



Tips for Teachers for the First Weeks of Preschool



There are many ways to help children express their feelings about separation and cope with their emotions. The key to working with young children and babies as they enter early care and education is to communicate that it is ok to feel sad, frightened, and angry. In legitimizing these feelings, you build self-confidence and trust.

Special Strategies to Use during the 1st Few Weeks:

- **Encourage children to participate fully in saying goodbye.**
Hugging, kissing, crying, waving, and saying, “I’ll miss you” are all ways of bringing feelings out into the open. Once in the open, they are easier to deal with. *A parent should never sneak out.*
- **Plan together.**
Parents, teachers, and children can all plan for the next day’s parting. Will the child walk with the parent to the door? Make a drawing for the parent to take along? Will the parent read one story? Through such planning children gain security and experience self-confidence.
- **Remember that children may display regressive behaviors.**
Regressive behavior can range from thumb-sucking to wetting their pants. It’s important not to make a child feel badly, by saying things like “only babies suck their thumb.” This is a way that children cope with change, and the regressive behaviors will soon disappear.
- **Be aware of transition times in the daily classroom schedule.**
Sometimes those “in-between times” - such as cleanup time or moving from one place to another - are especially difficult for children coping with separation. Try to involve a child in an activity right away.
- **Expect some difficult days.**
Mondays and Fridays are often hard days because they involve parting *from parents (Mondays)* and *from the center/school (Fridays)*. And don’t forget the day after (or before) a holiday break.
- **Encourage children to bring a favorite article to school.**
Children can bring a toy or blanket to school each day or something belonging to their parents. Allow them *not* to share these “security” objects. To the children, they are a bit of home.
- **Announce when you’re stepping out.**
When leaving the room to go to the bathroom, getting more supplies from the closet in the hall, or taking a regular break, be sure to announce, “I’ll be right back.” Children under three often equate an adult leaving the room with the departure of their own parent.
- **Cheerfully answer worried parent calls.**
Give a parent a call within the first few days of school to share their child’s progress on handling separation.
- **Ask parents to call you if their plans change or they’ll be late.**
- **Exchange information with parents about the day’s events.**
Doing so will make parents feel more involved in their children’s education.
- **Give yourself credit for being the best teacher you can be!**

From: Everyday Goodbyes by Nancy Balaban (Teacher’s College Press, NY, 2006); <http://www.ext.nodak.edu> on “Parenting Preschoolers: Separation”



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