



CHOICES in EDUCATION

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IN THE CLASSROOM

Tips for students and teachers to get through the midyear slump

There comes a certain point during every school year when students and educators alike are at risk of suffering from a mid-year slump. One solution to staying motivated? Adding some color and vibrancy to everyday tools used in the classroom. Here are five ideas for doing so:

- A change of scenery has the power to inspire. Students can revamp their lockers and desks at home with new decorations, artwork and organizational tools, like a color-coded bulletin board. Teachers can make the same updates to classrooms to give students and themselves a fresh perspective.

- Add a fun splash of color to music-making. With Casiotone CT-S200 keyboards, you can select

from vibrant red or white, in addition to the standard black. The ability to hook up to any portable music player so that the user can play any music downloaded to the device offers versatility in lesson planning, practice and performance.

- Any calculator can be easily customized with skins, but if you want to keep it simple, some models are stylish and colorful right out of the box. One such example is the fx-9750GII. Available in black, blue or pink, this can be a great way to give young mathematicians a fun and useful tool to see them through finals, college entrance exams and more.

- If you didn't purchase new accessories like backpacks, gym bags or laptop cases at the beginning of

the school year, maybe it's time for a refresh. Slick new carrying essentials can give a student greater confidence while traveling from home to the classroom, and help brighten the school day.

- From quotes and messages greeting students each morning to building out lessons with pictures from around the globe, a projector designed to work well in the classroom can be a versatile tool for teachers looking to liven things up or engage students in a lively conversation.

By embracing colorful tools, students and teachers can work their way out of the midyear slump for a strong finish to the school year.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media



PHOTO COURTESY OF DIEGO CERVO / ISTOCK VIA GETTY IMAGES PLUS

By embracing colorful tools, students and teachers can work their way out of the midyear slump for a strong finish to the school year.

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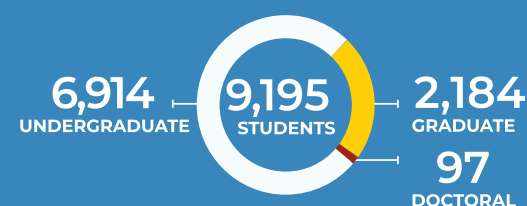
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PARENTING

How math can become your child's favorite school subject

Ask kids what their favorite school subject is and fewer and fewer will say "math" as they age. While 37% of 4th graders report that math is one of their favorite subjects, only 15% of 12th graders say the same, according to National Center for Education Statistics.

At a time when a strong math foundation is more important than ever before, you may be wondering how to keep the subject fun and interesting for kids, even as the workload grows more complex and challenging with each passing year.

Here are a few ideas for infusing fun into the equation:

- Set a good example: Don't make math out to be a subject you yourself don't enjoy. Whether you're talking about the batting average of your favorite player, working out your budget or watching a news report citing statistics, you can point out the many ways in which

math is used to think about the world and spark a numbers-fueled conversation.

- Embrace a love of tech: Your children are digital natives, so when it comes to mathematics, let them use the tech tools that feel most natural to them without limitations. You can feel particularly good about this decision when it comes to calculators.

Many calculators today are much more intuitive to use than their predecessors, allowing students to spend more time learning the joy of math rather than figuring out how to operate the device. For a high-quality scientific calculator, check out the fx-300ES from Casio, which has over 250 functions. Once a graphing calculator is needed, a good choice is the fx-CG50, which has a high-definition, three-dimensional display.

- Check in: Many students stop loving math once it gets hard. Unfortunately,

a lot of students don't mention they are struggling until it's too late to easily catch up, as most lessons build on previously taught material.

Periodically check in with your student to ensure they are keeping up with their classmates. Let them know there is no shame in getting an extra bit of help. Many teachers will meet with students before or after class to offer assistance and answer questions. Study buddies, tutors and online tutorials can also help students grasp the material, achieve good grades and ultimately, continue to enjoy math.

There is no doubt about it, a love of math is a good thing. By making it approachable and offering the right tools, you can help your young mathematician continue to embrace the subject.

*Story courtesy of
StatePoint Media*



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

While 37% of 4th graders report that math is one of their favorite subjects, only 15% of 12th graders say the same, according to National Center for Education Statistics.



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I came to Central Michigan University because I knew it gave me the best opportunity to do scientific research. I also was able to present at the National Society for Neuroscience conference.

As an undergraduate, I joined neuroscience faculty member Dr. Ute Hochgeschwender's research on spinal cord injury treatments. Our research focuses on using light from proteins to help stimulate spinal cord neurons. Our goal is to use the proteins to help promote recovery in the lower extremities after injury. In our work together, I proposed and implemented therapeutic swimming to help strengthen and practice using the injured limbs.

I learned so much working with Dr. Hochgeschwender, and presenting our research at the National Society of Neuroscience conference allowed me to learn more about becoming a better researcher. I received feedback from neuroscience experts from around the world, challenging me to think about new ways to approach my work. I know the connections I made at that conference will make a difference in my future work and studies.

I hope that one day my research will create new treatment plans and evolve the current medical treatments to center around noninvasive options for individuals with spinal cord injuries. I also hope my research will help change the way we think about neurodegenerative diseases.

I owe so much to my partnership with Dr. Hochgeschwender. Like everyone here at CMU, she genuinely cares about her students and wants them to succeed. My work with her has given me a great head start on a career in medicine, and working in the lab also has helped me develop personal skills that will help me become a great physician and mentor someday.

It's been an incredible privilege to do such important research as an undergraduate at CMU.

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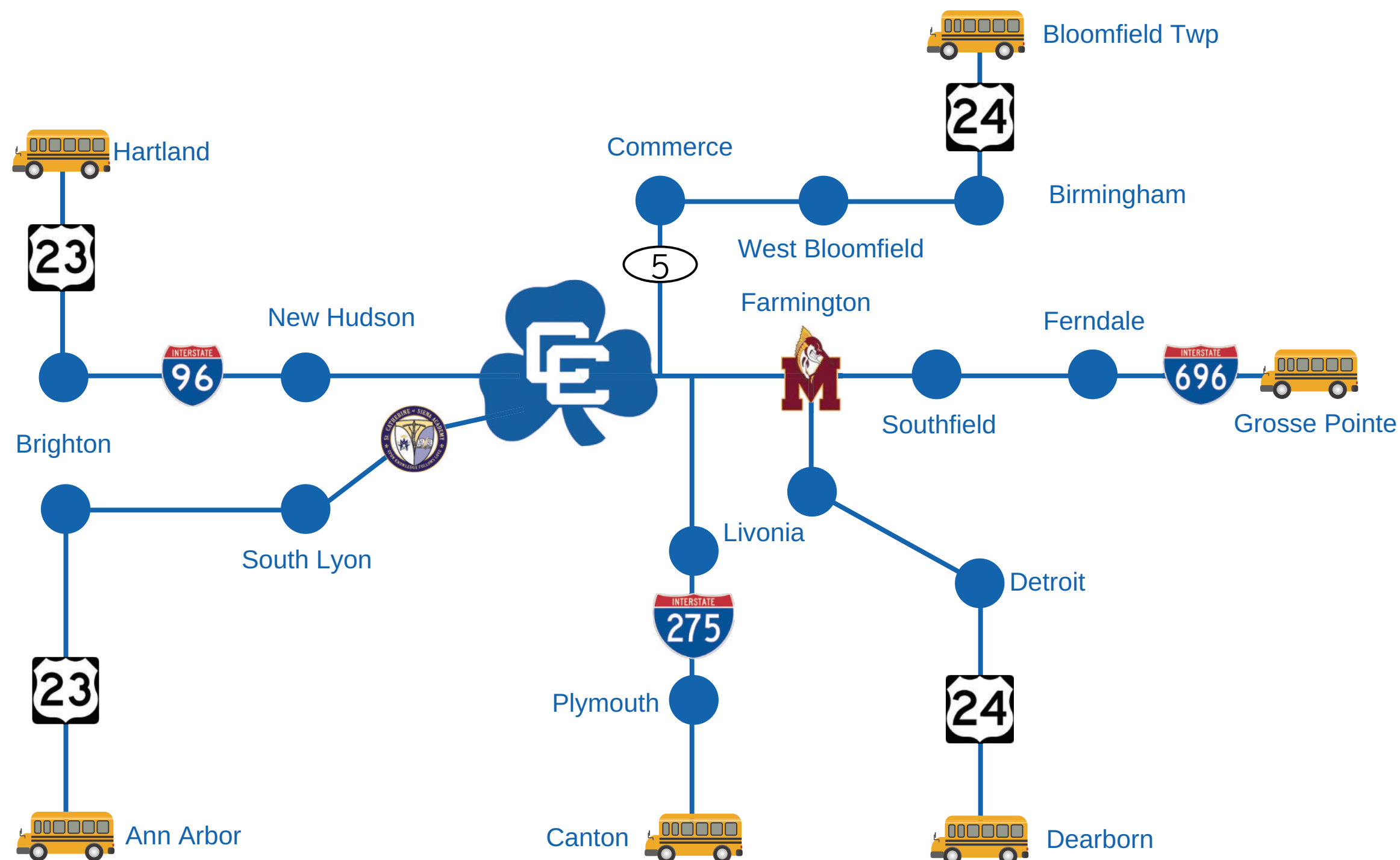
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TECHNOLOGY

Screen time: What research says and what parents can do

Screen time is a hot topic for parents and researchers alike. While digital devices are the norm, and children can certainly use them to their benefit, parents can also help children learn healthy digital habits.

Research is still working out the long-term impact of devices on kids. Here's what's known so far, and what you as a parent can do about it.

▪ **Devices Before Bed = No Sleep:** It's undisputed: when it comes to bedtime, devices are a big no-no. According to Hoag Medical Group, devices are known to emit a specific light wavelength that messes with sleep patterns. Doctors recommend that kids don't use devices for at least one hour before bed.

The fix: At night, stick

to the basics. Read to your children or tell them a bedtime story. When they're old enough to read to themselves, encourage them to stick with the habit of curling up with a good book before light's out.

▪ **Screen Time Linked to Depression and Anxiety:** According to a study published in JAMA Pediatrics, kids who spend a lot of time in front of screens are at a greater risk for emotional issues and low self-esteem. This is in part because the more time kids are spending in front of screens, the less time they're spending doing healthy activities like socializing or being active. Additionally, certain content can increase anxiety, particularly social media.

The fix: Distract kids with fun, thought-provok-

ing alternatives. Whether it's a trip to the playground, board games or fort-building, putting screens away gives children's imaginations time to flourish.

▪ **Verbal 'Warnings' Do More Harm Than Good:** Every parent knows the struggle of limiting device use. Handing a tablet over is easy enough, but getting it back? That's when the struggle begins. According to research, giving kids a warning that screen time is coming to an end increases the chances that kids will fight back and defy their limitation.

The fix: Setting clear limits on tech use is not just important, it's essential. New technology can help you do so much more seamlessly than an idle warning. Think apps that don't lead kids into the

next level of a game or give parents control over kids' devices remotely.

One such tool is a parental control app called OurPact. To start, parents sign up for a free account. After pairing their child's devices, they're able to manage them remotely through at-a-touch blocking or automated schedules. It's great for setting bedtime schedules, ensuring devices don't cause homework distractions and for enjoying ping-free family dinners. It works on Wi-Fi and all cellular connections, meaning you can manage access whether you're at the grocery store or at home. To learn more or download, visit OurPact.com.

And of course, open the lines of communication about device use with your

kids early on, and keep the conversation in the middle of a con-



While digital devices are the norm, and children can certainly use them to their benefit, parents can also help children learn healthy digital habits.

dialogue going. Explain why screen time rules are important and set a good example. If you don't want your kid to look at their de-

versation, hold yourself to the same rule.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media



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SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT AND INTERVENTION

The opioid crisis is devastating lives the world over. UM-Flint offers Michigan's only online bachelor's degree in substance use treatment and intervention. Program graduates possess the knowledge and skills to help those suffering from addiction and to provide substance use treatment in a variety of clinical settings.

RN TO BSN

To meet today's healthcare challenges, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine have called for an increase in the number of BSN-prepared nurses. UM-Flint's School of Nursing has designed its RN to BSN program to help meet this demand for a highly educated nursing workforce. The program is online, flexible, and intended for the working RN who seeks to advance their education, career, and service to patients.

HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION

As Michigan's population gets older, demand for health care services is increasing, making the training of empathetic, ethical and effective health care administrators a top priority. For those seeking to affect this trend, the online format of UM-Flint's bachelor's degree in health care administration delivers a convenient, world-class education, resulting in professional success, personal advancement and patient well-being.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION MANAGEMENT

Flint is a hub of entrepreneurial energy. UM-Flint's School of Management has been at the forefront of this movement, serving as the home of the Hagerman Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and establishing a bachelor's of business administration degree with the same focus. Ideally situated to leverage other key resources and partnerships, such as the University Center for Community and Economic Development and University Outreach's two Innovation Incubator locations, UM-Flint's globally recognized business educators have created a program perfect for those with big dreams and ideas.

EARLY EDUCATION

The role of free play in early education

Glance at a typical family schedule and you would no doubt see that afternoons are jam-packed and many children — even the youngest among them — have full itineraries of structured after-school activities.

In an effort to raise well-rounded and intelligent children, many parents enroll their youngsters in all sorts of extracurricular activities, including sports leagues, travel teams, enrichment clubs, and musical instruction. While these activities benefit kids in myriad ways, it's also beneficial to let kids be kids and to provide ample time for them to engage in free play.

According to the popular toy and learning company Alex Brands, structured activities can teach children how to follow rules and routines and help them build developmental skills. But free play can improve critical skills as well. One of the biggest benefits to free play is it can foster kids' creativity and help kids discover their interests on their own. Free play also helps children learn independence and how to keep themselves occupied.

The United Nations recognizes free play as a basic right of every child and underscores its importance. Despite this, unstructured play seems to be on the decline, with more structured activities taking over young children's days.

Even in school settings

free play has given way to more time spent at desks and devices in preparation for standardized testing. Recess, which has been cut or reduced in many school districts, has become a hot-button issue for many free play advocates. The development of Recess for All Florida Students, as well as proposed legislation in other states, has redirected attention to free play and the importance of it. Recess is a form of free play and provides students with a break from the rigors of learning.

In a 2011 article in the *American Journal of Play*, Peter Gray, Ph.D., a researcher at Boston College, indicated that "lack of play affects emotional development, leading to the rise of anxiety, depression, and problems of attention and self-control." Gray also indicated that without play, "young people fail to acquire the social and emotional skills necessary for healthy psychological development."

Free play also can benefit youngsters in the following ways:

- Enables kids to learn dexterity and improve on other strengths;
- fulfills exercise requirements for growing kids;
- helps kids conquer fears and develop confidence;
- establishes natural leadership roles and hierarchy in social groups;
- contributes to emotional well-being by giv-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Top: Structured activities can teach children how to follow rules and routines and help them build developmental skills.

Bottom: "Free play is an important component of learning and exploration for children."

ing children a respite from schedules; and

- helps teach self-responsibility, which may translate to better behavior at home and in school.

Free play is an important component of learning and exploration for children. A mix of structured and unstructured activities is key to raising well-rounded individuals.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



One of the biggest benefits to free play is it can foster kids' creativity and help kids discover their interests on their own. Free play also helps children learn independence and how to keep themselves occupied.



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PLANNING AHEAD

Learn the best ways to build a college fund

College is the next logical step for many newly minted high school graduates. The National Center for Education Statistics indicated that, in fall 2019, roughly 19.9 million students were slated to attend colleges and universities in the United States. Statistics Canada stated that, for the 2015-16 school year, the most recent for school statistics, just over two million students were enrolled in Canadian universities and colleges.

Families need to begin thinking about how to pay for college as early as possible. According to the Wall Street Journal, the average college graduate's student loan debt is \$37,172. And the most recent data from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York indicates the overall student loan debt in America alone is roughly \$1.3 trillion. The average expense of sending a child to college has been rising at double the rate of inflation for more than a decade, offers CNBC.

A robust college savings account can help future students avoid considerable debt. The following are some ways to save for college.

- Open a tax-advantaged 529 college savings plan. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission says a 529 is a savings plan designed to encourage saving for future education costs. The person funding the account pays taxes on the money before it's contributed to the 529 plan. Funds can be used for education expenses. There are two types of 529 plans: prepaid tuition plans and education savings plans. The prepaid plans allow account holders to purchase units or credits at participating colleges and universities. With education savings plans, account holders open investment accounts to save for qualified future higher education expenses, including room and board.

- Invest in a Coverdell Education Savings Account. A Coverdell account is a tax-advantaged method to contribute up to \$2,000 per year to a child's account. Individuals need to be under a certain income level to contribute. The funds will grow free of federal taxes.

- Consider a Uniform Transfer/Gift to Minors account. This is a custodial account

that holds and protects assets for beneficiaries, who are typically donors' children. The custodian controls the assets until the minor reaches legal age. The money will not grow tax-free, and it can be used for purposes other than school expenses. The account also may count against the student and parent when applying for financial aid, which is something to keep in mind.

- Open an IRA. IRAs are often associated strictly with retirement savings. However, they also can be used for qualified college payments as long as the contributions have been made for at least five years, advises Nationwide Insurance.

- Use a standard savings account. Even though it may not grow as quickly as investment accounts, routinely saving money in a savings account can be another means to saving for college.

Starting early can give families ample time to save substantial amounts of money for youngsters' college educations.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Families need to begin thinking about how to pay for college as early as possible.

PARENTING

How to ease kids' transition to a new school

Being the new kid in school can be a tall order for youngsters. Children who change schools may face a host of challenges that studies suggest can affect both their social and academic development.

In a 2010 study that followed students who entered kindergarten in 1998 through 2007, the Government Accountability Office found that 13 percent of students changed schools four or more times by the end of eighth grade. Such mobility can adversely affect students, as a study of 13,000 students in the city of Chicago found that children who had changed schools four or more times by the sixth grade were roughly a year behind their classmates.

In addition to the toll



PHOTO COURTESY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Transitioning to a new school is not easy for many students.

transferring schools can take on their academic performance, students also may experience difficulty assimilating into their new schools. Though there's no formula to make such transitions easier, parents can try various strategies to

help their kids successfully adjust to new schools.

- Speak with children about the transition. Pathways.org, a not-for-profit organization devoted to providing free child development information to parents and health profession-

als, recommends parents speak with their children about transitioning to a new school. Encourage children to share what excites and worries them about the transition. The way parents discuss transitions can go a long way toward shaping how kids view the change.

- Stay true to your routine. Pathways also recommends parents of students who are transitioning to a new school do their best to replicate first day of school routines from years past. Some familiar traditions might help calm kids' concerns about their first day in a new school.

- Assimilate into a new community before the school year begins. The education resource Edweek.org notes that the most common causes of students

changing schools are residential moves related to parents' jobs or financial instability. Parents on the lookout for a new job or those who may need to relocate for financial reasons may want to delay moving until the current school year has ended. Moving between school years gives families time to acclimate to their new communities. That means kids will get time to make new friends. Some familiar faces on the first day at a new school can go a long way toward alleviating the fears children may have.

- Volunteer at your child's new school. Parental involvement at school can have a profound impact on children. The National Education Association notes that children whose parents are involved at school are more

likely to perform academically than students whose parents are uninvolved. In addition, such students are more likely to have good attendance and exhibit stronger social skills than children whose parents do not involve themselves in their children's school. It stands to reason that students transferring to a new school may benefit from parental involvement even more than other students, as seeing their parents approach a new school with excitement and energy may inspire children to follow suit.

Transitioning to a new school is not easy for many students. But parents can help smooth that transition in various ways.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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