

Tips to ease your morning drop off

So you finally managed to get your child through getting up, breakfast, getting dressed, brushing teeth, and getting out of the house, but one hurdle remains – saying goodbye at school!

Whether going to school for the first time, or returning after a summer at home, going to school involves transition. Feelings of excitement may be accompanied by feelings of anxiety. Crying, clinging, and even begging (“Please don’t leave me!”) can be harder on parents than the children. Remember that most children quickly turn off the tears after saying goodbye, then move on to learning and laughing with teachers and friends! At Fairfield, our teachers look forward to working as a team with parents in easing the transition to school.

With a little patience and consistency, rest assured that you and your child will adjust to the transition.

In the meantime, here are a few suggestions to help ease your morning drop-off:

Start early

Prepare as much as you can the night before (set out clothes, prepare lunch and book bags, etc.). Try to get your child to bed early so they get plenty of rest and can wake early enough for a healthy breakfast, extra cuddles and a calm morning routine.

Be consistent.

Change can be tricky for everyone. Consistency is key to a successful transition to school. Going to school on a regular basis is really important and will help your child adjust and teach them how to adopt routines. Each time you pick them up, remind them that you came to pick them up just as promised, which may ease anxiety the next day.

Talk about what to expect, and listen.

Keep explanations simple, but letting your child know what to expect may reduce anxiety. Explain changes to their routine, and try to focus on the positive side of each. Ask your child if they are excited about school, then listen. If they bring up concerns, acknowledge them and address them openly. Talk about healthy ways to ease their fears. If concerns persist or worsen, speak with your child’s teacher about them.

Use the journey time to get your child excited about their day.

On the way to school, talk about what you know to be the favourite parts of your child's day. Mention any special friends you know they'll be excited to see to remind them of what they like about school. Stay upbeat, and if you sense the conversation is causing more stress, switch to talk about something that you may do together after school. Try to avoid giving your child any ideas ("Don't cry") or comparing them with other children ("Joe never cries at drop-off").

Think about developing a goodbye ritual.

Sometimes expecting that special hug or high five along with a consistent phrase ("See you later, alligator!") and reminding them of the pick-up point can make it easier for your child to say goodbye. Once you've said your goodbyes, it's best to leave quickly and not go and look for your child through the classroom window as this may upset them again just as they have settled.

Stay positive and keep goodbyes short and sweet.

Children can pick up on your mood. So if you appear nervous and anxious, your child will likely follow suit. Try to appear confident that your child will separate easily — say goodbye cheerfully and matter-of-factly before leaving as quickly as possible.

Read books with your child that address goodbyes.

If needed, The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn and Llama Llama Misses Mama by Anna Dewdney are excellent books that can ease separation anxiety in pre-schoolers.

Help the teacher get to know your child.

If you know your child is anxious, brief the new teacher with information that could help them get to know each other better. Knowing favourite colours, toys or even songs your child likes can be helpful. It may also help to know what techniques you use to calm your child when feeling upset or anxious.

Don't be too hard on yourself!

Remind yourself that these feelings are normal, and part of growing up. They often come and go. Learning to work through difficult emotions is an important part of becoming more independent and learning to cope with transitions in life. Remember that time apart is healthy for you and your child and with patience and consistency, your little one will quickly adjust so you can say goodbye to tears and hello to a successful school year!