

2am and 3am
Hi Everybody,

As you probably know, among our goals for children and families is building relationships. We follow a specific separation policy, and a gradual easing into school, to allow families and children to get to know and trust teachers. We feel that children's emotional development is intertwined with social, physical, and cognitive development – none of these areas of development grow in isolation of the others.

Here are a few goals from our curriculum statement:

*We seek to develop relationships of mutual trust with children, their families, and among children themselves. One of our main goals is to foster in children an understanding of how they belong to the larger community.

*We want them to experience the joy of human interactions and relationships. We hope they will solidify their identity and formal notion of self as an individual, and also as an individual in context of others.

To further some of these goals, we recently sent home a laminated page, printed on both sides. One side of the handout is a face page, with pictures of every child and teacher in your child's class. Names are printed in caps along the bottom of each picture. The other side is a picture schedule of our day.

When we handed these pages to kids, most first looked for their own picture. There were exclamations of delight, or little smiles. "That's me!" We expect this to be the first reaction – where am I on this page, in this group, amid the rest of my peers? Children in preschool are primarily following their own interests – finding out what they like, what they are good at, what they find challenging.

We also expect that over time they will get to know the other members of the group, and begin to find their place within the context of this group. Who else likes to paint? Who is really good at block-building, or putting together puzzles? Who do I like to sit next to at Snack? As teachers we encourage children to use one another as a resource. We might ask one child to show another where they found the paper, or encourage children to tell or show how they worked out a problem with the magna tiles. We also sing name songs, and have made a family picture book in our class, to help further this process of knowing one another. It is an on-going process, to navigate the social scene. Children work hard to construct their knowledge about social relationships, and we take seriously our job of supporting them in their explorations.

Aside from the work we'll be doing in school to get to know one another, the face page can facilitate some good conversations for children at home with their families. It can be a resource for figuring out who your child is talking about, especially when their description stops at "the boy in the blue shirt...." It can even serve as a literacy

tool, when children begin to notice the names, and think about who has similar letters to theirs, or starts with the same letter of the alphabet.

The picture schedule on the back of the face page was sent along to help reinforce the routine of our days at school. We think a predictable routine is comforting to children and can create a safe environment where children know what to expect of each day. Children often spend time in our classroom in front of our large picture schedule, talking through the events of the day. Learning the sequence of activities is important to them, (and sequencing is also an important skill in both literacy and math.)

We hope you'll also find the picture schedule to be a useful tool - to help remind children that, yes, we really will go to gym every day; to offer the reassurance that you will see them just after story time, when it's time to go home; or to initiate conversations with them about activities in the different parts of their day. Some children can find it difficult to summarize what has happened at school on a particular day but may remember more details when asked a specific question, about what bike they rode in the gym, or which story was read that day.

Have a great week!

Melinda, Sarah, and Anita