

One Week Before School Starts

Children feel more comfortable when they know what to expect regarding preschool. Some strategies to begin this new process might be:

1. Several days before preschool, tell them about the change in their life. Don't prepare too early.
2. Drive past or walk by the preschool building.
3. Be confident and relaxed about preschool. Talk about it in a positive way.
4. Visit school before the child attends:
 - Meet the teacher
 - Locate your child's cubby
 - Explore play materials
 - Find the bathrooms
 - Share information with the teacher
5. Read books about:
 - Activities at school
 - Successful ventures away from home
6. Have your child draw a picture to take the first day.
 - Attach to his/her cubby
 - Place on the bulletin board
 - Give to the teacher
7. Get your child involved:
 - Help your child decorate a bag to take an extra change of clothes to school the first day.
 - Let your child help select clothes to wear on the first day. Lay out clothes the night before.

The First Day of School

1. Greet the teacher when you arrive.
2. Stay briefly to get your child settled, we recommend two to three minutes, maximum!
3. Upon leaving, tell the child:
 - Where you will be
 - What the child will be doing
 - When you will return
4. When it's time to leave, say goodbye once and leave quickly. Don't sneak out.
5. Arrive promptly at pick-up time.

Teachers Can Help with Transitions



For the child entering preschool for the first time, separation is a large part of the daily curriculum. Coping with separation takes time, effort, and cooperation on the part of all caregivers. Helping a child cope with this separation will influence growing independence, resulting in a self-reliant, capable individual.

Building a strong, trusting relationship with the teacher and assistant, plus settling into a daily routine, will help each child feel secure at preschool. It takes time for children to learn to trust new adults. Gradually the children and caregivers will learn about each other and, through this daily routine, the child will gain security by understanding what happens next throughout their day. Soon, the child will understand that mom and dad are "out-of-sight" but will return.

Your teachers understand the separation process and will be helpful to both you and your child. Before the preschool year begins, teachers will have prepared the room in such a way that it will assist in the transition/separation process. An individual visit is the next step in helping your child feel comfortable and secure being away from home. If you anticipate problems the first day of school, it would be advisable to talk with your child's teacher and have an idea of how you will handle those first "good-byes." The teachers will be ready to comfort and talk with your child upon your departure from preschool and would welcome a call from you during the first few days to check on your child's adjustment. And, as always, if you find you have questions or concerns, please talk to your teacher or the director.

The goal at First United Methodist Preschool is to provide a fun, nurturing, and loving environment which will enable all children to grow and learn.



Saying Good-bye

Easing the Transition Between Home and School



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FAQs

My child is clinging to me or crying, should I stay?

We will recommend that parents still say goodbye and depart. The teachers in the classroom are prepared to comfort and console your child. When a parent stays for an extended period, the child thinks that preschool is a place that we come together, the delayed departure becomes confusing. Our goal is to begin the routine of brief drop off and quick goodbyes right from the first day.

My child was crying when I left and I am worried?

Feel free to telephone the preschool office. We know that goodbyes are hard and you are wondering how things are going. We are happy to contact your child's teacher for an update. Really, we don't mind a bit! If your child is dealing with separation issues when the day is underway, the preschool staff will contact you as well.

What if he/she cries all day?

Rest assured, we will not allow a child to cry for the entire preschool day. If they are inconsolable, we will ask you to pick up your child early, usually one hour to an hour and a half is our threshold. If they are inconsolable, we will ask you to pick up your child early. We will telephone you after 30 minutes of sustained crying (continuous distress, not taking comfort in hugs/reassurance from teachers, not participating in play) and ask that parents pick up their child within 30 minutes of the call.

We are two weeks into school and my child is still crying at drop off? Should I withdraw him/her?

Over the years, we have found that about 5% of the children enrolled struggle with separation. For those who struggle, we find that the following formula is a good rule of thumb: Most children settle into an easier goodbye after about 10-12 days of school depending on your child's enrollment pattern. For children attending five days per week, separation issues diminish after two weeks. For children attending M/T/W, it is about 4 weeks. For TH/F children it is about 6 weeks. Our staff will keep you informed of how your child is adjusting.

Children's Concerns and Feelings About Separation

Concerns of the child:

1. Is my parent coming back?
 - With younger children you might play games of appearance and disappearance. With older children you can explain that you will return after lunch.
2. Who will take care of me until my parent comes back?
 - Reassure your child of the teacher's care.
3. Children are concerned they have been sent away from home because they have done something bad.
 - Remind your child of a fun activity planned for the day.
4. Other concerns:
 - Provide answers for the child through books and conversations.

Books:

- *Cohen, Will I have a Friend?*
- *Kuklin, Going to Nursery School*
- *Tompert, Will You Come Back for Me?*
- *Berenstain, Berenstain Bears Go to School*

Feelings:

1. Sadness over separation from parent.
2. Anxiety about new experiences.
3. Anger that parent left them.

Feelings may be expressed in many ways:

- Hesitation to enter the room
- Shy silence
- Acting out or other types of problem behaviors
- Crying
- Ignoring parent or expressing anger toward parent. Help children to understand and express their feelings.

Tips for Successful Separations

It is wise to make sure you feel comfortable with the decision to enroll your child. If you feel enthusiastic about the preschool experience, your child will look forward to it as well. Talking to other parents in the program who have had successful transitions and talking to your child's teacher may aid in this process. You may want to try the following:

1. Plan successful times away from you before the child begins school.
2. Avoid talking about exciting things you will be doing while the child is at school.
3. Some children separate better from one parent than the other. When possible, let that parent take the child to school.
4. Plan for separation adjustments:
 - After a weekend during the first few weeks
 - Following a brief absence for vacations
 - During illnesses
 - When there are changes at home



A Few Things to Remember

- Repetition, routine, and ritual, at both home and school, give your child a sense of security and understanding.
- Separation anxiety reoccurs at various developmental stages throughout your child's life.