This summer, in fact, many educators throughout our county attended conferences, studied, refined, planned and deepened their knowledge about content and instructional approaches, and connected with professionals about impactful ways to support students.

For the students who will reap the benefits of these efforts, excitement is no doubt building for the new school year, but it is also quite normal for them to have some trepidation.

Michele Frantz, the 2020 Santa Barbara County Teacher of the Year, from Joe Nightingale School in Orcutt, had this advice for students: “Know that it is normal to feel both excited and nervous about returning to school. Remember that you are one of a kind and have special gifts and qualities that only you can bring to your classroom, so just be you!”

That’s great advice for parents to share with their children. Here are some other tips from experts that have proven helpful:

- Make extra time for your children, especially as they go through the transition to a new year with new teachers and new friends. Listen to their questions and concerns. Stress your love and support to help ease their worries. Talking together about school can strengthen your family bonds and ease any anxiety your children may be feeling.
- Parents can help children transition back into a good sleep routine for school a week or so before the opening day. We know it is vitally important for children to get the right amount of sleep in order to be alert and ready to learn all day. Parents can start now to have children get to bed at a reasonable time and get up and eat about the same time each day.
- Try to structure time so that the morning is calm. You can work backward from the time your children need to be at school, figuring out how long it will take to get dressed, eat breakfast, and travel to school. Build in time for unexpected delays.
- Make an after-school game plan. How will your children get home? Will there be after-school programs, sports practices, or music lessons? Where and when will your children do their homework?

Parents can be assured that all our dedicated and skilled school professionals have a common goal of supporting your children, and they are excitedly looking forward to welcoming them back to the classroom. It is a ritual that we’ve all gone through in our own childhoods, and it will continue for generations to come.

Let me add my voice to those welcoming your children to the new school year. May it be productive, fun, full of joy, wonder and new learning for every member of our school community.

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