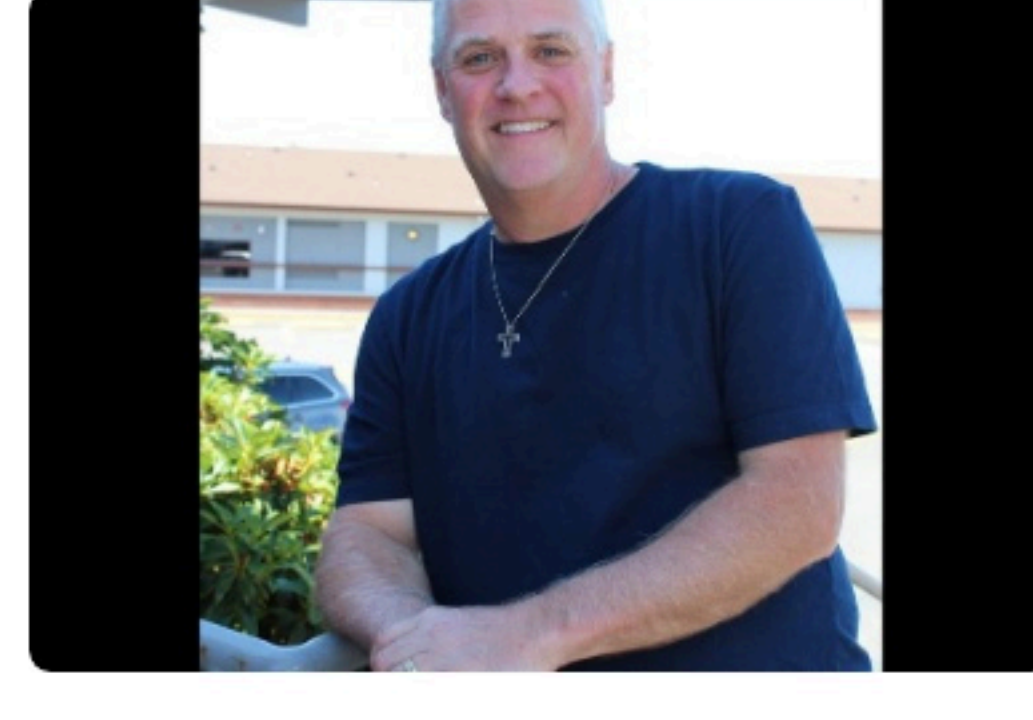




Start The School Year Off Right

School is just a few days away and teachers and staff across the Chehalis School District are getting ready to greet students for the 2023-2024 school year.



The first day of school for grades 3-12 will be Tuesday, Sept. 5. First and second graders will start Wednesday, Sept. 6 while kindergartners will have their first official day on Friday, Sept. 8. Are you wondering how to support your student to start the school year off on the right foot? We asked those in the know for some ideas for parents in these final days of summer.

Brian Adams, Chehalis School District Mental Health Intervention Specialist, said it is important for parents to encourage their students to start the school year strong, which means taking school seriously and also asking for help if they need it. Even a few missed days or assignments can quickly put a student into a position where they cannot keep up with their peers. At the high school level, even one failed class means a student is not on track to graduate on time without intervention. Adams said he hates to see students who have gotten so behind that they feel frustrated or defeated and want to give up on school. Throughout the district, there are [counselors](#) available to help students with educational or mental health struggles and Adams said he'd love to see more kids take advantage of this service.

"They can talk to us any time," Adams said. "Just come into the counseling center and ask to talk to your counselor. Don't hesitate and don't wait until it's almost too late."

Jamie Roundtree, RN, BSN, Chehalis Health Services Coordinator said now and through the first few weeks of school, parents can help their kids remember to get plenty of sleep. According to the Center for Disease Control, kids up to age 5 (the age of some new kindergartners) need 10-13 hours of sleep a day, while 6-12 year olds are recommended to get 9-12 hours of sleep and 13-18 year olds should get 8-10 hours of sleep each night.

"The first couple weeks, the kids are exhausted because they haven't been on their routines all summer," she said. "We need them to get plenty of rest."



Start a Conversation, Start a Routine

For W.F. West High School Assistant Principal Christine Voelker, the biggest thing she sees students and parents struggle with at the beginning of the school year is re-establishing routines.

"Helping them establish a routine before school starts is so important," Voelker said. "What does your nighttime routine look like? What does your morning routine look like? So many of our kids just don't have that routine."

Having a conversation with your students about their feelings, needs and expectations is a great place to start. Voelker said some conversation starters parents could use with their kids include:

- What time do you plan to get up tomorrow and what do you plan to wear?
- Do you have a place to store your school supplies so they're in one place in the morning? (In the case of kids who have more than one household, think about having a backpack and school supplies at both homes so kids at least have basic school supplies with them at school every day)
- Where should we keep important dates and paperwork from school?
- Where would you feel most comfortable doing your homework?
- What are you most excited for this school year?
- How can I help you get ready for school?
- What parts of your day worry you? How can I help with that?
- Who is a person at school you feel you connect with?



Safety First When the School Year Starts

Getting ready for a new school year also means getting yourself and your student back into the mindset for safety, said District Safety Officers Todd Thornburg and Troy Thornburg.

Remember those school zones will be returning with the school year, and along with decreased speed limits. [State law](#) establishes a required 20 mile per hour zone within 300 feet of any marked school or playground crosswalk and traffic fines double in school zones. If you have a student who will be walking to school, talk to them about being mindful of traffic and how to safely cross the road if needed. If you have a student who will be driving themselves to school, talk to them about obeying the speed limit in school zones. If you will be driving your student to school, set a good example by also obeying the speed limit and being courteous to pedestrians and other drivers.

"We're always safety minded in our office but staff and parents and students, they've been off for the summer and it's about getting back into the mindset that we need to be safe," Todd Thornburg said.

Some other safety issues they asked students and parents be aware of are:

- The pickup area for [James Lintott Elementary](#) and [Orin Smith Elementary](#) can often be very congested right after school dismisses. Parents who are able to arrive 10-15 minutes after school dismisses will encounter little, if any, congestion
- There is no parking in the school bus zone on the side of [Chehalis Middle School](#)
- High School and Middle School students need to bring a lock to secure valuables items such as money and cell phones during gym and athletics. Unfortunately, many thefts occur each year
- Only Juniors and Seniors at [W.F. West High School](#) are allowed off campus during the school day
- All visitors to any school need to check in with the office to receive a visitor's badge and only those who have an active volunteer clearance through the Chehalis School District may volunteer at any school or event. Volunteer forms are available [HERE](#)

More Steps to Take Before School Starts

- View your student and family information on [Skyward](#). Make sure to update your contact information if it has changed so that your student's school can reach you
- Sign up for the [Remind](#) App, the Chehalis School District's primary communication tool for notification such as school closures, bus district's changes and emergency information
- View the 2023-2024 school year calendar including half days, holidays and school day schedules [HERE](#)
- Fill out a volunteer clearance form [HERE](#). Forms need to be renewed annually
- View school lunch menus, add money to your child's school lunch account or fill out paperwork to apply for free or reduced lunch [HERE](#)
- Make any other payments besides school lunch accounts (ASB card, sports fees) [HERE](#)
- Read district news, sign up for newsletters and find out how to follow us on social media [HERE](#)

Get On The Bus

Have you ever thought about driving a school bus? The Chehalis School District is now hiring bus drivers. Paid training, CDL certification testing fees covered, competitive wages and benefits. For more information about becoming a bus driver, go to chehalisschools.org/transportation/.



[Notice of Non-Discrimination](#)
[Anti-bullying Policy and Procedure](#)