

## Back to School

It's hard to believe, but summer break has given way to another new school year. While the first day of school in our house used to mean early wakeups for pancakes and walking excited kids to their classrooms, it now brings groans of despair when the alarm goes off. I am a parent of teenagers. Not only do I no longer get to walk them inside, I have become a source of embarrassment wherever other Gen Z humans are present.

My son is starting eighth grade and is still in the unfortunate position of having to ride in the car with me. Each morning, as we approach the school, he insists we turn off NPR Morning Edition or, heaven forbid, my Spotify playlist and communicate in whispers, lest someone hear me say *I love you* through the glass. When we arrive in front of the building, he exits the car low and quick as if I were delivering him to school in the Oscar Mayer Wienermobile.

My daughter is a junior this year and now drives herself, which means Mike can no longer threaten to come through the afternoon car line dressed as Mr. McGibblets. This has been an effective teen behavior deterrent over the years. Don't worry, though. Mike and I continue to find ways to be embarrassing. This year, she had the rare misfortune of her school's open house falling on an evening when both parents were off work. She tried to talk us out of going, convinced that two adults with three doctorate degrees between us would not be able to locate her classrooms and that we would wander the building, lost, until they turned off the lights and locked us in for the night. She remained dubious, even after I assured her that if I can find CSF with a spinal needle in a back with no discernible spinous processes, I can certainly find her history class. So, as a reminder that Gen X is still sharp-minded and able to use a smartphone just like everybody else, I sent her a selfie from every class as we followed her schedule.

For all of you parents of young kids who still want to be seen with you, cherish these first days. For those of you in the same boat as us, Mike will be happy to lend you the Mr. McGibblets costume. Have a great school year, everyone!