

October 6, 2013 2am, 3am, 3pm

Hi Everybody,

Well, we are nearly at the end of this initial separation period and we want to thank you all for your great support and cooperation. This phase of separation proceeded somewhat speedily this year; so don't feel discouraged if you're someone who is still hanging around school. It won't be long now.

For those of you who are all done we want to remind you that probably most kids will still prefer that you walk them in and help them get settled. Don't be alarmed if many kids remain more hesitant on a Monday. It's difficult for all of us to get going after weekends and family time. As for the rest of the week, reluctance to separate may show up on any day. Remember, separation can crop up at any time. It's a terrific effort to let go and transition to a different environment. But keep in mind that now kids are more familiar with the space and with us, so most of the time even if they seem to be in heightened distress, they are comforted fairly easily and quickly. Here are some activities we might employ to engage them.

Often we suggest a note or drawing to a parent. Sometimes a child will immediately begin on their own while sitting on a teacher's lap, or sometimes if they are still overcome, a teacher will begin a drawing of a parent [forgive our lack of skill, they never resemble you] or craft a little letter. The narration that accompanies these activities is almost always interesting and diverting. "Now, what color shirt was mommy wearing today?" "Shall we write about what we are doing?" Some kids on completion will carry this paper with them for the rest of the day.

In the gym as well we make sure we bring markers and paper each day. Though many kids can be more outgoing in this loud busy space, just as many may feel overwhelmed, so we provide a cloistered area on the green mat where kids can watch and draw. Sometimes large groups gather. "It's crowded!" Under these circumstances kids may watch the progress of someone else drawing. There is a lot of exchanging and conversation. If there is a child sitting with a teacher because they were worried, they get a chance to observe closely these other kids interacting with relish and at some point they usually join in.

A different soothing strategy might include using animal or people figures we have in our room. The baby polar bear is looking for her mom or in the doll house the family searches for the brother, or better still one by one the kids come out the door [of school] to be greeted by their dads and moms. A similar activity may take place in the playhouse where kids may be caring for and comforting the baby dolls. These little dramas can often provide a format where kids can express their anxieties, and the situations are recognizable and crucial enough that little crowds may gather to share their feelings on the subject.

There are many styles and stages of separation. Some kids skip right to the end and wave their parent goodbye and some go one step at a time, checking repeatedly to locate their parent in the room. Whichever stage your person is at, overall the confidence and assurance in the classroom is mounting. One boy asks every day "Where are the animals?" until on the fourth day the teacher replied "You know where the animals are, don't you?" and he ran to get them. A few kids have started independently accessing the writing shelf and helping themselves to scissors and hole punchers. The schedule is often a subject of discussion as kids become increasingly aware of the day's sequence. Little by little our group times grow less rambunctious. And here we are again looking forward to another exciting year.

Melinda, Anita, and Sarah

P. S. You can help us at dismissal, everybody, by waiting on the outer edges of the sidewalk leading to the door. We know you are excited to greet your children but please resist crowding in front of the door. It makes it very confusing and anxious for kids coming out when there is no visible path. Thank-you.