

## Back to School By Amber Pastusek, M.D.

Summer is winding down, and school is around the corner. Children are filled with anticipation and anxiety about the upcoming school year. The first day of school finally arrives, and children become accustomed to the routine of school again. Classroom assignments, tests, and homework begin. Children are eager at first to do well in school, and as the weeks progress, some children may start to experience frustrations with the new school year. Perhaps the learning pace is too fast or the student may experience frustration with the difficulty of the school material. Here are some warning signs that your child may need additional assistance:

- Easily frustrated with basic assignments
- Difficulty finishing assignments
- Taking hours to complete one homework assignment
- Forgetting assignments or homework
- Procrastinating with homework or projects
- A decline in grades

If a child starts to experience any of these difficulties, he or she may then become anxious about his or her performance at school. As a result, the child's grades may decline. In addition, the child may start having behavioral problems in the classroom due to forgetting assignments or being unable to complete assignments. These difficulties may occur over the course of a school year and continue on into the next school year. Here are some avenues of assistance for your child:

- Talk with the teacher to obtain specific information regarding the child's difficulty in the classroom
- Request additional time for assignments or tests
- Recommend tutorial sessions to improve low grades
- Provide one on one assistance tailored to the child's needs

Working with the school to help your child is essential to the success of your child. If a child continues to experience difficulty in school after implementing the above techniques, then an evaluation by a professional may be indicated. A variety of factors may be contributing to the child's difficulty in school such as a possible learning disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or a mood disorder (ie. anxiety, depression). These disorders may contain symptoms such as decreased concentration that overlaps with ADHD and mood disorders. A clinician can determine the etiology of the disorder and recommend different treatment modalities tailored specifically to the child. Treatment options may include neuropsychological testing, behavioral therapy, parent-child interactive therapy, and/or medications if indicated.