

The School Savvy Parent

If you're getting ready to send your child off to school for the first time, you've probably got a lunchbox sized case of the jitters. Most kids do just fine, most kids manage to survive separation anxiety, most kids manage to find their own way through the maze of new faces and new challenges presented by school. There are a gazillion picture books out there for you to read to your little person...everything from Big Bird's First Day of School to Zoo Animals Go to School, and they're all helpful to some extent. Whenever you can help your child vicariously experience what lies ahead, whether it's school, new baby, hospitalization or moving, you help them navigate the perilous terrain of change.

If you think about how schools have changed since YOU went to kindergarten, you'll probably outfit your child at the nearest survivalist center rather than the department store. But unless you're planning to home-school, the best bet is for you to dive into a book for a couple of hours and the title you want to delve is **THE SCHOOL SAVVY PARENT; 365 Insider Tips to Help You Help Your Child** by Rosemarie Clark, Donna Hawkins and Beth Vachon (From Free Spirit Publishing, 176 pages, \$12.95 paperback, available September, recommended for parents of children 4-14).

The authors are all teachers and parents and give you concise and helpful answers about a paragraph long to all the most basic questions you might have on every conceivable topic from bullies to bus rides and safety to socialization. This is not a school-bashing book, but rather a travel guide to this strange new country into which your child is headed. There are tips for enrichment, how to nurture a love of reading, how to help your child be organized, how to help with homework (and how NOT to help), how to set up routines that build comfort and resilience in the child, and lots lots more. With their 37 years of combined classroom experience, the authors have seen it all. They share their insight with good spirits, snappy writing, and unflagging humor. The format makes it easy to read while you nuke your morning coffee and make lunches, or read in the car while you wait for dance class to let out.

©2005 Gwynne Spencer, PO Box 121, Mancos, CO 81328,
gwynnespencer@aol.com