

The Back-to-School Family Project

Shop the house first. Buy the gaps. Make what you can. Begin the year together.

Family message: We are not starting from zero. We already have resources, skills, and one another.

ONE AFTERNOON • ABOUT 60–90 MINUTES

STEP	DO THIS TOGETHER	FAMILY WIN
1	SHOP HOME	Gather backpacks, binders, pencils, other supplies, lunch containers, clothes and shoes.
2	SORT	Create two piles and one list: ready to use • clean or repair • need to buy or obtain.
3	REFRESH	Wash bags, sharpen pencils, test markers, patch clothes and decorate plain folders.
4	BUY THE GAPS	Use the school list. Compare unit prices. Buy only missing essentials first.

Before you buy

- ☐ Ask the teacher which items are needed on day one and which can wait.
- ☐ Check relatives, neighborhood groups, clothing swaps, thrift stores and school/community giveaways.
- ☐ Let each child choose one special new item when possible; everything does not have to be new to feel new.

Make the food plan a family project, too (this may not be necessary if breakfast and lunch are provided by the school. Fun family time project though.

BUILD	LOW-COST IDEAS	CHILD'S JOB
Breakfast	Oatmeal cups • egg muffins • toast + fruit	Portion oats or wash fruit
Lunch	Bean spread wrap • leftovers • soup + crackers	Choose produce and pack it
Snack	Popcorn • apples • yogurt • homemade muffins	Fill reusable containers

Keep it gentle

Choose one or two actions—not all of them. The goal is not a perfect zero-spend school opening. The goal is to reduce waste, protect the budget, teach resourcefulness and help children feel included—not deprived.