

### **Helpful Hints for Separating**

*Never leave without saying good-bye with a smile and a hug*

*Tell your child when you will be back*

*Let them know how proud you are of them for this big accomplishment.*

- **Do model for your child how to handle the separation process:** Your own feelings (directly or indirectly expressed) are probably the most important factor in how s/he handles separation. The calmer, and more relaxed, you are, the better for your child. Faking it *is* acceptable! Also, communicate with us so we can address any lingering concerns you may have.
- **Do prepare your child before they enter the school building** by discussing what they might like to do (draw a picture, play in the block area, talk to friends, look at a book), who they will see, etc. Ask them these questions—this helps children to visualize the experience better than listening to you talk, and it helps make the notion of being in the classroom more concrete.
- **Do send your child with a small favorite stuffed animal or book that can stay in his/her backpack,** along with a photo of you or the whole family. This brings some of home into school.
- **Do encourage your child to go to the teacher with any needs or questions.** This will help them develop a relationship and problem solving skills better than if you try to solve your child's problems yourself.
- **Never ask your child if it's okay to leave.** This is too big a decision for your child to make, and gives them the sense of having too much control, which is frightening for a child. It is not realistic to expect that your child will **reassure you** during this moment. It is *your* job to reassure him or her that s/he will be safe and fine and that it's time for you to leave.
- **Don't have conversations with other adults when it is time to say good-bye.** This distracts children and makes them feel less secure about leaving you. Wait until you are out of sight of your child to engage in conversation with another adult.

- **Don't negotiate with your child about when you will leave.** It is easier and ultimately more comforting for your child if you are clear and firm once a decision has been made. Prolonged negotiations can extend anxiety, and also create a pattern for future good-byes.
- **Don't draw out good-byes.** At some point, the moment of leaving must happen. If you have decided to leave, it only prolongs the anxiety of separation if you keep drawing it out. Postponing departure when a child cries does not help him or her to learn to handle anxiety; it only teaches him or her that crying will make you stay. Be assured that if your child remains upset for an extended time, we will contact you. Also, if your child is physically clinging to you or trying to follow you out the door or gate, let a school staff member know that you are leaving and that your child needs a companion to help him/her separate. We will help your child with the good-bye.
- **Communicate with your child's teacher.** Besides giving them important information about your child, this will help you to feel comfortable with the separation process.
- **Don't worry!** We know that's easier said than done, but we are here to work with you and your child. Take a deep breath and remember how your child also mastered walking, talking and many other skills. In the same way, they will eventually say good-bye and enter school with confidence

**A few good books to read with your child:**

*Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes

*The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn

*Llama Llama Misses Mama* by Anna Dewdney