

## Arc Guide

### Preparing for the Start of School



- Make certain the IEP (Individualized Education Program) adequately reflects your child's needs for the new school year. If not, request an IEP meeting from your child's case manager immediately (preferably before the new school year begins.) Also, make sure staff working with your child is aware of their needs and their IEP.
- Provide the school office and primary teachers with emergency contact information— your name, cell phone/work/home phone number and e-mail address.
- Visit the school several times before the first day of school. Locate and take pictures of important sites such as the lunchroom, library, classroom(s), gym, special education room, music room, restroom, water fountains, bus drop-off/pick-up point. Try to determine your child's schedule for the day and walk him/her through it a few times before school starts. This will help reduce your child's anxiety about the unknown.
- Meet the teachers with your child. Take pictures of your child's teachers and record their names. This will help your child learn the names and faces of trusted adults that can help him or her during their school day.
- Provide each of your child's teachers/staff with a one page 'snapshot' of your child including his/her picture, likes/dislikes, interests, behaviors and tips for working well with your child.
- Ask the teacher(s) who will be interacting with your child about the lunchroom routine, library checkout/return routine, the routine for the beginning and end of the school day, the recess routine and rules and the restroom routine and rules. Use this information with pictures to prepare your child for daily routines.
- Establish and introduce a communication notebook or e-mail address so daily activities or significant activities/concerns can be relayed between home and school.
- Make certain all accommodations and modifications that are on the IEP are in place when your child begins his/her first day of school.
- If your child will have a locker, determine whether a combination or key lock will work best and practice before the first day.
- Find out if any former classmates will be in your child's class. If possible, arrange get-togethers during the summer months.
- Request a school map and list of teachers' contact information (phone, voice mail, e-mail.)
- Request a lunchroom menu. Make special food requests/substitutions known to staff.
- Students are often asked to enter a lunch code. Request your child's code and take a picture (most schools have an actual size photocopy) of the keypad in which the number is entered. Have your child practice entering the code.
- Call the bus company to request the site of your child's bus stop. If possible, get the route your child's bus will take and drive it with your child before school starts. Add the bus company's name and phone number to the general list of teacher contact information provided by the school. Make copies of this list so that both parents have access to it at all times. Consider making copies for personal care attendants or in-home staff, emergency contacts and childcare as well. If your child receives specialized transportation as part of their IEP, make sure the transportation portion of their IEP is being implemented. If necessary, be sure the bus company knows your child's specialized transportation needs.

For further information or advocacy services, contact Arc Greater Twin Cities at 952-920-0855 or visit [www.arcgreatertwincities.org](http://www.arcgreatertwincities.org). Tell us what you think about this Arc Guide. Please complete a short survey online at <http://arcgreatertwincities.org/resources.aspx>. Thank you!