



Arlington Heights Nursery School

Established 1965

Tips For a Smooth Start

Separation issues are a normal part of early childhood development, and one in which we have had many years of experience. Developing coping skills is one of the essential tasks of early childhood. Nursery School (no matter what your child's age) provides a wonderful opportunity for children to begin to master these skills, including separating from caregivers, managing transitions, and developing self-help skills. These skills enable children to feel comfortable and confident in themselves.

Here are some tips for a smooth transition.

- Express confidence to your child that they will enjoy the school day without you and will have a smooth transition. Saying positive things like: "There will be lots of wonderful toys in the room for you", "There will be other boys and girls to play with", "The teachers are excited to see you", supports children's understanding of school as a place to have fun.
- Always leave promptly after saying goodbye to your child. Make sure that before leaving, you say goodbye to your child, and that you let him or her know that you will be back soon. Children can't begin to adjust to you not being there until you say goodbye. The teachers are there to help your child handle his or her feelings. You can call the office as often as you wish to see how your child's day is going. Once you have said goodbye, please do not re-enter the classroom or remain in the doorway, as this is very upsetting to children.
- Sometimes we hear parents say in front of the child, "She will never be able to stay without me", "I'll know he'll cry when I leave". These ideas can be self-fulfilling prophecies and can undermine children's belief in their ability to handle this transition. Instead, say, "I can't wait to hear about all the fun things you will do at school", "I will be back later to pick you up and I'll be so glad to see you".
- Telling your child that you'll miss him or her, and that you'll be sad without them, is not comforting to children and doesn't support your child in separating from you. In fact, our experience tells us that saying these kinds of things can be counter-productive and can make children feel responsible for your emotions.
- If your child is upset when you leave, it's important that you remain calm, encouraging and positive. You may be feeling upset yourself, but you need to let your child know by your words, tone and body language that they'll be safe and have fun in this new setting.
- Remember that the teachers have many years of experience with helping children settle in to school. September and October are all about separating, learning the school routine, and getting to know the children and teachers.
- Remember that young children are different from adults; contrary to popular belief, they do not benefit from lengthy preparation for new events, since they are such concrete thinkers, and do not have a well-developed sense of time. Do not let your child be overwhelmed with talk about starting Nursery School, either by you, or from relatives or friends.

We find that parents often have more anxiety about separation than their children; if you approach nursery school enthusiastically and happily, your child will too!