

Getting Ready for Kindergarten at P. S. 452

Starting school is a milestone for children and their parents/guardians. Sending your child to school where he/she will spend the better part of the next six years brings about many emotions – excitement and pride, perhaps also nervousness and anxiety? If this is not your first child heading for school, you probably already learned what works for your family. But if this is your first child in Kindergarten, the mixed emotions you may experience are natural and expected.

From our experiences, we have learned some practical ways which families may find helpful:

- Show interest, be supportive and encouraging. Change is exciting but it can be scary, too. Be reassuring and responsive to your child's concerns.
- Talk to your child about what to expect (activities, lunch, the schedule, toys, and other children.)
- Let your child know it is normal to be nervous or worried about being away from you and suggest he/she takes a familiar object along or a family picture to school (transitional object.)
- Show confidence that you know your child will have a good day.
- Identifying a buddy from the same class (walking to school, in the cafeteria, at the play ground) can help decrease apprehension about being alone in a new setting. Forging friendships with other children will make the transition to school easier. Make informal play dates with other children.
- Make the getting ready for school a stress free ritual and involve your child in school preparations.
- Children respond well to consistency so set up good habits such as the following:
 - ✓ Create night time routines: Pick out clothing
 - Ready backpacks and needed materials before going to bed.
 - Prepare lunch
 - Make sure your child is in bed early to get a good night sleep
 - Limit TV watching
 - ✓ Create morning routines: No TV. (Why invite struggle?)
 - Set a timer (to finish brushing teeth or getting dressed.)

- Give your child breakfast every day home or in the cafeteria.
- Give yourselves enough time so you don't have to rush.
- Please, BE ON TIME! Children who are late even for 5 minutes are off to a poor start. They know their teacher and the other children already started the day. By being late, they miss the morning routines and interrupt the flow of the class. This leaves them with uncomfortable and anxious feelings. Over all, lateness creates chaos for everyone.
- Read age appropriate books about going to school with your child such as: Will I Have A Friend? By Miriam Cohen, The Kissing Hand By Audrey Penn, Kindergarten Kids by Ellen B. Senisi, The Night before Kindergarten by Natasha Wing among many others.

What if your child has some difficulties with separation?

There is a range of behaviors that children show in the beginning of Kindergarten. Some kids become teary, some wail, while others walk off barely saying good bye. A child who has been in day care or Pre-Kindergarten may be more comfortable with the daily ritual of separation (but not always!) If the adults have mixed feelings (guilt, anxiety, fear...) about sending a child to school, this can add to the child's hesitancy or reluctance. Some children may show regression in some behaviors such as sleep difficulties, clinginess, thumb sucking, bed wetting. These behaviors should be temporary and will be helped by your continuing encouragement and positive expectations.

From our experience, we have learned some ways that are helpful to children:

- Do arrive early enough so your child becomes acclimated away from home.
- Do take the drama out of goodbye: Give your child a hug and a kiss and say you'll be back then leave. He/she might cling and cry but lingering won't help either of you.
- Don't hang around and don't hover after you said goodbye. Let your child join the line up by him/herself and leave! Stretching out goodbye does make it harder for him/her to break away.
- Do stay upbeat and positive even though your child may be upset.
- Do not sneak out! Disappearing can create distrust.
- Do return on time at the end of the day. Don't make your child wait and worry you have forgotten him/her.

- Don't overdo your reunion. If you go on and on about how much you missed him/her, your child may feel guilty for making you sad.
- Do take turns and have another adult drop off your child. This helps difficult drop-offs disappear.
- Do not take your child home because of separation issues. It will make it that much harder
- Do not take your child home because of separation issues. It will make it that much harder to come back the next day.
- Do not bargain or bribe your child to behave (if you stop crying, I'll...)

Please, rest assured that the Staff at P. S. 452 wants the best for each child and that we will work very hard so that each one soon will be happy to go to school

What if parents/guardians are having separation difficulties?

Sometimes, however, it is parents and guardians who find themselves stunned and emotional by the departure of their little one. This is where your head must override your heart! You must wave goodbye and let your child take his/her first steps toward independence and growing up. For this, your child needs you to help him/her make that feel ok. The truth is that your child will be fine without you!

Some tips that can help parents who find it difficult to separate:

- Do remain patient, calm and loving.
- Do keep your anxiety under cover. If you are nervous, your child will be, too!
- Don't sob in front of your child. You will scare him/her.
- Don't sneak in and don't peek back after leaving!
- Do find a support system if you need it with other parents/guardians or with the school staff.
- Do trust your child be ok shortly.
- Keep your sense of humor!

Lastly we hope that you will model the values and behaviors that you wish your child to acquire. Kids are learning all the time and they learn a lot from what they see in daily experiences. Values that we believe are especially helpful to school success are:

Try your best. Work hard. Don't bully or call names.

Be kind. Take turns. Help others.

Respect materials and books. Put things back where they belong.

We are excited to welcome your child to Kindergarten and share your desire that the beginning of their school experience is a happy and successful one!