

Children's Adjustment to Class

Entering a new group of children and adults may be temporarily upsetting to a child which, in turn, may bring about feelings of guilt or doubt in their parents. These feelings are perfectly natural. And, while it may take time for a child to feel completely comfortable in a new environment, it will happen. Some children will run right into class with a hurried good-bye to parents. Some of these parents may feel emotions that the child doesn't need them anymore, and this is certainly not the case. Parents should respect their child's independence and say good-bye and let the child know that they will return later.

Suggestions for families who are having a slower adjustment :

- Talk with the child's teacher, sharing any information that will help make the transition easier.
- Talk positively and enthusiastically about the class and teachers with the child. It is important that the child sense that the parents like and trust the teachers.
- When arriving to class, the parent could take a moment to get the child settled in, interest him/her in a toy or activity and tell him/her that they are going now, but that they will be back later. Once the good-bye has been said, parents should promptly leave the classroom. Good-byes should be kept short and simple. It is not recommended to "sneak out" while the child isn't looking. He/She may soon discover the unexplained absence and feel betrayed or abandoned. By being open about "good-byes", parents will help their child develop the confidence and trust that the parent will return.
- Crying when a parent leaves is not unusual of a young child. In most cases, crying stops shortly after the parent is out of sight. Trust that the staff will try to comfort your child until he/she is ready to join their new friends. Some children may not want to be comforted by the teachers (in some cases it can even make the child more agitated); in this case, teachers will let the child have their own space and the teacher will keep an eye on them from a distance. Teachers will encourage participation in the class, but will never force participation. The goal is for the child to gradually feel comfortable in their new environment– the child may choose to play independently or watch from the perimeter of the classroom.
- Parents shouldn't "peek" through the classroom window as children are aware of this and will have a difficult time moving away from the door and joining their classmates. If the child is in Building Blocks or Stepping Stones, parents may call the classroom phone to check on their child. If the child is in Twoodles and is extremely upset and not calming down, a teacher will bring the child to the parent if deemed necessary for the well being of the child or safety of the other children in the class.
- Parents are encouraged to have open communication with teachers to discuss strategies. Parents should inform teachers if there have any changes at home like a new baby, visitors, death in the family or anything else that may disrupt the daily activities at home.

