

**The Post Rock Connection**  
**Post Rock Extension District #1 Family and Consumer Sciences Column**  
**Month of September 2023**  
**By Jamie Rathbun, Family and Community Wellness Agent**

**Organizing for Back-to-School**

School supplies lining the aisles of retail stores is a fall tradition. We make our purchases and then the supplies line the rooms of our home until the kids are back in the halls. I recently sent the packs of loose-leaf paper and boxes of tissues to school and breathed a sigh of relief at the temporary clearing of the school clutter. The relief was short lived. If you have children you know exactly what I am talking about – permission slips, registration forms for afterschool activities, lunch menus! And it not just the clutter that causes chaos. With 4 children in my house, getting out the door in the mornings is no small feat – who needs a sack lunch?, are sports uniforms clean? have permission slips been signed? who needs a check for lunch money? are gym clothes packed for the day? Families can cut the clutter by creating a family plan for organization.

*Be a Fan of the Plan.* Make sure it is a plan the whole family can agree on and follow. Look at your regular morning routine and create a physical checklist for each person in the family. When you see a child straying from the routine a simple “Honey, is that on your checklist?” can help bring them back to the task of getting out the door on time. Looking at your routine can also help you find ways to make it more efficient. You can identify your most time-consuming tasks and schedule accordingly.

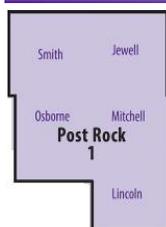
*Fashionably great.* Clothing for four children makes laundry seem like my second full time job, one that consumes my entire weekend. But it also gives the opportunity to prep outfits not just the night before, but the week before. There are multiple options at the stores for keeping clothes/shoes/accessories together for each day of the school week. Or you can just use a hanger in the closet for each day. If you think picking for a week is

too much, fold clothing with coordinating pieces together so choosing an outfit for the day includes all the pieces needed.

*Signed, Sealed, Delivered.* My method at home (and at work) is to handle papers once. With school we empty the book bags nightly, what needs to be signed is signed and sent back. What is an FYI about an important date is noted on the large wall calendar and the paper is put in recycling. School lunch menus are immediately looked over, sack lunch dates are noted for each child, then the menu is posted on the refrigerator. On Fridays, when all of the weekly work comes home, we go through it, discussing what was learned. The most important pieces are hung up, old ones taken down and filed in the yearly school file (one for each child), and all other papers are, again, recycled. All of this helps to eliminate the huge pile of papers that can accumulate on a kitchen counter that is later rifled through (more than once) to find the information that someone needs, usually at the last minute.

Let's start new fall traditions of organization to avoid stressful school mornings.

*The Post Rock District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith Counties. Contact Jamie Rathbun at [jrathbun@ksu.edu](mailto:jrathbun@ksu.edu) or by calling 785-524-4432. Stay connected with "Post Rock Extension" on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Our website is [www.postrock.ksu.edu](http://www.postrock.ksu.edu).*



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