

Ease Those First-Day Blues!



Separations, sadness, fears, and tears—a young child's first day in your program can be challenging for children and adults! These strategies can help teachers and caregivers make it easier for children and parents to get through those first-day blues.



Help families prepare.

- Make home visits before the first day—that way the child and the parent see a familiar face when they arrive.
- Send welcoming notes or e-mails with pictures of staff. Children like to get mail, and the photos help them recognize their teachers on the first day.
- Schedule an open house for children and parents outside of regular program hours.
- Offer families a list of strategies that may help children deal with being in a new place away from parents.
- Involve children in making a book about your classroom to share with new families. Include pictures of staff members, parts of the room, and children engaged in every-day activities.



Help children “ease in.”

- Shorten the first day so child and parent go through a full day's schedule in just a few hours.
- Invite parents to stay in the room for extended periods the first week, gradually reducing their time each day.
- Show every child where to find bathrooms, cubbies, coat hooks, cots, soap, paper towels, and facial tissues.
- Let children know that you understand that they might wish their parents were there. Assure them that they are safe with you and that you believe they will soon find something they like to do.
- Teach cooperative games so children can enjoy each other right away.
- Sing songs that use children's names (for example, “Willaby Wallaby” or “Pawpaw Patch”) to help classmates get to know each other.



Welcome the child who starts after the year has begun.

- Ask the group to discuss ways that they might help “new children” adjust to being in your program. Even if the year has just begun, the other children are veterans compared with “the new one!”
- Assign a caring “partner” to help a new child find his way around.



For related Web resources, see “Ease Those First-Day Blues!” at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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