

- 1 Check your children's closets to see if they have clothes they rarely wear or school supplies they can use again this school year. Have a "fashion show" with younger children.
- 2 Back to school clothes shopping may need to involve compromise. Make a list of "want" and "need" items with an extra column for "maybe" items. Use this time to explain budgeting to your children: as well as making choices (one special outfit versus several different outfits).
- 3 Purchase a good, sturdy backpack for everyday use. Backpacks should have two wide, padded shoulder straps that don't dig into shoulders as well as a padded back and waist and chest straps.
- 4 Buying school supplies and lunches in bulk will save money; gather a group of parents to shop at warehouse stores.
- 5 Plan for more than one shopping trip. A one-day marathon will be exhausting for you and your children. Try to avoid the weekend before school starts, which will be very busy.
- 6 If you know families who lack the resources to purchase school supplies or clothes, encourage them to contact their school Social Worker. There are also a number of organized school supply drives—find out where and when they are taking place.
- 7 Take advantage of the "Back to School" sales that many department stores are having and start purchasing school supplies little by little. Look for store coupons in the newspapers, on the Internet or on your phone.
- 8 Look beyond the main stores for your shopping, such as consignment stores, dollar stores, and websites. The Internet can be a great resource for bargains - and a way to sell gently-used clothing and toys your children no longer use or wear.
- 9 Wait to buy trendy items like lunchboxes and themed school supplies until a week after school begins. Your children may want the same brand as their friends.
- 10 Work with other parents and families to organize a neighborhood swap for clothing, toys, and books.