



Do I Need To Go To Back to School Night?Q. I just received the school year calendar from my kids' school. On the calendar is a "back to school night." What is it and is it important for us to attend?A. Yes, it is important and yes you should definitely attend. First, you should attend as many school meetings as possible. Not only do they keep you informed but also allow you to express your ideas and concerns. Back to school night is a general meeting that has the following purposes: you get to meet your children's teachers, principal and other important staff, academic standards and expectations are outlined, homework expectations are presented, behavioral issues are addressed, parent expectations are outlined, specialty staff are introduced should your child need any services during the school year, your district's handbook is presented and explained, dress codes are stated and you get to meet other parents and the PTA committee in the school. Back to school night is not the time for a parent teacher conference. Most back to school nights occur within two to three weeks of school starting. Your children's teachers don't have anything to tell you, yet. Your child's teacher will introduce herself and give an overview of students' daily routines, schedules, goals, and activities — some of these may already be written on the blackboard when you get there so the teacher can dive right into the other important things. She will also discuss her homework policy, discipline plan, and any other important information such as if she maintains a classroom homepage and how to contact her. The lengthiest part of the evening will be spent going over the curriculum and the methods the teacher will use to reach the year's goals. If your child has several teachers for different subjects, you may go from classroom to classroom doing this, usually in the same order your child would, so you experience a mini-day of school.

Some questions you may ask the teachers are as follows:1. How much homework do you give?2. What grading system do you use? 3. How do we communicate with you?4. Will you call once you see that my child is struggling?5. How do you handle behavior issues?6. How do you handle children who may be a little advanced?7. What can I do at home to ensure a successful school year for my children?8. Can I volunteer in the classroom?9. Can I accompany my children on trips?10. What are school lunches like?11. Can my child bring a snack?12. How do you handle special needs students who need extra help?13. Do you have a reward system?14. My child is shy. How will you help him/her to speak up?15. What supplies does my child need?16. Do you send a weekly calendar or is my child expected to remember notices?17. Are there specific books used at school that I can purchase for home use?18. Can the school send home textbooks for home use?19. Can my child gain extra points for extra work?20. What can we do as parents to aid the education of our children in your class?21. Can I leave you my contact numbers in case of an emergency?22. What is your teaching philosophy?23. How do you uplift your students who may need extra encouragement?24. How do you reach students who may be below average?25. Do you teach via all modalities so that all of the children benefit including visual learners, auditory learners and hands on learners?

What Can I Do About Students With Poor Hygiene?Q. I am a 5th grade teacher and last school year a few of my students had poor hygiene and body odor. Some of them were teased by other students which I put a stop to in my class! How can I address this problem this year without

hurting the children's feelings and offending parents?A. This is a hot topic but one that needs to be addressed! You can approach the subject in your classroom as a health lesson and send home a notice to parents that you will be covering this topic in class. Explain to them that this is not a sex education class but a health topic on how to take care of your body! Some parents are so busy and don't notice that their children are of age to start using body products. A flyer sent home may grab their attention to the matter. As puberty starts parents must teach children good hygiene. Often around age 9 and 10, parents begin to let children bath themselves and sometimes they don't do a good job! Children who are not clean can suffer from:

1. Teasing2. Alienation from peers3. Have low self esteem4. Afraid to interact with others5. May catch diseases or spread diseases6. May develop skin conditions7. Have bad body odour8. Can develop urinary tract infections9. Hair can become matted10. Painful cavities can form11. Bad breath12. Scabies 13. Pink eye

Parents must also make sure that their children:1. Have clean hair 2. Scrub good in the tub daily 3. Wear clean clothes 4. Know how to blow their noses 5. Have and use deodorant 6. Have and use lotion 7. Keep faces clean 8. Have good eating habits and avoid sweet foods 9. Consult a pediatrician if the child has a bad odour anywhere 10. Visit the dentist twice yearly 11. Washes hands frequently especially before a meal

What Can You Do As A Teacher?1. Create a lesson that is a thematic unit that will span a few weeks 2. Have the kids tell what staying clean means and how to do it 3. Ask parents to send in toothpaste and toothbrushes so students can brush after lunch 4. Buy deodorant, lotion, hair products for your students who you know need it most and who may not be able to afford it in this economy—but give it to them alone so they don't feel singled out or embarrassed 5. Have the children write a fictional story about a boy or girl who has poor hygiene and how he/she can fix it 6. Solicit parents help and cooperation 7. Take your class on a field trip to visit a doctor and dentist offices 8. Ask special area teachers to help you during your thematic unit. For example, the kids can draw pictures about hygiene in art class, and talk about washing off after gym 9. Make the lesson a fun one

Lisa-Anne Ray-Byers is a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist who has worked in education for over two decades. She holds graduate degrees in speech-language pathology and multicultural education. She also holds certification in educational administration. She is the education editor of the Community Journal newspaper in Baldwin, NY and is a member of the National Education Writers Association. She is also the author of the children's books, *They Say I Have ADHD*, *I Say Life Sucks! Thoughts From Nicholas*, *They SSSay I'm a StStStutterer, But I Say Nothing! Meet Kelly!* and co-author of *365 Ways to Succeed With ADHD*. You may contact her at speechlrb@yahoo.com or by visiting her website at www.AskLisaAnne.com.