



Experienced Woodhaven Parents' Tips for Drop Off

Your child's first preschool experience is a milestone to look forward to with excitement and happiness, but it can also cause some worries about separation. Teary eyes on the first day of school are completely normal for both children and parents. Here are some tips from experienced Woodhaven parents that we hope will help make preschool drop off a little easier.

Keep it Short and Sweet (and Consistent)

Decide on a short and sweet goodbye ritual so your child knows what to expect but the goodbye doesn't prolong. Establishing a routine is important. A special kiss, handshake, or goodbye saying like "See you at noon my little raccoon!" helps your child know it is time to say goodbye and that someone is coming back to pick them up. When you are reunited later (at pick up or when you are home from work) reinforce that you always come back. Give your child the opportunity to work through their feelings, and learn to face and overcome adverse emotions on their own. (*The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn is a great book to read together before starting school).

Don't Hang Around to Make Sure Your Child Is OK

We all want to be sure that our children are happy and adjusting to preschool. However, your child has a sixth sense when it comes to knowing you are on campus. If they can see or hear you in the parking lot, looking over the fence, or peering through a window and you re-engage, then you must start that separation process all over again. The sooner you are off campus, the sooner they can adjust to your absence. Usually once parents are out of sight and earshot, children settle into their routine within minutes.

Keep Comfort Objects in the Car

It can be reassuring to a child to know their favorite toy, blanket, or stuffed animal is nearby. It may be tempting to bring that comfort object onto the playground at drop off, but those objects really need to stay in the car (think "out of sight, out of mind"), and virus concerns require that no personal items be brought to school. More importantly, children cannot play freely, climb, swing, or ride bikes while they are holding an object, and this will inhibit their ability to engage in the playground as a transitional aid. Have your child strap that item into their car seat when you leave the car and it will be waiting there for them at pick up.

Socialize with Other Parents Away from School

Developing relationships with other families is a very important aspect of attending preschool, and it is tempting to chat with other parents while on the playground or at the benches outside the gate. As discussed above, however, this can interfere with a healthy goodbye routine and impacts our social distancing practices. Please move out of sight and earshot of the playground after you say your goodbyes and leave the playground, and maintain social distancing from other families at all times.

Come Early and Leave Early

We begin our day on the playground so that your child will have 15 minutes to process their emotions and transition into the school day. If it takes them 10 minutes to warm up to school and you haven't left until we call "Clean Up and Line Up", your child doesn't get the space and time they need to adjust to the separation on the playground before we go inside. Please plan to arrive early enough for your child to process the separation and prepare to engage.

Don't Sneak Away

Getting to say goodbye to you is very important to your child. When you see that your child is engaged in an activity or with a friend, it may be tempting to sneak out, but they will eventually turn to look for you. If you are not there and they didn't get to say goodbye, it can be devastating and may erode their trust.