



## **Transitioning Back to School Without Overloading Your Child**

We can all remember the excitement, anxiety and enhanced level of activity that takes place as a new school year begins. This time of year brings increased expectations as well as new routines, new friends, a new teacher and possibly a new school.

Simultaneously, families review child care arrangements and the type and number of activities in which they want to enroll their children. While research studies have recognized the benefits of participating in organized activities, juggling all of these changes can be overwhelming to even the most well adjusted child.

“It is important to consider your child’s interests and their ability to adjust when planning activities,” says Janeal Roberts, Vice President of Education for Champions®, a nationwide provider of before and after-school programs. “Being aware of your child’s needs and preparing for this transition can be the key to a successful and fun school year.”

As the new school year approaches Roberts offers the following tips for parents to consider prior to finalizing their children’s schedule to ensure they are set-up for success.

- **Look at each child as an individual.** All children are different and have different talents and varying abilities to manage their time and handle change. Be sure to take this into consideration especially if your family has more than one child.
- **Establish expectations and priorities with your child.** Ask yourself “what is most important to me” and “what do I want for my child?” Be sure to involve your children and consider their input in your decision. Your family’s schedule should reflect these goals and not those of neighbors or other influences. Revisit these priorities with your children on a regular basis and engage them in discussions to help you reinforce and celebrate successes, assess issues and challenges and review lessons learned.
- **Wait before you commit or over extend your child.** Look for extra curricular activities that can be added after school schedules are

established. Waiting 30 days to add a new activity after the school year begins can give you and your child the time needed to settle into a routine and reinforce priorities.

- **Streamline and organize activities.** For many children it is not the additional one to two hours a week of soccer, piano or dance that causes stress or frustration, but the added time and rush to get from one place to another. Look for centralized afterschool programs that provide a variety of activities on-site to reduce or limit running from one place to another.
- **Establish family routines and traditions early.** Make a calendar that clearly lists meal times, bedtime, homework, chores, activities and other important family commitments that your child is expected to attend. Review and reinforce the schedule with your children to help establish routines.
- **Plan for down time, don't wait for it.** There is a lot to be gained from unstructured activities. Reserve down time so that your child can accept an unexpected invitation, be spontaneous and appreciate the times when "there is nothing to do."

Working together with your child to find the schedule that works for your family will not only ensure a comfortable balance, but will teach children to understand their own tolerance. In addition, being able to discuss these challenges will help as your child transitions into middle school and their teenage years.