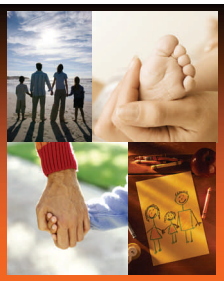


Kinship Connection

September/October 2011

Helping Kids In Care Change Schools

By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Inc.

Children who are in care often face educational challenges that require a great deal of attention and support from foster parents. These children who are traumatized by the abuse and neglect that brings them into the system also deal with the trauma of being removed from their homes.

They bring these experiences into the classroom and often find education secondary to their need to deal with the emotional challenges brought about by their life experiences.

Studies show that children with multiple home placements (and thus often in multiple schools), gave a low rate of graduation from high school. Reading levels on average are lower for children in foster care. They need extra support and assistance to succeed in school.

Foster parents are faced with the challenge of supporting these vulnerable children during school transitions. In an ideal world, a child who is placed in a new foster home would have the time to adjust to the new physical setting and neighborhood, get to know the family, and learn the new household routines before entering school. Foster parents would have time to guide their new family members though their personal and educational transition into a new school.

In the real world of foster care, an abrupt transition to a new home is frequently a necessity. This transfer to a new home happens at any time—including during the school year and on days when the foster parents have to work. Often the families and workers don't have the luxury of time to prepare the kids for the experience of going to a new school. They need to be registered and begin school upon placement in new homes, sometimes within the following day of that placement.

Here are some things you can do as a foster parent to make sure that the school transition is the best it can be.

Preparing for school

- Get to know the local schools and their locations if you are not familiar with them. Most foster parents enroll their child in public schools, but you may also choose a private, parochial or charter school if the child's parents and social worker also think that's a good idea.
- If appropriate and approved by the social worker, invite the child's parent to accompany you to the school. Involving the child's parent from the beginning may help the child make a smooth transition and helps build respect.
- Obtain any health forms and immunization records from the child's parent or your social worker as soon as possible. They are required for school registration. You may have to schedule physician, dentist or optometrist visits.
- Work with your social worker to obtain the necessary signature from the parent or legal guardian. Schools vary as to how strict they are about who is able to sign for what activities.
- Learn what forms you can legally sign. Often caseworkers recommend that foster parents cross out "parent or guardian" under the signature line on any form and enter "foster parent" in bold letters with their signature.
- Consult with your caseworker about an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) if the child you foster is in special education. SEE FCARC Tip Sheet, Fostering a Child with an IEP for more information about that topic. http://wifostercareandadoption.org/library/519/IEP.pdf.
- Keep copies of all school forms that you sign in a confidential file, as well as any paperwork that you get from the school. Work with the child's parents about signing permission forms and school communications. You can become a mentor for the birth parent, if he or she isn't already very involved with the school system.

Preparing the child

- Practice your name, address and phone number with new children in your home, whether the children are six or 16. Make sure that they have a written copy of your name, address, place of employment, telephone numbers and any other pertinent information. Put a copy of this information in their backpacks or a secure place for younger children where they know they can find the information.
- Take the child with you to the school when you register, whether he is six or 16.
- Show your child the route to school or the bus stop. If possible, consider taking her to school the first day or two or introducing her to the bus driver.

Continued on Page 2

Relative Caregivers Support/Education Group

Help Us Help You!
Bring ideas to provide topics for discussions that will be informational as well as beneficial to you and your families.

First Tuesday of each month
September 6th, 2011
October 4th, 2011
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Refreshments will be available

Parents Place
1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI
262-549-5575

Free Childcare - Call Parents Place to reserve your spot!

Please RSVP To Janis or Libby
Janis Ramos 262-896-8069
Libby Sinclair 262-548-7277

Helping Kids In Care Change Schools
Continued from Page 1

- If possible, introduce your kids to the teacher, the principal and other school staff before the first day.
- Tour the school with the child and familiarize him with his classrooms, locker, gym, library and cafeteria. Some schools arrange a school tour for older children or have another student show them around.
- Get to know the teachers. Introduce yourself and tell them that you are a foster parent. Make sure they have your contact information, including cell phone and email address.
- If children are in special education classes or have other support teachers, get to know those teachers well. Remember that foster parents cannot sign for any (IEP) forms, although the responsibility is the school personnel to get the right signature.
- Prepare children for lessons about genealogy and their family history so that they can participate in these lessons in the most comfortable way they can. Share with teachers that these assignments may be difficult for your placement child as well as other children not living with biological families.
- Help children develop an age appropriate story with which they are comfortable so that they can respond to questions others may ask. See the article Children Who Are Adopted and School issues at www.wifostercareandadoption.org/library/164/ADOPTED%20CHILD%20GOES%20TO%20SCHOOL_ADOPTED%20CHILD%20GOES%20TO%20SCHOOL.pdf for information about developing life stories.
- Learn what the extracurricular activities are at the school and encourage the child you foster to become active in one or more of these activities.

Working with the School

- Remember that you are an advocate for the child. Work with the school and communicate with them assertively, while also recognizing the constraints the schools have. Remember that teachers have many other children in their classrooms and their time is limited. However, they may be very willing to give special assistance to children when they are aware of their challenging situations.
- Talk to school librarians and suggest books about foster care and foster children.
- Visit the school for open houses and volunteer there, if possible. If there is not enough time to bake for bake sales or make classroom treats, buy some snacks to send with your child. Studies show that when parents are involved in the schools, their kids do better.
- Become familiar with county, agency and school district guidelines if children have an IEP. Also see FCARC Tip Sheet, "Working with an IEP" (http://wifostercareandadoption.org/library/519/IEP.pdf).
- Talk with the teacher or guidance counselor about the behaviors of the children that result from their difficult backgrounds without violating confidentiality. Know the guidelines for confidentiality. It often helps to tell teachers information about what some kids in care experience in general, rather than your child specifically. (i.e. *Many children in foster care had multiple placements making school and friendships difficult for them.*)
- Educate classroom teachers and other staff about foster care. Many may know little about foster care and the obstacles kids in care encounter.
- Talk to school librarians and suggest books about foster care and foster children.

With thoughtful preparation and support, you can help ease the transition to a new school when children come to your home. Talk to the children in your care regularly about their school experiences and maintain good communication with school staff.

© 2008 Adoption Resources of Wisconsin

Recognizing Outstanding Kids

6th ANNUAL ART SHOW
November 17, 2011 at
Waukesha County Human Services Board Room
Exhibit 9 am—6 pm
Reception 6 pm—8 pm

The theme for this year's ROKs Art Show Mural is **People Helping People**.

Any agency youth under age 21 are eligible and invited to participate in this non-competitive show, which will include painting, sketching, drawing, clay works, photography, woodworking, music, poetry, fiber arts, jewelry, dance forms & other media. This is another opportunity for artists of all kinds to showcase their creativity.

We are looking for any artists who would like to create this year's mural(s), which will be displayed in the building. The deadline for submitting your sketch for approval is September 15. The mural needs to be completed for unveiling at the 6th Annual ROKs Art Show on November 17 and will be publicly displayed in the Agency.

We look forward to your child's participation and also encourage you to invite your child to take part in this year's show by submitting any art pieces they have created. All the participants in previous shows have found it a truly rewarding and reaffirming experience. We hope you will join us in being a part of this show.

Fall 2011 Wisconsin Education Fair

See the links for the Fall 2011 Wisconsin Education Fair nearest you. The fairs are intended for youth participation. It's an opportunity for youth to talk about their futures to:

- colleges
- universities
- technical colleges
- vocational and trade schools
- the military

See the links:
http://wefs.org/
http://wefs.org/locations
http://www.wefs.org/Prepare/students.html

"Find what makes your heart sing and create your own music."
~Mac Anderson

Internet Safety Tips for Caregivers
From Adoption Resources of Wisconsin

The internet offers many opportunities for adults and children to learn, and the Internet has also dramatically changed how we communicate.

Unfortunately, the Internet is also a place where children and adults can be seriously victimized by various kinds of predators. Children and adults can be exposed to: cyber-bullying, inappropriate content, and loss of privacy.

In order to effectively protect our children, parents need to know the dangerous aspects of the Internet, including taking the necessary steps to promote Internet safety for your family.

The Crimes Against Children Research Center found that one in five youth using the Internet received online sexual solicitations. W e need to encourage our children to come to use when something inappropriate happens.

Following are some tips that may be helpful for you and your children.

Establishing Family Ground Rules
Families have established house rules for a multitude of behaviors and expectations, but sometimes families neglect to address the importance of developing clear and consistent rules regarding computer usage.

Families can post a written *Family Internet Agreement* that should:

- Set clear boundaries on prohibiting the posting or sharing of personal identifying information online; such as names, pictures, telephone numbers, addresses, passwords, or credit card numbers.
  This includes not letting your child's last name appear on the "from" line and some foster parents don't allow their child to have even his or her first name as part of the email address. Absolutely do not let your child have an email address such as: Jane.Doe2011@email.com
- Designate the amount of time that each child can be online.
- Specify time frames when each child can be online.
- Give a general outline of which sites are appropriate (i.e. Disney, Ask Jeeves, Wikipedia, etc.) and which sites are forbidden (i.e. all sites that require the viewer to be 18 or older).
- Establish specific Internet ground rules of what is acceptable and appropriate behavior.
- Specify who the child should tell if he or she receives any threatening material.
- Prohibit opening of e-mails or attachments from an unknown person.
- Depending on the team members' input, consider making one of the rules be that the foster parent (and others as necessary) be allowed to know the password of the account and monitor mail periodically. Stress that the child has a right to absolute privacy with "snail mail," but that the Internet is a riskier place.
- Share this Internet agreement with other members of the child's team (birth family, social worker, school staff, respite providers, etc.)

Educate:

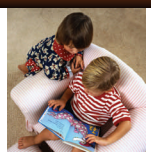
- Become familiar with the Internet. This is important whether or not you have a computer in your house because computers are easily accessible to your children.
- If need be, enroll in a computer class or consult with your friends, neighbors or colleagues.
- Set up a time to talk with your children and have them teach you what they already know. You're likely to learn something new, and it helps build your child's self esteem to teach you something.

Communicate: Talk openly about the dangers that exist on the Internet and encourage to be responsible.

Supervise: By placing your computer in a central and visible location, such as a living room instead of a bedroom, you will be able to closely and consistently monitor Internet use. Make sure that the monitor is facing in such a way that people who are passing by can view it easily. This has an added benefit of the kids knowing that you're going to safe sites when you're at the computer, as well.

Explore Together: Learn from one another by utilizing the Internet as a teaching tool and educational resource. While the Internet can be dangerous, it is also an invaluable resource of opportunities to learn and grow together.

The Children's Book Nook



Reading about going back to school is a great way to ease the transition. Especially with younger children, as you turn the pages together, you can talk about their hopes and fears, as well as discussing the wonderful characters in these books.

To get you started, here are some suggestions for children of elementary school age:

- *The Berenstain Bears Go to School*. Berenstain, Stan and Jan. Random House, 1978.
- *Arthur's Teacher Trouble*. Brown, Marc. Trumpet, 1986.
- *Clifford's First School Day*. Bridwell, Norman. Scholastic, 1999.
- *Never Spit on Your Shoes*. Cazet, Denys. Scholastic, 1993.
- *Get Ready for Second Grade, Amber Brown*. Danziger, Paula. Puffin, 2003.
- *Kindergarten Rocks!* Davis, Katie. Harcourt Children's Books, 2005.
- *Back to School for Rotten Ralph*. Gantos, Jack. HarperTrophy, 2000.
- *Back to School with Betsy*. Haywood, Carolyn. Odyssey Classics, reissue edition, 1990.
- *Chrysanthemum*. Henkes, Kevin. HarperTrophy, 1996.
- *The Day the Teacher Went Bananas*. Howe, James. Penguin, 1987.
- *It's Back to School We Go!* Jackson, Ellen. Millbrook Press, 2003.
- *Sumi's First Day of School Ever.* Pak, Soyung. Penguin Putnam Books, 2003.
- *Amelia Bedelia Goes Back to School*. Parish, Herman. Harper Festival, 2004.
- *Curious George Goes to School*. Rey, Margret. Houghton Mifflin, 1989.
- *The Best School Year Ever*. Robinson, Barbara. HarperTrophy, reprint edition, 2005.
- *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*. Slate, Joseph. Puffin Books, 2001.
- *The Teacher from the Black Lagoon*. Thaler, Mike. Scholastic Paperbacks, 1989.
- *The Night Before Kindergarten*. Wing, Natasha. Grosset & Dunlap, 2001.

For Middle and High School Students

- *The Middle School Survival Guide : How to Survive from the Day Elementary School Ends until the Second High School Begins*. Erlbach,Arlene. Walker Books for Young Readers, 2003.
- *High School Bound: The Ultimate Guide for High School Success and Survival*. Spethman, Martin J. and Klein, Chuck. Westgate Publishing & Entertainment, 1997.
- *The Real High School Handbook : How to Survive, Thrive, and Prepare for What's Next*. Lieberman,Susan Abel. Mariner Books, 1997.

Calendar of Important Dates/Events

September 5, 2011 ..... Labor Day - Waukesha County Closed
September 6, 2011 ..... Relative Caregivers Support/ Education Group
September 11, 2011 ..... Patriot Day
September 11, 2011 ..... Grandparents' Day
September 17, 2011 ..... Apple Harvest Festival 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Retzer Nature Center
September 23, 2011 ..... First Day of Autumn
October 4, 2011 ..... Relative Caregivers Support/ Education Group
October 9, 2011 ..... National Children's Day
October 10, 2011 ..... Columbus Day
October 24, 2011 ..... United Nations Day
October 31, 2011 ..... Halloween

Fun Family Activity: Halloween Yard Art from www.kaboose.com

What you'll need:
- Orange corrugated plastic (pumpkin)
- White corrugated plastic (ghost)
- Green corrugated plastic (stem of pumpkin)
- Yellow "Painters" paint marker
- Black "Painters" paint marker
- 4 wire hangers
- Wire cutters
- Pliers
- Orange electrical tape (pumpkin)
- White electrical tape (ghost)
- Scissors
- Scotch brand foam Mounting Tape

How to make it:
1. For Pumpkin: Cut out a pumpkin shape from the orange corrugated plastic. Make sure you cut it so that the lines in the plastic are vertical.
2. Cut out a stem from the green corrugated plastic and attach to the pumpkin with the mounting tape.
3. For Ghost: Cut out the ghost shape from the white corrugated plastic. Make sure you cut it so that the lines in the plastic are vertical.
4. Draw the faces onto the pumpkin and ghost with the paint markers. Use yellow and black for the pumpkin, use only black for the ghost.
5. Cut the hooks off all four hangers with the wire cutters.
6. Unfold and straighten the hangers.
7. Using the pliers, fold down the top two inches of each straight wire to form a hook.
8. Push two hangers down through each plastic decoration so they come out of the bottom and can be stuck into the ground.
9. Secure the hangers on the back side with the electrical tape.

After-School Snacks Kid Can Make from www.kaboose.com

If your child rushes home from school with a growling tummy and in need of a treat, it's time to tell her about these tasty and healthy snacks she can prepare herself. Note: Some assistance is required for kids ages 8 and under.

Snack #1 - Ants on a Log
What you need:
- 2 celery sticks
- Pairing knife
- Butter knife
- Cutting board
- Raisins
- Cream cheese or peanut butter

What you do:
1. Wash the celery and use your paring knife to cut it into 4 pieces (about 5 inches long) on the cutting board.
2. Spread cream cheese or peanut butter on the celery sticks with your butter knife.
3. Add raisins and voila! You've got ants on a log.

Snack #2 - "Sushi" Rolls
What you need:
- Cream cheese
- 2 slices of cold cuts
- 1 whole wheat wrap
- Butter knife
- Cutting board
- Chopsticks (optional)

What you do:
1. Place your wrap on the cutting board.
2. Spread cream cheese on the wrap and then add your cold cuts.
3. Roll the stuffed wrap into a tight roll.
4. Cut the roll into 8-10 pieces (each piece should be about 2 inches wide).
5. Grab your chopsticks and chow down!

Snack #3 - Personal Pizza
What you need:
- Whole wheat pita
- Cheese slices
- Cherry tomatoes or tomato slices
- Microwave-safe plate
- Paring knife

What you do:
1. Place your pita on the plate.
2. Add the cheese slices and tomatoes to the pita.
3. Put the plate inside the microwave and close it shut. Set it for 30 seconds. (Parents may need to help here)
4. Cut the pizza into 4 slices and it's ready!

Snack #4 - Cinnamon Toast
What you need:
- 2 slices of bread
- Butter knife
- Butter
- Cinnamon
- Toaster

What you do:
1. Toast your 2 slices of bread in the toaster until it looks golden brown.
2. Put them on a plate and use your butter knife to add butter while the bread is still warm.
3. Sprinkle cinnamon on top and eat this treat while it's warm.

Snack #5 - Homemade Parfait
What you need:
- Vanilla yogurt
- Honey
- Mixed Fruit (strawberries, bananas, and berries)
- Chocolate chips (optional)
- Tall glass
- Tablespoon

What you do:
1. Fill your glass about halfway with yogurt.
2. Fill the rest of your glass with mixed fruit.
3. Drizzle honey on top and use a tablespoon to mix everything together.
4. Add a handful of chocolate chips for a finishing touch and dig in!

Contact Phone Numbers:

Kinship Care Staff
Linda Finn
lfinn@waukeshacounty.gov
262-548-7254

Deb Fosberg
dfosberg@waukeshacounty.gov
262-548-7256

Kathy Mullooly, Supervisor
kmullooly@waukeshacounty.gov
262-896-6832

Relative Licensing
Libby Sinclair
esinclair@waukeshacounty.gov
262-548-7277

Janis Ramos
jramos@waukeshacounty.gov
262-896-8069

Mary Alice Grosser, Supervisor
mgrosser@waukeshacounty.gov
262-548-7272

Very Special Thanks to Maureen Erb for designing and producing our newsletter.

WAUKESHA COUNTY KINSHIP CONNECTION