

## Starting the School Year Right

By: Bright Tomorrows Staff from the National Crime Prevention Council

For most of the year, children spend more time at school than anywhere else other than their own home. At school, children need a secure, positive, and comfortable environment to help them learn.

Overall, schools are one of the safest places children can be. However, some schools have problems, such as bullying and theft, which make them less secure. But there are specific ways that parents can make going to school a safer and more valuable learning experience for their children.

- Talk to your children about their day. Sometimes children won't tell you right away if they are having problems at school. Ask your children if they see anyone bullied, if they are bullied, or if anything else makes them feel uncomfortable. Look for warning signs, such as a sudden drop in grades, loss of friends, or torn clothing.
- Teach children to resolve problems without fighting. Explain that fighting could lead to them getting hurt, hurting someone else, or earning a reputation as a bully. Talk to them about other ways they can work out a problem, such as talking it out, walking away, sticking with friends, or telling a trusted adult.
- Keep an eye on your children's Internet use. Many elementary schools have computers with Internet access. Ask your children's school if students are monitored when they use the Internet or if there is a blocking device installed to prevent children from finding explicit websites. Talk to your children about what they do online – what sites they visit, who they email, and who they chat with.
- Ask about the safety and emergency plans for your children's school. How are local police involved? How are students and parents involved? What emergencies have been considered and planned for?

Take the time to talk to your children, know their friends, and be involved in their school and activities. It can make all the difference in the world. For more information about Bright Tomorrows visit [www.brightcac.org](http://www.brightcac.org).