



Kindergarten Ready: Tips for parents & caregivers to ease the drop-off

Beginning kindergarten is a big life change for all children – and for parents/caregivers! It is an exciting new adventure and all children respond differently to this new experience – some will ease into the new routines without any difficulties, and some many need a bit more preparation to make the transition easier. Here are some ideas to help make the start of the day easier for both of you: **Children look to the adults in their lives for guidance and comfort, so it is very important that you are presenting a calm, hopeful exterior (even if you are feeling different on the inside).** As a parent/caregiver, you are a powerful role model for your child in showing them how to handle new and potentially stressful situations. The goal is to model for them healthy ways to cope when feeling stressed – send them a message that you have confidence that they can handle things that feel scary!

This [short video](#) from Anxiety Canada has some wonderful tips for setting your child up for a successful start to their school day.

Anything is possible. Anything can be.

-Shel Silverstein

To help set your child up for a good day at school, try some of the following strategies:

- * Remind your child about the **fun things** that are happening at school that day. Paint a mental picture for your child of what to expect. Talk about their new friends, the classroom routine, and their favourite activity stations. Excitement can be contagious!
- * If your child is struggling to separate from you, take opportunities to **practice**. For example, when at grocery store, ask your child to get something from the other end of the aisle (or slightly down from you). This goal is for them to experience small successes while separating from you.
- * Connect your child with other children in the school and make plans (when possible) to have the children arrive at school at the same time to enter the school together.
- * Check with your child's teacher to find out if there is a place that your child can put a **family photo** in the classroom; this would allow your child to 'see' you (as well as siblings, pets, etc.) anytime they need comfort.
- * Create a **special fun way to say goodbye** to your child that will make your child look forward to the drop off if they happen to be feeling a bit uneasy. For example, you could have a silly handshake, tug on your ear, or a funny saying – something that only happens at drop off.
- * **Don't be late for pick up.** We recognize that sometimes parents and caregivers are stuck in traffic, or events come up that we do not anticipate, but a late pick-up may cause a child to feel anxious; which may negatively impact on drop off the next day (and the coming days).
- * Oftentimes, we as adults want to sneak out when we see that our child is settled and distracted because we think that it will be easier. However, this can result in a fear of abandonment. Likewise, a drawn-out goodbye is also not helpful. Instead, let your child know that you are leaving, say **goodbye with a bright smile** and a reminder that you are excited to see them after school and hear about all the fun things they did that day.
- * When packing your child's lunch, leave an **encouraging note** or even a drawing of a heart to remind them how much they are loved and how brave you know they are being.
- * And finally, have confidence in your **child's teacher** to support your child while they are at school. Know that your child's teacher will reach out to you if they are concerned about how your child is adjusting.

Based in part of the work of Stephenie Gold, Director LEAP Clinic;
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If your child is having more difficulty settling into the new classroom routines. or they are having more difficulty separating from you than you expected, additional strategies to support your child when they may be feeling anxious are in [Anxiety in Kindergarten](#) (speak to your child's school for a copy).

If you are concerned, don't hesitate to reach out for help —it can be a great benefit to both of you. Talk with your child's teacher about your concerns and what they have observed in the classroom. Gathering information about how often your child is experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties, and what strategies are already being used, will be helpful. Within HWDSB, help is available. Through your child's teacher, you can reach out to the school Social Worker for support, access presentations and workshops, or learn more about groups that are offered to support parents/caregivers. In the community, speak with your child's doctor/health team, or explore services offered [Child and Adolescent Services](#) or [CONTACT Hamilton](#).