

## Transitioning Back To School Without Overloading Your Child

(NAPSA)—We can all remember the excitement, anxiety and enhanced level of activity that take 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 the type and number of activities in which they want to enroll their children. While research studies recognize the benefits of extracurricular activities, juggling these changes can be overwhelming to even the most well-adjusted child.

“It is important to consider your child’s interests and 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.”

Roberts offers the following tips to help parents schedule children 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. Revisit these priorities with your children regularly, engage them in discussions, celebrate successes and review challenges and lessons learned.

- **Wait before you commit or overextend your child.** Look for extracurricular activities that can be added after school schedules are established. Waiting 30



**Juggling after-school activities can overwhelm children. A centralized after-school program can minimize the stress.**

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.

- **Streamline and organize activities.** It’s not the additional one to two hours a week of soccer or dance that causes stress or frustration, but the added time and rush to get from place to place. Look for centralized after-school programs that provide multiple activities on-site to reduce running from place to place.

- **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 downtime, don’t wait for it.** There is a lot to be gained from unstructured activities. Reserve downtime 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 ensure a comfortable balance and teach children to understand their own tolerance. Discussing these challenges will help as your children transition into middle school and their teenage years.