

Starting the school year: Tips and information for families

For some children, this may be their first experience in a group setting without their parents. This can be both a thrilling and frightening concept, for children and parents. Here are some tips and suggestions that have worked well for other families in the past, to help ease you and your child into the group education environment.



PREPARE YOUR CHILD TO BE INDEPENDENT AT SCHOOL

Make sure they can get in and out of their clothes by themselves without any real help from an adult.

For example, pull-on pants with no buttons or zippers and Velcro shoes. If your child can't yet tie up their shoes, don't send them to school in lace ups. Remember, your child is striving for independence and we can foster that by being aware of (and adjusting for) their capabilities and developing skills.

A few weeks before school is a good time to start waking up earlier to get into the "school" routine. Start moving bedtime a little bit earlier every night if summertime has allowed for a later-than-usual bedtime routine.

Help your child practice choosing an outfit the night before. If they decide the next morning that they don't want to wear that outfit, help them choose another by offering them two choices. (We always use the "two options" rule with the preschool child; as this is how their brains currently operate. Too many choices can lead to frustration, confusion, and power struggles!)

Above all else, make sure that if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas for how we can support your child's entrance into our classroom, please let us know. Our goal as educators is to set each child up for success, and to assist them in their journey into education.



The first days of a new school are wonderful, frightening, thrilling, and stimulating - for you and your child. Trust that you've made the right choice and stay in touch with your child's teachers.

SEPARATION ANXIETY



You and your child may have loved the Open House and the program tour, but the actual, real, first-day-of-school can be anxiety riddled. **The most important thing we suggest to parents is to try not to show any anxiety to your child.**

Children are sensitive to parent's emotional states and if they sense you are anxious, they may think there is something in this new environment to be anxious about. **Be positive and enthusiastic about your child's first days of school - your child will see you feeling excited and happy about this new piece of their world, and will follow your lead!**

Talk about what is going to happen a few times before the first day - children are less anxious if they have an idea what to expect.

Let the teachers help with the separation. Indicate when you are ready to go so that we can hold and comfort your child if they are crying. Then say goodbye and LEAVE. Don't hesitate, linger or come back because that will just make it more difficult for your child; this can feel very uncomfortable and uneasy for parents, as they can feel a lot of anxiety and guilt when leaving their child, who may be visibly upset - trust in the fact that we will ABSOLUTELY call and let you know if your child has not calmed/become comfortable within a few minutes, so that you can come back. As hard as it is, the best thing for your child is to not create an environment where they are "unsure" - unsure if you are gone/still there, unsure if you are hiding/waiting in another area - this creates very real anxiety for your child. Having clear outlines of what they can expect (you are leaving, but will definitely be back at a set time), is in their best interest.

Drop Off Routine. Park your vehicle, escort your child to the gate, sign in, and... Believe it or not ONE, SOLID, CONFIDENT, "Hug, kiss and Goodbye. I love you. I will pick you up at lunchtime!" is much more reassuring to a child. They gain their strength from you. They look to you to be strong for them. The first day for parents is just as difficult. Your baby is growing up! Let them! You can do this.

Be prepared to do the same thing for a while. They may have had a great time on the first day of school but would really rather stay home with you. Goodbye on the second, third and fourth days of school can be just the same as on the first. Trust that they will settle down in a little while. If you are concerned, feel free to set up a time to speak with your Teachers after class time, so we can brainstorm ways to support your child through this transition period.