

Ten Important Back to School Poems

by Kalli Dakos

Back to school can be a very stressful time for children. You can help your students by sharing poems about the school world. A short poem can give children the “words” for feelings they may not be able to express, help them realize they are not alone with their thoughts and fears, and give teachers a starting point to discuss the return to school.

I have written over 2,000 poems about life in school, and here are ten of my favorites for BACK TO SCHOOL, 2010.

Cleaning House in My Brain

I'm cleaning house
In my brain,
It's BACK TO SCHOOL
Time again.

Shine windows,
Paint doors,
Vacuum rugs,
Polish floors.

Brush away
TV shows,
Picnics, beaches,
Free time goes.

Bring my memory
Back in gear,
Sweep the channels,
Crystal clear.

My brain is
An amazing tool,
And it's all ready for
BACK TO SCHOOL!

Poem by Kalli Dakos from current manuscript

In the following poem, a student is considering all the changes she will make to have a successful school year.

Introducing a New ME!

There's a new ME this year,
An on-time ME,
A clean-desk ME,
A first-to-hand-in-assignments ME,
A listens-in-class-to-the-teacher ME,
A teacher's-pet-for-the-first-time-in-my-life ME,
An-always-willing-to-be-good-and help-out ME,
A dead-serious-get-the-work-done-and-hand-it-in
Before-it's-due ME.

The problem is
The new ME
Is not like ME
At all.



Poem by Kalli Dakos

Put Your Eyes Up Here and Other School Poem (Simon and Schuster)

*Everyone is a bit nervous on the first day of school – children, parents, teachers
... even some pencils.*

Warning All Pencils in School

*It's not fair,
It's not fair,
ALL PENCILS
BEWARE!*

**Pencil sharpeners
Are in there,
Biting teeth
Beyond compare,
Teachers sticking
Us in hair,
Erasers hiding
Everywhere,
Kids who do not
Really care,
Lots of work
And tests to bear!**

*It's not fair,
It's not fair,
ALL PENCILS
BEWARE!*

Pencil Poem by Kalli Dakos from current manuscript

*Children are afraid of mean kids and bullies, and these fears should be
acknowledged and discussed at this time of the year. This poem can help begin
such a discussion.*

The Bully and the Wimp

**We were in the bathroom,
The bully and I,
He punched me,
I punched him back,**

And that's when he cried!

Poem by Kalli Dakos from current manuscript

One of our children's greatest fears is "failure," yet learning to fail" is probably the most important lesson they can learn. This short poem says a great deal about "failure" for parents, teachers and the children themselves.

Don't Tell Me

Don't tell me
I won't fail
For it might not
Be true.

Just tell me
You'll still
Love me
Even if I do.



Poem by Kalli Dakos
Don't Read This Book, Whatever You Do! More Poems About School
(Simon and Schuster)

There are so many moments of embarrassment in school. A poem helps a child to feel connected with others who have made the same "mistakes."

I Called My Teacher Mommy

I called my teacher
Mommy,
What a silly thing
I said!

I called my teacher
Mommy,
I have fluff
Inside my head!

I called my teacher
Mommy,
Now my face

Is apple red!

Poem by Kalli Dakos from a current manuscript.

There are good days and bad days in school, and some days children feel like just hiding away somewhere.

Hiding in the Bathroom

I'm hiding in the bathroom,
There's no one here to see,
I'm tired of my classroom,
And I wish they'd set me free.

Free from all those noisy kids,
Rattling round the room,
And calling me such awful names –
I'll never last till June!

Free from that darn substitute
Who screeches and who yells . . .
The bathroom is the nicest place,
To sit and wait for bells.

Poem by Kalli Dakos

If You're Not Here, Please Raise Your Hand, Poems About School
(Simon and Schuster)

Discuss BACK to SCHOOL from the teacher's point of view. Sometimes teachers have bad days too.

Mr. C's Bad Day

The entire day
Has been.

MR. C THIS,
MR. C THAT,

MR. C. COME HERE,
MR. C. GO THERE,
MR. C I NEED
MR. C. I WANT,
MR. C. I FORGOT,

MR. C.

MR. C

MR. C.

I'm so tired of my name,
Please –
For the rest of the day,
Call me,

MR. D.

Poem by Kalli Dakos
The Goof Who Invented Homework
(Dial Books for Young Readers)

It is important to remind children that the summer is usually a lot of fun for their classmates, but there are times when classmates suffer great sadness. Poems of grief and loss help build empathy and understanding. One teacher told me she cried all through August when her little dog died, and was still sad on the first day of school. Another student could not stop crying on the day his dog died.

On the Day My Dog Died

On the day
My dog died,

I cried,
And cried,
And cried.

This is my
Whole poem,
There's nothing
More to say.

I cried,
And cried,
And cried,

On the day,
My dog died.

Poem by Kalli Dakos from current manuscript

It is a good idea to discuss with children the subjects they love in school as well as the ones they don't like that much. Gym is a consistent favorite, and this is poem of celebration.

I Live for Gym

I	I'm	It's	Have
live	free	in	gym
for	in	the	the
gym	gym	gym	whole
I	to	I	day
breathe	run	feel	through
for	and	so	why
gym	play	good	then
I	to	I'd	I'd
watch	try	live	always
the	new	there	dash
clock	games	if	to
and	and	I	school
race	shout	only	
to	"Hooray!"	could	
gym			

Poem by Kalli Dakos
Don't Read This Book, Whatever You Do! More Poems About School
(Simon and Schuster)

BACK TO SCHOOL is the perfect time to use poetry in the service of children.

These poems can begin to open discussions about the school world and help children deal with **BACK TO SCHOOL** joys and concerns

Have fun sharing these poems with your students!

Kalli Dakos

***Kalli Dakos, a former teacher and popular school poet, has written many collections of poems about school including five IRA-CBC Children's Choice Selections: *If You're Not Here, Please Raise Your Hand, Don't Read This Book, Whatever You Do, The Goof Who Invented Homework, The Bug in Teacher's Coffee, and Our Principal Promised to Kiss a Pig*. She gives popular poetry presentations in schools, and uses her knowledge as a reading specialist to inspire children and teachers to write about the school world.**

Her newest book, *I HEARD YOU TWICE THE FIRST TIME (Poems for Tired and Bewildered Teachers)* has just been released.