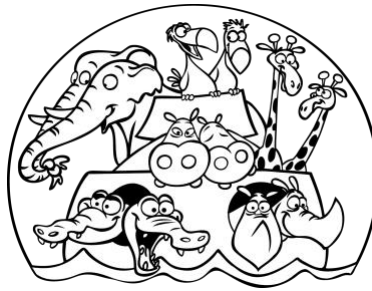


Saint Mark's Preschool Good Beginnings Transitioning to Preschool

We are so happy and excited that your child is joining us here at Saint Mark's Preschool and we are here to help make the transition to school as comfortable as possible for you and your child. Starting preschool is a major life transition for both young children and their families. Change, even when it is a positive change, can be stressful. In many cases this may be the first time a child is away from their family or an individual caregiver. Both the child and parents may experience separation anxiety. Parents want to know that their child will be in a loving and safe environment when the child is not in their direct care. Young children have been developing an attachment to their parents and are often secure in their daily home life and routine. There are specific measures that both parents and caregivers can take to ease the transition to care and alleviate the separation anxiety:

- Recognize your child's temperament. All children have unique personalities and as many different reactions to starting school. Some children will be very active on their first day and want to touch and try everything; others will be more cautious and quietly observe what is going on before feeling comfortable about joining in. Some children will be happy for the first few days and then later show signs of separation anxiety.
- Recognize your own feelings. Your child is sensitive to your emotional state. Stay positive and show your child that you are comfortable and excited that he is starting school.
- Prepare your child in advance. Talk with your child about starting school. Read books to her about preschool and how much fun she will have, as well as talking about what will happen when you say goodbye and when you will return. Establish a "goodbye" ritual.
- Parents are very welcome to come and visit the school before the enrollment date. We keep this visit to no more than 30 minutes long, and preferably one day the week before the start date.
- Set up a planned routine for the first day. Please check the daily activity schedule for outside/inside times. Go into the classroom with your child to drop off bedding and lunch; sign them in using the QR code in the classroom. Then, if the class is outside, go onto the yard with your child and find your child's teachers.
- You may choose to keep the first day or few days short. Children who have little experience in group settings may have absorbed all they can in a couple of hours. With the app, we can always make this decision on a case-by-case basis.
- Give the child a transitional object for the first few days – a blanket or stuffed toy.



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However, please keep in mind that this object may get lost or damaged at school, so always have a backup at home. Many young children will want to hold on to their lunch box or backpack for the first days as a connection to home.

- Communicate with the teachers. The teachers are here to help make the transition as smooth as possible for your child. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance. Make sure you communicate with teachers about anything they will need to know about your child to make the day run smoothly – e.g. you child didn't eat much breakfast and may need an early snack or that you will be back before lunch to pick them up.
- Say goodbye to your child. You may wish to warn your child that you will be leaving in 5 minutes, or after you have finished the activity (reading a book or digging in the sand). When it is time to go, say goodbye and go. Continued extensions to the separation seem to only add to anxiety and make the separation more difficult. Always resist the temptation to "sneak" out. Regardless of how upset the child is, sneaking out only adds to their anxiety, and breaks down the child's sense of trust.
- The teachers will send messages and photographs through the procare app, and you are welcome to message to ask at any time, and however often, for updates throughout the day.
- Please ask if you have any questions.

It is the role of parents and teachers to support children through this process. Preschool is a very fun place for children. They make friends, they bond with teachers and other adults, and relish having their own special place. Keeping this in mind, and a positive attitude from parents, goes a long way to enabling children to cope with separation in a healthy and productive way.

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