

BACK TO SCHOOL:

5 things every preschool parent with a child who is blind or has vision loss should know



AUGUST 2019

August is here and a new school year is almost in session! While this time in a child's life is very exciting, the transition can be worrisome for first-time preschool parents and children, especially for those that experience vision loss or blindness. We know this - so we brainstormed a few tips and tricks to ensure a smooth transition for your child's preschool adventure. And (hopefully) make the transition as easy as possible for you too!

ARRANGE A VISIT TO THE CLASSROOM

This allows your child to explore the room free of distractions and other children. Locating their cubby, finding a fun toy and meeting the teacher in a 1:1 setting will help your child feel more comfortable and confident on the first day. While there, ask the teacher if you can send a comfy “lovey” or toy from home that may soothe your child if anxiety arises. That connection to home often helps comfort children when they are unsure of their environment.



PRACTICE INDEPENDENT PLAY

Prepare your child to work independently on a task (puzzle, playing with a baby doll, driving cars on a race track etc.) for a limited amount of time before moving to another activity. One of the largest goals in a preschool setting is teaching the students how to socialize and play together. In order to do this, children must learn how to play by themselves independently. Introducing structured play time beforehand will get them used to this idea and will help them gain an understanding or sense of time.



ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS

Help your child understand what to expect on the first day by talking about specific scenarios. Ask them questions like, “How will you ask for help?”, “How will you tell your teacher you’re hungry?” or “How would you ask a friend to play together?” Another way to walk through scenarios with them is by reading books together about the first day of school. Remember, audio books are available on YouTube! “Mouse Loves School” is a good book to start with.





COMMUNICATE WITH THE TEACHER

Make sure your child's teacher is aware of their health issues and daily routines. Anything you can tell them about their mannerisms and daily occurrences is helpful. If you have found a specific way to comfort your child, tell them. If your child prefers drinking from a particular cup, tell them. If they understand the word 'potty' over 'restroom,' tell them. This creates an easier transition from home to school for both your child and their teacher.

BE HONEST WITH THEM

Going to preschool is one of the first times they will be somewhere without you there. Children don't have a real concept of time, so be sure to tell them that you will be back to pick them up. Instead of telling them a specific time you will be back, say that you will be picking them up "before lunch" or "after nap time."

As for you - the parent, it is okay to feel excited, nervous, sad or anywhere in between. This is a big step for you and your family. Prepare everything for the first day the night before so you can enjoy the morning with your soon-to-be preschooler!



ABOUT CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULT SERVICES

Cleveland Sight Center offers programs and services for infants, toddlers, school-age children, and teens/young adults that are designed to maximize his or her potential to grow and learn. The staff is devoted to assisting families with the unexpected emotions of parenting a child who is blind or has low vision, as well as other developmental disabilities.

Contact Sylvia Snyder at 216-791-8118 or ssnyder@clevelandsightcenter.org for more information.