

The First Day:

Quick Tips for a Smooth Transition

We know that first days can be tough (sometimes more so on the parents than on the children) and depending on the age of your child, there are various degrees of first day jitters. So here are 5 quick tips on preparing for a first day!

1. Stay calm and carry on! Your child picks up on your mood and stress, so keeping yourself on point can help keep them calm and excited. Remember that they are in good hands, and will have so much to share with you at the end of their day!
2. Give advance notice. Talk to your child (no matter how young/old they might be) in advance of the first day. Tell them about the fun they will have, the routine they may expect, talk to them about teachers and how teachers will care for them. Emphasize that you will always be back to pick them up. The more you communicate with them, the more prepared they will be for the first day.
3. Take your time. Give yourself a head start on the morning, so you can properly show your child their classroom, and meet the teacher. You'll want to see and show your child where the bathroom is, or where they will be changed, and where personal items will be kept. Walking through a new environment with a familiar and loved face can help children establish trust for new places and people.
4. Establish a routine. Do the same thing, every morning, for every drop off. We know that there will be those days where life interferes; but for the most part, children thrive off knowing what comes next. On the way to school it might be a good idea to go through the day with them. Remind them of when you will be picking them up.
5. Stay connected. Talk to your child about how their day was, even nonverbal infants and toddlers benefit from having your attention and questions. They may react or answer nonverbally, but the language they are gaining is going to last a lifetime. For verbal children, give them a chance to talk about what they've done that day, and stay current on classroom activities and art projects so you can prompt them for more information. Many times at the end of the day, children will forget everything they did that morning, and remember just the last few minutes before pickup. Challenge them with questions like:
 1. Who did you play with today?
 2. What did you see/hear/taste/smell that was new?
 3. Where did you like playing the most?
 4. When did you eat? Nap? Go outside? (hint: helping even young children sequence their day is a foundational math skill that will help later on in school)

Many children take several weeks to adjust. Children who may appear fine the first week, may suddenly become clingy and tear stained the second week. Be patient, and be consistent, follow through with your routine and keep in communication with your child's teacher to get updates. First day jitters are normal, for kids and for parents, so if you need support just ask! You've got this- Have a wonderful first day of school.