

## Making New Students Feel Welcome Tips for Teachers

**J**ust as adults have many concerns about their life transitions; children can have their own set of worries.

Children entering formal school encounter many new experiences. They have a new classroom, a new teacher, usually a new school, possibly a new means of getting to the new school, and the list goes on. Children may wonder, “Where am I supposed to sit? Where do I put my backpack? Will my new teacher be nice? What if I have to go the bathroom? Will I see some of my old friends? What if I don’t know anyone there?”

As the formal school teacher, a very important part of your job is to make the new arrivals feel welcome as soon as they walk through the door. This can be a difficult task when you have 20 or more children, all with similar anxieties. The more organized you are before the children arrive, the more time you will have to deal with their fears and insecurities, which means the more welcome they will feel.

- ★ Before children arrive on the first day, you should have a space designated for each child’s personal belongings. Have cubbies and/or coat racks labeled with each child’s name. If you are able to get a picture of each child in your class before school starts, use the child’s picture as part of the label.
- ★ Plan for each child to decorate his or her own cubby during the first week of school. This gives the children a sense of ownership.
- ★ Write a welcome note for each child and have it waiting in his or her cubby upon their arrival on the first morning, or even mail it to each family as a way to introduce yourself before the first day of school. You can include a snapshot of yourself and other staff for the children to show to their families.
- ★ Try and gather information from families about each child’s particular likes and dislikes, favorite activities, and things each child does well.
- ★ Take a picture of each child as he or she arrives and post it on a “Welcome to Our Classroom” mural or bulletin board. (When it is time to take the display down, be sure to save each child’s photo and include it in a “My Kindergarten Year” journal.)
- ★ Remind children where the restrooms are, and review classroom rules and procedures daily during the first few weeks of school.

- ★ Find out if any children knew each other prior to the start of school. Create a buddy system that pairs each child with someone he or she knows. It is likely that some children won't know anyone. Pair up these children with a more outgoing child or a child that is sensitive to the needs of other children.
- ★ Contact the preschool or Head Start teachers of those children who participated in preschool or Head Start to find out what favorite songs, books, activities, art, and materials used in their classrooms. Then use these familiar materials and activities to create continuity between the two classrooms.

By incorporating some of these ideas into your routine, you are off to a good start.

Enjoy the school year!