



**Holy Family**  
Catholic Regional Division

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Peace River - Grimshaw - Manning - McLennan - High Prairie - Valleyview

It's fall, and that marks the return to school! The start of any school year can elicit a wide range of emotions: some students are thrilled to see their teachers and friends, some are eager to get back into routine, some are uncertain about the year ahead, and there are some that are nervous or unhappy to return. Obviously this fall is a different return to school than most of us have experienced, but that doesn't mean that it has to be negative. Here are a few tips to make the start of this year as smooth as possible for students and families:

1. Focus on the positive things about going back to school. Many kids are looking forward to seeing their classmates again, and safe socializing, new school clothes, and fresh school supplies can all be uplifting.
2. Model calm and honest behavior. Children of all ages look to adults for cues on how to handle situations, so how the adults in their lives address their own fears and frustrations will directly influence the children's emotions and behaviour.
3. Listen. Check in with your child(ren) before and after school to see how they are feeling, and to provide any reassurance if necessary. Their emotions may change over the course of the day (just like us!), and they need to know that such changes are normal. Checking in allows kids a chance to express their emotions in a safe environment, and to feel valued and understood by the adults who are most important to them. For example, if your child(ren) says they are feeling anxious because of all the changes, it is okay to acknowledge things are different, and that can make people uncomfortable. Kids can then be reassured that there are guidelines in place to keep them safe, and their teachers will plan lots of time to teach and practise any new safety measures.
4. Typically it is best to teach kids to tolerate fear and anxiety. Avoiding anxiety-provoking situations, like school, creates a vicious cycle of breeding stronger anxiety that leads to more avoidance. Breaking the day down mentally into small chunks can make the return to school feel manageable (eg. "I've just got to make it to recess/Now I've just got to make it to gym/Now I've just got to make it to home time").

If your child(ren) is faking sick to avoid returning to school because of worry, enlist the support of teachers, other school staff, or your local behavior consultant and/or division psychologist. If your child(ren) exhibit real physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach aches due to anxiety, speak with those same people and your family doctor.

**"Student Success in a Catholic Community Guided by Christ"**

For more information, check out these websites:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/page16759.aspx>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/back-school.html?WT.ac=ctg#catlearning>

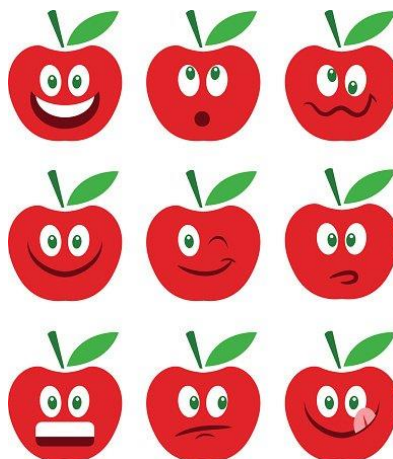
<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-covid-19-school-return>

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/7-tips-for-educators-returning-to-school-during-covid-19/>

<https://www.lutherwood.ca/mentalhealth/blog/2020/supporting-your-child-through-back-to-school-covid-anxiety>

<http://infoaboutkids.org/blog/parents-and-COVID-19-helping-your-children/>

If your child attends:	Please contact:
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