

With a little bit of planning you can have an incredible evening with your family, full of fun as you strengthen your child's faith. Beginning a new school year is a perfect time to gather as a family, have some laughs and set goals for the coming year. As you celebrate another grade, take a few minutes to get organized and prioritize those things that are most important for your family.

gym setup (decor)

cost: \$0-10 time: 10 minutes

This is a great night to use what you already have! Here are some suggestions (be sure to share your own ideas at familymuscle.com):

- Make a centerpiece using school supplies, backpacks and lunch boxes.
- Make a Pretend Bulletin Board using a poster and decorations found at a dollar spot.
- You can also use placemats that allow your kids to practice writing their ABC's, Numbers or Math Problems.

Get creative and be on the look out for bargains while shopping for school.

diet (food)

cost: \$5-6 time: 15 minutes

Main Dish & Sides:

Pack a Lunch

Pack each member of your family a lunch, with a sandwich, chips, a piece of fruit and a drink. You can use brown paper bags (have everyone decorate their bags) or their normal lunch boxes. You can also do an old-fashioned lunch "pail" using a sand bucket. You children can also decorate their buckets with their name.

Drinks:

Milk Cartons

grab some milk cartons and throw in a straw

Dessert:

Edible Crayons

<http://www.gourmetmomonthego.com/2008/08/runs-with-scissors-and-eats-crayons.html>

Back to School Cupcakes

<http://www.livinglocurto.com/2010/08/back-to-school-free-printable-cupcake-topper-and-wrapper/>

Milk and Cookies

a take on the classic after school snack

Talking Points:

During dinner, have everyone go through their lunch survey (<http://junepfaffdaley.blogspot.com/2008/04/official-lunch-survey.html>). Have everyone talk about what they are excited about for the new year, any fears they might have and goals for their schoolwork.

building muscle (craft/activity)

Morning Chore Chart

Read: <http://www.livinglocurto.com/2009/08/school-morning-routine-free-printable-cards>. Have the kids cut these out and put them in their bathroom/bedroom. Discuss what school mornings will look like and your routine. You can also talk through things such as: bedtime routine, picking out clothes, packing lunches, having backpacks ready and morning devotional time.

cost: \$5 time: 20-40 minutes

Edible Crayons

Use this as one of your activities. You could also choose to do this beforehand and surprise your kids!

cardio (games)

Show & Tell

This is a fun school game that kids LOVE! Have each child find an object, souvenir or write out their favorite summer memory. Talk about what they enjoyed about the summer. You could also have them talk about what is one goal they have for the new school year. Encourage your kids to pray for their teachers, their school, their classmates and the administration at their school.

cost: free time: 10-20 minutes

Playground Games

Play a few games that are popular on the school playground such as, Four Square, Tag, Red Light, Green Light or Kick-Ball. (Four Square is our favorite!)

strength training (family devotion)

The anticipation for a new school often revolves around learning who the teacher(s) is going to be for the next year. Emotions can include hope, fear, worry, impatience, excitement, and disappointment. These feelings make sense, teachers are obviously a huge part of the school experience and will have tons of influence for our children.

In our school journey, we take on each year trusting our Lord's activity and providence in who the teachers for our children will be. We are open to the reality that their teachers could be a perfect fit or maybe not so perfect...in our eyes. There will probably be many, many days of great educational and relational experiences. Yet, there could be some challenging moments, miscommunications, differing philosophies and even some tension from time to time.

Whatever is ahead for you and your child, and their teachers, the Back to School Family Night Devotion is a great time to talk as a family about God's role in who your children's teachers will be. If you trust that God is in control of this situation as He is others, then what are the implications for you as a parent and for your children. If God is the one who ultimately placed your child in their teachers' classroom, then:

- God wants us to pray daily and serve often their teacher(s).
- There is a more significant design by God than just learning some math formulas, reading rules, spelling words, etc.
- When those potential tensions or disagreements come with a

teacher, how could God be using this to refine you as a family or your child.

- and more...

God has placed this authority, teachers, and others in the life of your family and children. Use the majority of your time in your devotion affirming God's care and work in who your teachers are; as well as, affirming their authority in the lives of your children.

Key Passages: Hebrews 13:17, Titus 3:1

The ending portion of Titus 3:1 (NIV) encourages, "...to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good." What two great actions points for your family devotion! Depending on the age of your children, describe scenarios that will happen in their daily school routine. The ask for each one:

1. How should we be obedient to your teacher?
2. How can I be ready and do whatever is good?

As they serve and obey, God will be honored and glorified by their actions. Plus, what great growth you will see in your children.

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