

JENNIFER CONNELLAN: FUTURE FOCUSED

Back To School: Homework for All

“**B**ack to School”... I think I can hear the chorus from here.

For kids, it's goodbye to long beach days and hello to homework. For parents, it's the school supply lists, the new carpool rosters, and trying to find your kids' classrooms on Back to School night.

Fun stuff, right?

Add in the anxiety of having new teachers, new class schedules, and busy counselors, and it's enough to make you want to skip the fall all together.

So, how do you navigate the waters of a new school year? Should you introduce yourself to your kids' teachers? What is the best way to contact them? What if there is a problem with your child's schedule? Questions, questions, and more questions... You need answers!

Not to worry. I have the answers for you, straight from the horses' mouths (the horses being the teachers, counselors and principals from our local schools). And here's what you need to know now: 1. Teachers want you to introduce yourself to them! From what I gathered, a short, polite email is perfect. Let them



know that you are looking forward to having your student in their class and ask them what you can do at home to support their efforts. A brief description of your student's strengths and problem areas is also appreciated. For example, "Johnny is a strong Math student but he is often shy and has trouble participating in class discus-

sions." Finally, for the Subject line in the email, put your student's name so that the teacher can reference it easily in the future.

2. If there is a problem with your student's schedule, call your student's counselor. Follow-up with an email specifically stating the problem. In doing so though, understand that the counselors are dealing with a large number of scheduling problems, and they basically doing triage according to urgency. Priority is given to students who do not have enough classes and have holes in their schedules, and to those who have too many classes. Then, they address the general errors in scheduling like having a senior who was accidentally placed in a freshmen English class. All other prob-

lems are handled in the order received. Be aware also that some schools have set up specific days for the different grade levels to see their counselors. 3. Make sure you check the website to see what day your student is supposed to see their counselor.

The school websites are THE key sources of information now, especially if you need to know dates. Check the website for the 'Important Dates' and/or the 'Daily Bulletin'. This will keep you up to speed even if your student doesn't know what is going on!

These are the big ones that will help you most immediately. Most importantly though, remember to be optimistic about the year ahead! It is a new and exciting opportunity for your students to be successful.

Ask your kids what THEIR goals are for the year. How do they want to make this year great?

If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to email me! I want this column to be VERY interactive and I welcome your concerns, questions, and comments. Chances are that if you are wondering about something, so is another parent!

JENNIFER CONNELLAN IS THE NEW COLUMNIST FOR THE SCHOOL SECTION OF THE CAPISTRANO DISPATCH. SHE IS THE CO-FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF SAN JUAN-BASED FUTURE FOCUSED. FUTURE FOCUSED HAS BEEN OFFERING HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LIFE COACHING AND TUTORING SERVICES FOR TEENAGERS SINCE 2003, AND THEY HAVE HELPED HUNDREDS OF ORANGE COUNTY STUDENTS INCREASE THEIR GPAs, IMPROVE THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE AND CONNECT WITH THEIR FUTURE. SHE HAS TWO MASTER'S DEGREES IN PSYCHOLOGY AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE DEALING WITH ADOLESCENT ISSUES. REACH HER BY EMAILING: JENNIFER@FUTUREFOCUSED.COM

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