Elementary Family Tip Sheet
Back to School for Students with Disabilities After COVID-19 Closure

**Start Talking About School**

- Make going back to school part of your daily conversations.
- Discuss what your child is **most excited about** when school resumes.
- Ask your child if they have any **questions or concerns**.
- Offer a variety of opportunities for your child to **express how they feel** through books, discussions, writing, drawing, and play.
- **Read or tell stories** about going back to school.
- **Be aware of changing behavior** because this can be a sign of anxiety or fear. If this occurs, **discuss coping and calming strategies**.

**Foster Connections from a Distance**

Create **positive social interactions** to ensure connections are occurring:

- **Create social time with family** where communication can occur (e.g., sit down to dinner, play a game).
- **Plan ways for your child to communicate with friends** via phone calls, text, email, and/or video platforms.
- **Have your child play a game with friends** online.
- **Allow your child to do schoolwork with a friend** over the phone or video call.

**Prepare Materials and Supplies**

Gather **back to school supplies** and collect **items that need to be returned** to the school.

Help your child **start organizing their supplies** to build excitement.

**Maintain/Build Routines**

Get your child back into their school **bedtime and morning routines**.

Get a copy of your child's **school schedule and bus route**. You may want to create a visual schedule and review it with your child ahead of time.

- **Adapt eating routines** like the school schedule, with times for breakfast, lunch, and snacks.
- **Build academic endurance** by extending school activities (i.e., move from 15 minutes of reading to 20 minutes).
- **Provide learning opportunities at home** (e.g., ReadyRosie, PBS, or school supplied resources/activities).

**Communicate with the School**

Tell your child's teacher(s) about how your child has been doing during the school closure to assist with their transition (e.g., strengths, weaknesses, changes, fears, triggers, effective at home strategies).

- **Ask special educators** to help with your child's transition by requesting copies of the daily school schedule, social stories to read at home, and prepared visual supports.
- **Communicate important updates** to the school (e.g., medication, new diagnosis, changes in behavior, life events).
- **Plan to meet with the IEP team** in order to review your child's current performance levels, identify gaps in learning that resulted from school closings, and determine what additional services, if any, may need to be provided.