BACK 2 SCHOOL

Busy parents can keep up with their child's school work

By Ruth Russell,
Navy Region Japan School Liaison Officer

The start of school comes like a whirlwind to some. It was just yesterday your child was enjoying lazy summer days. While we all take precautions to help our children get organized, we can benefit our children more by preparing ourselves for the upcoming school year.

Numerous studies show that the more involved you are in your child's education the greater their chances for academic success. Having a game plan to keep informed about your child's progress is half the battle. Even the busy parent can stay informed about and on top of their child's progress. Here are a few tips:

• Make sure when you come home with those new school supplies to set some extras in an accessible area. A basket with supplies at the ready sure can cut down on homework time.

• Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools use an internet-based program called Gradespeed. This program provides parents with a password they can use to pull up their children's grades anytime. Put this link in your computer favorites, mark your calendar and check it weekly. To access the site go to dodea.gradespeed.net.

• Be sure the school has a valid e-mail address for you. Notices, newsletters, and updates are often e-mailed out to families. Ask to submit a work and home e-mail as well as one for both parents.

• Most school websites now post a weekly newsletter. Put it in your favorites on your computer and take two minutes to check it out once a week. Most newsletters go out on Friday. Mark your calendar to remind you to check it or better yet, put a reminder on your computer's calendar.

• Some teachers use a homework hotline. Get in the habit of calling it to check on assignments.

• Stay in communication with the teacher. Teachers prefer e-mail instead of phone calls. They can respond when they are not tied up with the students. E-mail the teacher a short note periodically. If there are problems, you will hear about them early.

• Master calendars are also posted on school websites. Mark your calendar at the start of the year for things like report card night, open house, concerts, et cetera. That way a busy life won't make you forget those important events.

• Some cell phones have a reminder tone on their calendars. Set a reminder to chime on special days.

• Some teachers also use a program called Blackboard. This program allows students to access their assignments, take quizzes and get immediate feedback. A parent can be given a password to access this as well. Ask if this is available and also put this link in your favorites on your computer.

• Consider doing a volunteer activity at the school. In a short time you can learn a lot about your child's activities at school.

• Place a special bin, basket or even a binder in your home as a place for your children to put notices or forms sent home from school. This way, they are less likely to be found crumbled at the bottom of a backpack a week later and can be quickly located when needed.

• Have your child write all assignments on an agenda calendar. This is easier to check each night because all homework is always written in the same location.

• Start the year off right and attend your school's open house. This will help you understand practices and procedures in your child's classroom and pave the way for a good line of communication with the teacher.

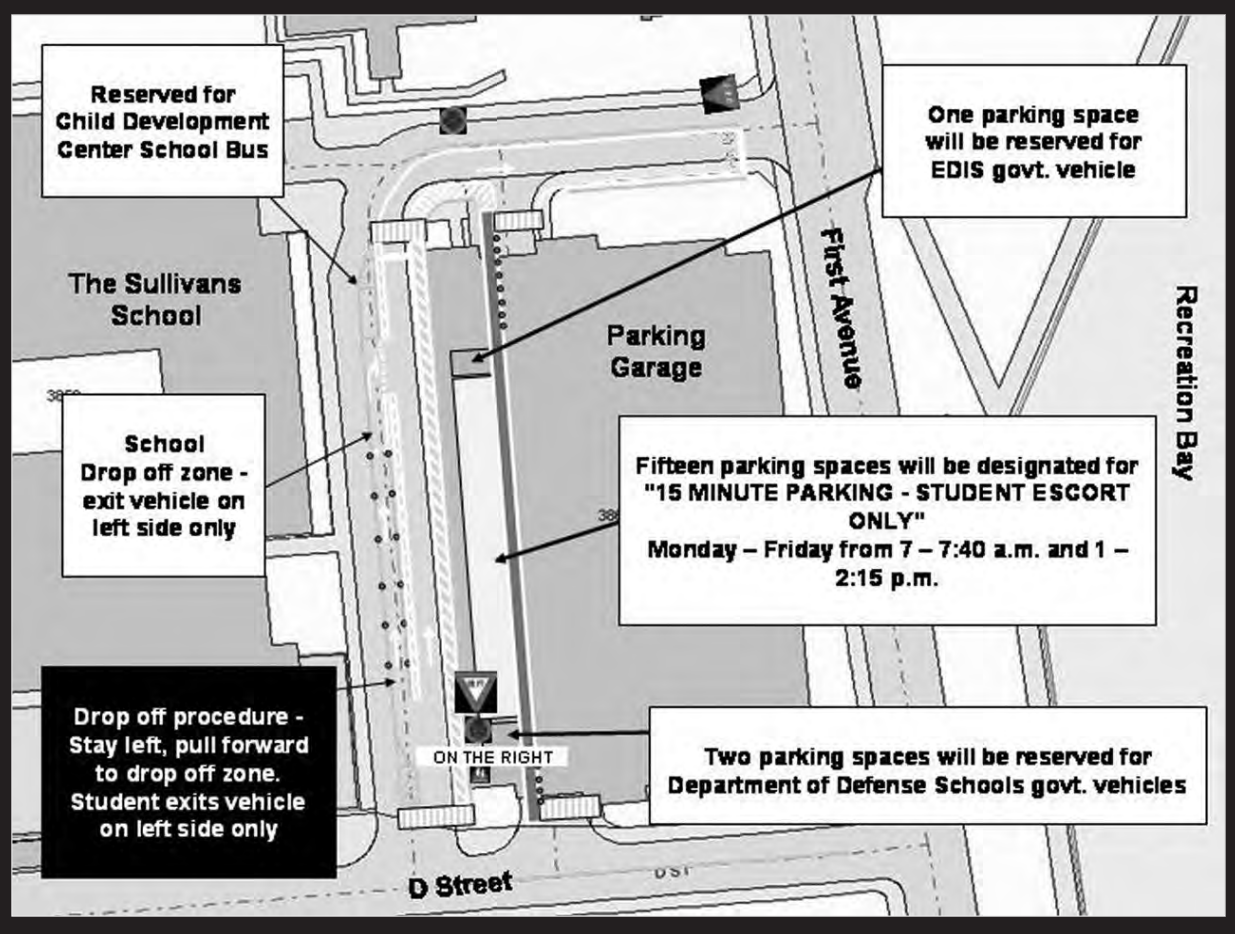
Open house dates for Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka DoDEA schools are:

• Yokosuka Middle School: Sept. 15, 4 – 6 p.m.
• Byrd Elementary School: Sept. 16, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
• Kinnick High School: Sept. 21, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.
• Ikego Elementary School: Sept. 22, 3 – 4 p.m.
• Sullivans Elementary School: Sept. 23, 3 – 4 p.m.

The most important thing you can do to keep up with your child is to listen to your child. Dinner is a great time to get in conversation time with the television off. For the child who doesn't offer up information easily, don't simply ask "How was school?" Ask questions that provoke thought. "Was there anything that surprised you today?" Or, "What was the hardest or easiest thing you had to do today?" Ask questions and listen. Don't get into the, "I walked uphill both ways to school" lecture, but share your school stories with your child. They may be more likely to tell you theirs.

With proper planning and a little bit of time, any parent can stay on top of their child's school work. It will pay off in so many ways, much more importantly than anything else you could have done with that time.

The Sullivans School student drop-off plan



The diagram above shows the layout of The Sullivans Elementary School student drop-off plan for personal vehicles. When dropping off your child, please adhere to the following procedures: Parents dropping off children are to move their cars through the lane between the orange bollards pulling all the way forward up to the drop-off zone; Children must exit the vehicle immediately after arriving at the drop-off zone; Children must exit the vehicle on the left side only; The drop-off zone is the only authorized area where children can exit the vehicle; No parking of personal vehicles will be allowed on any section of the access street between the school and the parking garage; Reserved parking on the first floor of the garage is designated for parents escorting children to class; and, pedestrians must stay on the painted walkway while inside the garage.

Schools offer help for parents, students

By Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

For Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Department of Defense Schools-Department of Defense Education Activity Pacific (DoDD-DoDEA), it's that time of the year again; time to head back to school.

The first day of the upcoming school year for most students is scheduled for Aug. 30. However, kindergarten students are scheduled to start classes Sept. 7.

For parents who have yet to register for the Navy Exchange (NEX) Automated Lunch Time System, they can register at the cash cage located inside the NEX.

Parents who wish to apply for the Federal Free-Reduced Lunch Program can do so at the 4th floor reception desk inside the Community Readiness Center located across from the Commissary.

There is a school liaison officer to assist parents with questions and a School Advisory Committee (SAC).

SAC, which is established under Public Law 95-651, is an elected body of parents and teachers who meet throughout each school year to discuss ways of continually improving the schools for the students.

Some of the items a SAC may discuss are policies, school activities, administrative procedures, instructional programs, educational resources, allocation of resources, health services, special education, testing, evaluation, counseling, extra curricular activities, student standards of conduct and discipline.

School buses are provided for students living off base, or who travel between housing detachments. Bus stop details and bus passes can be obtained Monday through Friday between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. at the Student Transportation Office located in room 216 of building B39A. For more information regarding bus transportation, call 243-9566 or 243-9564.

E-mail Navy Region Japan School Liaison Officer Ruth Russell to ruth.russell@fe.navy.mil or call 243-2588 for more information.