

Back to School Guide



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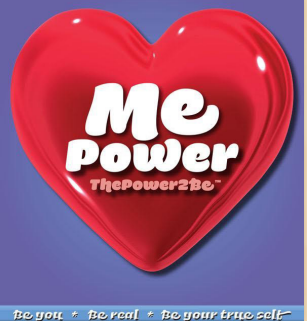
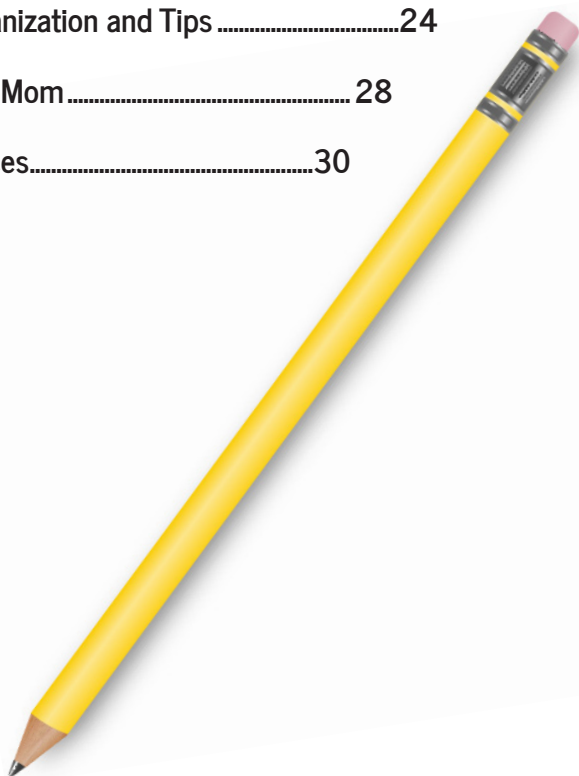


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Chapter 1

Back to School Shopping

Chapter 1 *Back to School Shopping*

Back to school time has become synonymous with the word “shopping”. We spend the weeks before the first day of school hunting down school supplies and clothes that you and your kids can agree upon (not an easy task!). Today we are sharing our top tips and places for back to school shopping in hopes of making the experience a little more enjoyable this year!

1. Look for ways to save money!

Back to school shopping can quickly turn expensive. [Tasha shares](#) tips on how to save money on your back to school shopping!

2. Shop throughout the year

This is especially true for clothing. Hit the sales at the end of each season so you can score big savings on clothing your child will wear next year.

3. Find your shopping style

Are you a “get it all in one day” kind of shopper? Or does the thought of that method make you break out into a cold sweat? Do you prefer to take the kiddos with you or keep them at home? Figure out what makes back to school shopping manageable for you and stick to it.



Chapter 1 Back to School Shopping

4. Create some excitement for school with some fun purchases!

Looking for a great way to get the kids excited about math this fall? The award winning **Multiples Tableware** is the solution! And every time our product is purchased we donate product to a child in need. Enjoy 20% on all items until the end of August with the coupon code: vtmoms!



Chapter 1 Back to School Shopping

5. Shop local as much as you can

Shopping local benefits our community in so many ways! Thankfully we have some great options for local back to school shopping to help you check those items off your list.

The Green Life at 151 Cherry Street in Downtown Burlington, is a local, one stop shop for lifestyle and home products made of organic or eco-friendly materials. They have everything for the environmentally minded shopper and offer alternatives that are healthier for you and the planet. They have a great selection of Back to School items like backpacks, lunch bags, containers, water bottles and more!



HOME + BODY + CHILD
thegreenlifevt.com



Other shopping options:

Lenny's Shoe and Apparel

Danform Shoes

Phoenix Books



Chapter 2

*How to Get Back Into a Routine when
Transitioning from Summer to School Days*

Chapter 2 *How to Get Back Into a Routine when Transitioning from Summer to School Days*

Summer time and the living is easy – and then BAM – you realize school starts in a couple of weeks. School shopping starts and the smell of erasers and freshly sharpened pencils fill the air. But how do you transition from the days of summer to back to school? We've put together our team's best tips on getting back into the school routine.



Bedtime

Let's start with bedtime because we all know this is the biggest one! It can be so hard to get the kids to readjust to an early bedtime after summer vacation, especially when it's still so bright out at bedtime.

Start Early – Don't wait until the night before school starts to get the bedtime routines back in order! We usually take the two weeks before school starts to use as readjusting time for bedtime. Slowly start putting everyone to bed a little bit earlier each night. Then the week before school starts, get everyone to bed on time. It will be hard but it's worth it!

Room Darkening Shades – Get some and love yourself for it. This works best for younger kids but even older kids will have an easier time falling asleep when the rooms are dark.

Wind Down Time – Spend a good half an hour before bedtime in that now dark room to wind down. Read a book, sing a song, snuggle. Not only are you getting in some quality time with the kiddos, you are helping them forget the fact that the sun is still shining behind those shades.

Chapter 2 *How to Get Back Into a Routine when Transitioning from Summer to School Days*

Wake Up!

Sorry, but no more sleeping in during summer vacation! The sad but true reality of putting the kids to bed on time means they will be getting up earlier. Or maybe they've been getting up early all along and now at least they are getting the sleep they need? Let's find the silver lining in this whole back to school sleep nightmare. For older kids, it means more work on our part. They are not going to want to wake up when they don't have to but it's important to get everyone up in the morning so that earlier bedtime will come easier. Set the coffee maker to auto-start and wake everyone up. It's gonna suck but on the first day of school, you'll be glad you are all ready to get up and get going!

Dinner Time

Eating dinner together every night is an important part of family life. If you are able to sit down for dinner together, push for making it happen more often during back to school time. This helps with the whole getting the evenings back in order goal.

Eating ice cream for dinner is an awesome summer treat, but in back to school prep time it's best to get the dinner routine back on track.

School Shopping!

Don't start too early, but don't wait either! I know, great advice, right? Starting early gets you the advantage of buying supplies before the slim pickings, but it can also really bum out your summer buzz. Wait for those couple of weeks before school starts to hit the stores. Combined with the other readjusting going on at home, your kids will start to slide right into the back to school excitement.

Chapter 2 *How to Get Back Into a Routine when Transitioning from Summer to School Days*

Buy the kids something special. Find a little something extra to light that spark of excitement. When shopping for school supplies, we spotted this hilarious notebook and my French-taking-boy just had to have it. It was unnecessary and he probably won't actually use it, but it got him excited, and that's worth \$1.50! It's amazing what a pack of brightly colored crayons and notebooks can do!

Don't buy back to school clothes yet! Buying a first day back to school outfit is fun, but don't rush out to buy a whole new wardrobe right away. The weather will start changing a few weeks into school and that's when you'll really need to change over the wardrobe.

Equipment Pre-Check

Much like the pre-flight checklist before a pilot takes off, we need to make sure our kids are prepared for their first days back to school.

- ☐ Can they open their backpack without any hitches?
- ☐ Can they latch and unlatch their lunch containers?
- ☐ Can they tie their shoes, zip their zippers, button their jackets?
- ☐ Do they know how to open a locker?
- ☐ Do they know where their classes are?

We are clear for take-off!

Talk About It!

Start talking daily about school. Ask questions. What are they excited about? Nervous about? Scared about? Talking things out beforehand will give everyone a chance to work out the jitters ahead of time.

Chapter 2 *How to Get Back Into a Routine when Transitioning from Summer to School Days*

Take a trip to the library with your pre-school and kindergartners. There are lots of books that will help you answer their eleven-billion questions and ease their worries too.

Try not to get too excited – or sad!

Is it just me or are we ready for those kids to get back into routine? Forget the fact that I'm ready for a **break**, I'm ready for the routine of things to be back in order. We all function better when we know what to expect, and while the relaxed attitudes of summer are fun and all, routine can be a glorious thing. But don't act too excited. Enjoy those last couple of weeks of sunshine and **creemees** with the kids.

We as parents can also start feeling sad that summer is over, that our kids are growing up, that we have to wake up earlier and pack lunches. Try not to let it show. The kids need you to be positive and upbeat with them. Mourn the last days together, but find those silver linings and encourage one another.

Plan something fun for the first weekend after school starts. A little something to look forward to will keep everyone positive and inspired to have a good start!





Chapter 3

Lunches

Chapter 3 *Lunches*

School lunch.

Those two words are enough to make some parents shudder. Tricia shares some tried and true tips for preparing school lunches, along with a master list of lunch ideas that will keep you sane!



1. Pack it the night before.

ALWAYS. Don't leave it until morning unless you're looking for a tantrum. (From YOU that is.) If there is something in the lunchbox that needs to be packed in the morning, (warmed pesto noodles, hot soup, etc.) write it down and leave it on the counter where you will see it. In our house, I make a list of what needs to go in each child's lunchbox and my husband does it all while I take care of bathtime. For a while, we did school lunches together so he could get the hang of it. As in...Maggie needs her bagel cut up into bite size pieces or else she'll just lick the cream cheese off. Sophia's salad doesn't get dressed until the morning, etc. Once he had it down pat, we divided and conquered.

2. Invest in good products.

If you plan to make it through the year with the same lunch gear, spend money on quality. Head to [The Green Life](#) to score some quality lunch gear!

3. Ice packs.

Think thin! Lunchboxes can become full rather quickly, so the last thing you want is a giant blue slab taking up precious space.

Chapter 3 *Lunches*

4. Reuse.

Save the Earth and your wallet and skip plastic bags. In general, look for reusable containers that are on the lean rather than bulky side. There are some great glass sets at the box stores and even mini Mason Jars with lids make good lunch accessories. Make sure you have enough reusable containers for two days worth of lunches so that you're not immediately cleaning them out for the next day's use. This variety is easy to clean and stayed with us the whole year!

5. CLEAN THE LUNCHBOX. EVERY SINGLE DAY.

I credit my husband for this genius practice. Whether you're an all-natural spray or a Clorox Wipes kind of gal, just do it. Right when you get home, wipe it out, inside and out and hang dry. It will be fresh by the time you make lunches at night.

6. Label.

Keep a few permanent markers handy or invest in some washable labels with your name on them. Otherwise? All of those quality products you spent money on? One by one, kiss them goodbye.

7. Start the year out healthy.

Most of the time, we include just one "snacky food" in each child's lunch box. If you start out following this rule, your child will get used to it and not expect Pirate's Bootie and Cheddar Bunnies and Fig Newman's in the same lunch. And then the day when you throw in some cookies and a piece of leftover banana cream pie? Ohhhhhh yeah. It's the stuff lunchroom dreams are made of.

8. Mix it up.

Don't be afraid to throw in something that your child doesn't normally eat. Just when you least expect it, that container of prunes might disappear.

Chapter 3 *Lunches*

9. Leftovers.

They're not just for dinner. Nothing makes this mama happier than knowing my petite five-year old is chowing down on last night's veggie lasagna. When you're cleaning up dinner, don't throw away the 1/2 cup of remaining rice! Add some avocado chunks, black beans and a handful of cheddar and voila! Lunchbox ready!

10. Bits and pieces.

Packing lunch does not have to be about a main course. Especially if your child is not a big fan of sandwiches, focus on small servings of many different foods instead.

11. Trail Mix.

This idea came from my hubby. He says, "it's a great way to include lots of items at once and the kids always seem to enjoy it!" Also a go-to if you're in dire need of a run to the food store.

12. Let them help.

A lot of the time it's just plain easier to do it without the kids. But sometimes they're interested and want to help. It can be pretty empowering for a 5-year-old to make her own sandwich. It can also be a good talking point for the 3-year-old who wants yogurt and bologna for her lunch every day. Give them choices and talk about needing lots of "different foods for healthy bodies." Sometimes, giving them the power is exactly what is needed to make some new healthy food choices.

13. The Master List.

Start it now. As you feed your child over the next few weeks, add more to your list. Keep it in the kitchen and when you feel yourself starting to get bogged down into the swamp of lunchbox desperation, pull out your list for inspiration.

Chapter 3 *Lunches*

And without further ado, our always evolving Master List:

Sandwiches

Nitrate-Free Cold Cuts
Cream Cheese & Jam
Peanut/Almond/Sun Butter & Jam
Baguette with Butter/Cream Cheese/Jam
Leftover Roasted Chicken/Steak/Pork
Egg Salad
Chicken Salad
Tuna
Sandwich Extras
Lettuce
Spinach
Tomato
Hummus
Peppers
Onions
Mushrooms
Nitrate-Free Bacon
Shredded Carrots
Cucumber
Sandwich Grains
Whole Wheat Bread
Homemade White/Wheat Bread
Wraps
English Muffins
Leftover Hamburger Bun
Baguette
Bagel
Pita Bread
Croissant
Melba Toast
Wasa Bread

Salads

“Crunchy” Lettuce (light green)
Mixed Greens with Spinach
Arugula
Any Veggie Need Apply!
Croutons
Sliced Almonds
Crushed Cashews
Sunflower Seeds

Kid-Tested Salad Dressings

Annie’s Asian Sesame
Newman’s Own Creamy Balsamic
Any Kind of Caesar

Dairy

Cheese Sticks
Yogurt Squeezes
Pro-Bugs
Yogurt with Granola on Side
Cream Cheese as a Dip
Fresh Mozzarella
Cheddar Cheese & Crackers (separated)
Greek Yogurt Dip (Honey & Cinnamon)
Cottage Cheese With Fruit or as a Dip
Goat Cheese Swirled with Berry Jam

Other Healthy Choices

Muffins
Rice Cakes (With Nut Butter)
Dried Fruit (Cranberries & Cherries)
Also Dried Figs, Prunes, Dates
Nuts
Dried Green Beans
Beans (Kidney, Garbanzo, & Black)

Chapter 3 Lunches

Other Healthy Choices (Continued)

Mashed Sweet Potatoes

Yogurt-Covered Raisins

Trail Mix (Cereal, Raisins, Crackers,

Dried Fruit, Dark Cocoa Chips, Nuts

Pretzels, Granola)

Apple Sauce

Fruit Squeezes (When Fruits are Low)

Homemade Popcorn

(with Parmesan/Garlic & Cinnamon/

Coconut/Vanilla)

Dips, Dips, and More Dips!

(Guacamole, Salsa, Whipped Boursin

Cheese & Peanut Butter)

Hardboiled Eggs

Dried Seaweed

Kale Chips

Sweet Potato Chips

Food Should Taste Good Chips

Fresh Fruit (Every Lunchbox, Every Day)

Other Main Course Ideas

Soup, Soup, Soup!

Pesto Noodles, Hot or Cold

Pasta! (Make a Big Batch, Customize!)

Leftover Cold Chicken With Dip/Sauce

Nitrate-Free Rolled Deli Meats/Cheeses

Pancakes/Waffles with Syrup

Macaroni & Cheese

Meatballs (on a Hamburger Roll)

Tacos with Fixin's, Child Assemblies

Sushi (Cooked or Veggie-Only for Lunches)

Shrimp with Cocktail Sauce

Oatmeal





Chapter 4

Dealing with Bullying and Your Kid's Friendships

Chapter 4 *Dealing with Bullying and Your Kid's Friendships*

Back to school can be a stressful time for kids in a lot of ways, especially if they have been bullied or treated unkindly in the past. While we hope our children's peers are being taught about kindness, we do have to prepare our kids for handling bullies, being left out, etc. – not to mention being prepared as parents. Here are some thoughts and resources to help you and your child navigate the rough waters of bullying and school relationships.

Ask Shauna *What the Heck to Say to Kids about Bullying*
Shauna gives some great tips on how to talk to our kids about bullying.

My Daughter Was Called the B Word

Jenn opens up about her daughter's horrible experience of being labeled a bully and reminds us that sometimes we are too quick to label situations "bullying".



Chapter 4 *Dealing with Bullying and Your Kid's Friendships*

Me Power

As parents, we can often feel at a loss when it comes to helping our kids navigate the murky waters of school friendships, teasing, relationship problems, low self-esteem and bullying. Deb Chisholm's Me Power: ThePower2Be is an innovative program that she created to help children feel and be confident, even under stress. Deb has close to 40 years of experience as an educator and family counselor and is a certified life coach. She offers individual or small group coaching for kids, which also includes a 2 hour workshop for parents. We absolutely love what Deb is doing for families and children in our community: giving kids the confidence to be their true selves!



802.578.2287
www.mepower2be.com

*Be you * Be real * Be your true self*

Deb Chisholm, M.Ed., CMC - Kids' Confidence Coach
(parent support and coaching too) Individuals or small groups, all ages

Making a Tween Tote

Meg shares a fabulous way to connect with our tweens and help ease the transition to middle school with a tween tote that you can make together!



Chapter 5

Tips From a Teacher

Chapter 5 *Tips From a Teacher*

1. Gradually reintroduce your child to a school year schedule

Jumping from a carefree summer schedule to a school year schedule can be a shock to a little ones system. Take this next week and slowly start to adjust bedtimes and AM routines so that the actual transition will (hopefully) be much smoother!



2. Get your children to bed on time

Sleep is an essential element for success for any student. They need to be well rested in order to focus and be able to attend to their work. And they younger they are the harder it is for them to possess any form of self-control if sleep is lacking (any momma definitely knows this!).

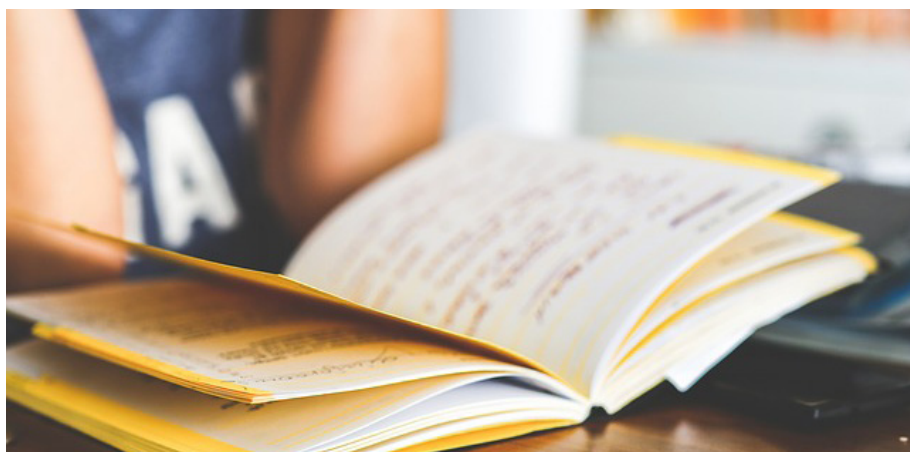
3. Spend a few minutes each evening asking your child about their day

Listen to them as they share about their day. Get excited about the things that interest them. Look over their school work, praise them for a job well done, and figure out if there is anything they are not understand.

4. Create a central calendar and command center for the whole family

Make sure the calendar is located some place that is clearly visible and will be seen on a daily basis. Putting everyone's schedule on one calendar will help you stay on top of important dates, tests, field trips, deadlines, etc. Create folders for each child where important papers, permission slips, etc. can be stored.

Chapter 5 *Tips From a Teacher*



5. Don't over schedule your kids

I've seen this happen far too often! A parent wants to make sure that their child has the opportunity to explore different interests, so they sign them up for everything under the sun. Before they know it every night is filled with something and they become a shuttle service shuffling tired kids to and from an endless parade of activities. Instead, pick one or two things that seem to interest your child. It will keep them (and you!) from getting burnt out and it will assure that they have sufficient time to focus on school and family time.

6. Don't do everything for them

I taught fifth grade for several years and it was very apparent which students had parents who did almost everything for them. Whenever they were missing an assignment or didn't get something in on time, the blame would almost always fall on their parents. It's important that we teach our children personal responsibility and important life skills; everything from tying their own shoes to managing their time effectively.

Chapter 5 *Tips From a Teacher*

And a few tips for those with older children...

1. Set aside a designated homework time. This is critically important, especially if you want to make sure that homework gets done on time. If a clear homework time is set from the beginning, a child will become accustomed to getting work done during that time and can begin to manage his/her own time more effectively.
2. Emphasize the importance of beginning to study for tests and completing projects well in advance. I can't tell you how many times I've seen students rush to complete a project the night before it was due when it had been assigned three weeks before. The end result was a muddled mess and a frustrated student. If your child's school doesn't provide a planner, purchase one for them and begin teaching them how to affectively schedule out studying and working on long term assignments. This is a skill that has to be taught but is truly invaluable!





Chapter 6

Back to School Organization and Tips

Chapter 6 *Back to School Organization and Tips*

Routine

Morning: Let your family get ready in the morning just like they would for school. Start this routine at least one to two weeks early. Make adjustments as needed and allow your family to become familiar with the schedule.

Night: Start the bedtime routine earlier also to ease from late summer nights to early school nights. Ensure your child goes to sleep and wakes up the same time daily. Hopefully, as the school year progresses you won't need an alarm clock to wake your little one.

Practice Run: Much like a fire drill, conduct a dry run of your morning transportation route. Our Transportation Coordinator at school suggests arriving at the bus stop 5 minutes before the listed time. Walk the path, with your child that he/she will take to school. Assign seats in the car or a front seat schedule for older kids to avoid bickering.

Clothes

Shopping: Go thru each child's current clothing to purge stained or too small items. Consider making it a game by having a fashion show! Check for possible hand-me-downs from older siblings. Make a list of needed pieces and go shopping with your prepared list.

Daily Clothes: Eliminate the fashion drama by **picking out the week's clothing**, each Sunday, based on school activities of the day.



Chapter 6 *Back to School Organization and Tips*

Food

Snacks & Lunches: After grocery shopping, prep individual servings to [store in the refrigerator](#) and pantry. Create a [master food list](#) to help inspire you when the boredom of lunch making sets in. Pack the night before and delegate tasks (age appropriately) to kids. Let's face it, we can't do it all and really we shouldn't. Let little hands help and learn responsibility. Clean lunch boxes daily (I use a [vinegar/water mix](#) to safely wash). [Label items](#) for easy identification at school.



Calendar

Sync Calendars: Either on paper or electronically. (I suggest electronic.) Just like at work, my husband and I send invites via our [gmail](#) calendars in efforts to end over-scheduling. Each family member is color coded. Consider letting older kids manage their own calendar.

Don't Overbook: It's too stressful running around from activity to activity so don't do it. Just say no. Consider only one sport during the season and remember to schedule breaks. Let them have free play to inspire imaginations and release tension.

Chapter 6 *Back to School Organization and Tips*



School Papers

Homework Station: Designate a location and time for homework as predictability provides comfort to children. Have the essentials handy to eliminate wondering and frustration. A fun project to make is a [homework caddy](#).

Inbox/Outbox: Assign a location for incoming newsletters, permission forms and schoolwork. This file should be reviewed daily, perhaps after dinner when everyone is already gathered, to ask questions and have discussion about current school events/activities. Determine if you or your kids will put the return-to-school items in their backpacks. Or create an outbox for kids to check offering ownership and responsibility.

Art & Other School Creations: Purge daily to determine with your child what to keep or not. Then purge weekly to keep the pile slim throughout the school year. [Maintain storage](#) for your child's keepsakes.



Chapter 7

A Survival Guide for Mom

Chapter 7 *A Survival Guide for Mom*

We all know that heading back to school can be hard on EVERYONE. While there seem to be numerous tips floating around for helping ease the kiddos back into school, we don't want to forget the mommas! Here is our Survival Guide for Mom...



1. Plan a breakfast with some other mommas.

It can either be a WOOHOO THEY ARE AT SCHOOL or a BOOHOO THEY ARE BACK TO SCHOOL party. Friends don't let friends go through back to school alone. Gather some moms, drink some coffee, breathe.

2. Don't skip the Open Houses, Meet the Teachers, etc, etc, meetings. We know, didn't we just get done with all of the end of the school year parties and ceremonies?! As silly as it may seem to attend all the back to school meetings, do it! It's obvious that it will make things easier on your kids, but it will calm your nerves too!

3. Wine. I mean, obviously. When you are picking up three billion folders and post it notes, grab the wine on the way out.

4. Coffee. I know, it's cliché, moms need wine and coffee. WELL WE DO SO SHUT UP. Ahem. Grab coffee.

5. Do not, we repeat, DO NOT Pinterest that lunch box.

The rest of us moms are begging you, don't make your kids lunch all cutesy and fun. We need the smooshed pb&j to look appealing. Don't ruin it for the rest of us.

6. Get your drop off line yoga pants cleaned. We need you, fellow drop off moms in workout gear who are not going to actually work out. (PS – meet us at the local coffee shop after drop off.)



Chapter 8

Community and Other Resources

Chapter 8 *Community and Other Resources*



Let's Grow Kids

Let's Grow Kids, a statewide public awareness campaign, aims to raise understanding of the importance of the earliest years in the lives of Vermont's children. Funded by a collaboration of private foundations, Let's Grow Kids is working with Vermont communities, organizations, businesses and individuals to create positive lasting change that will allow all of our children to succeed in life. Find out how to join the conversation at letsgrowkids.org.

Tutoring:

Sylvan Learning Center

Childcare:

Babies to Boomers

Vermont Nanny Connection

Care.com

Homeschooling:

Homeschooling Hacks: Homeschooling in Vermont

Other great resources:

Free and reduced price meal program

How to Prevent Head Lice Naturally

Lice Happens: Tips for dealing