

Dear Parents,

Beginnings and endings can be challenging, and we understand the stress that can come with transitions. As a relationship-based program, our professionals are very sensitive to our families who are experiencing separation tension and anxiety during this time of change and transitioning into school. This time marks a beginning in a new classroom community with different people and new routines, as well as an end to the daily schedules during the summer months.

Feeling comfortable with separation, for both parents and children, is a process that takes time. In order for children to be able to separate from loved ones and create new healthy attachments, the building of trust between parents and teachers as well as children and teachers is necessary. We invite you, our families, to stay with your children for as long as you need while our teachers support you through the separation process. They will help you decide when it is appropriate to leave the room and how long to be out of the room. We ask you to be prepared to be on call over the first few weeks of school if your child has difficulty separating from you. Initially some children may seem to adjust but may have a delayed reaction to separation. Each of these situations is a part of normal development.

At home, you and your child can participate in many playful activities to support a positive separation. These experiences can help children build skills and strategies to cope with a new life milestone. They also help you, as the parents, develop a better comfort level with your child's school separation. Practice "Goodbyes" and "Hellos," which help to affirm a child's trust that their parent is coming back when she or he says so. Young children need constant reassurance that their parents will return. It is important for young children to have calm, pleasant, and unhurried separations. Tell your child when you are leaving the room or house and tell them you will be back. Never disappear or sneak out. It may be initially easier, but your child never knows when you are leaving or returning.

For the classroom transition, take a family picture that you can send with your child to keep in the classroom. Children enjoy being able to look at the picture during their school day. In addition, you can read stories that address separation and reunion. These stories may seem simple to you, but they are meaningful for children who can relate to the theme. Here are some classics about separation, and you can ask your librarian for additional titles:

- *Are You My Mother?* by P.D. Eastwood
- *If You Were My Bunny* by Kate McMullen
- *The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown
- *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown
- *Goodbye, Hello!* by Shen Roddle
- *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell
- *Mama, Do You Love Me?* by Barbara M. Joosse
- *Papa, Do you Love Me?* By Barbara M. Joosse
- *You Go Away* by Dorothy Corey

At this time of year, I often emphasize that the only constant in life is change and it is so often difficult to work through. We understand that young children who have healthy transition experiences at school will be better equipped to self-regulate their emotions during times of minor and major change throughout their lives. The strategies they learn during these early years will help our young children develop positive attitudes towards change which can affect the ability to constructively embrace change for a lifetime. Our focus is on supporting our

families through transition processes by offering and modeling practical strategies for managing transitions and accepting change.

I look forward to a wonderful year filled with rich experiences shared with old friends and new. See you in the Welcome Center.

Best,

Jen Katz Burk
Director of Foundation