

Hello everybody!

2AM/3AM/3PM 9-29-14

We've just finished a full week of school with our regular schedule and it has been a whirlwind! Thank you for all your support as children settle into the classroom. Soon they'll know that they can depend on teachers to meet their needs at school, but in these early days they still count on their trusted, familiar adults. Many of you have spent some portion of class time outside of the classroom, and children are beginning to turn to teachers more for help and support. Some of you have done a quick trip to the bathroom, or spent a chunk of playtime away, or left for almost the whole day, by now.

In the next few days and weeks all of you will reach a day when teachers will let you know that you can drop your child off at school, and that you won't have to stay in the building. Just keep in mind that many, if not most, of the children in this age group still require a bit of settling in each morning. This may mean walking them in to their cubby to hang up their coat, or accompanying them during handwashing, or helping them settle into an activity in the classroom. Even once the initial separation process is behind you, there can be times when your child needs a little extra support.

Separation is an ongoing issue, and children may need your guidance as they return to school after a long absence, or an illness, or when there are other changes at home.....(or, when starting kindergarten, high school, heading off to college.....) You can reassure them that you are always going to return, that they will be okay while you're gone, that teachers are here to help them, and that even if they're sad now they will not feel sad forever. Learning to cope with these uncomfortable feelings is something that children will have to do all through their lives. Here at Park West we try not to minimize a child's sadness or anxiety. We try to help them identify and manage these feelings, offer suggestions for coping, and solicit help from their peers. Just last week when one of the children was crying for Mom, another child remembered she felt the same way when her babysitter left. Another child said she doesn't cry when her parent leaves, and when asked by a teacher what she does instead she said, simply, "I recover." Wise words for all of us to keep in mind!

With all of the challenges of starting school, you may notice that your child does fine here, but is especially needy at home. Tantrums, toileting accidents, trouble with sleeping or eating could all happen at your house.

It takes a tremendous amount of attention and self-control for little children to attend to what's happening, deal with all the other personalities in class and move through our daily schedule – with more and more independence from you. They may need a bit more cuddling or lap time, some extra stories or quiet times together. Acknowledging how difficult it is to start school, and how well they are doing, can help, too.

Thanks for all of the family pictures and electronic headshots! We are compiling a face page and a family book for each class, so please get yours in, if you haven't yet.

The face page is a great tool for families to use to talk about school, and to find out about the other children in class. It will give you a visual if your child is referring to someone, but doesn't yet know their name. It will also include a class schedule on one side, so that you can start a conversation about your child's day. It can be difficult for a young child to process and then describe 'what happened at school today.' A more specific question about a particular part of the day may result in a more detailed response. Children rely on routines to feel safe and comfortable at school, and going over the schedule helps them know what to expect each day.

Thanks! Melinda, Anita and David