



Supporting Each Child's Transition from Home to School

Helping young children make a smooth and secure transition from home to school is at the heart of learning to feel safe at Wild Lilac. Until children have established a sense of safety and trust, they put much of their energy into feelings about insecurity, uncertainty, and anxiety and are not able to fully engage with their peers, teachers, and the learning environment.

A key element in supporting transitions from home to school each day are **transition plans**. Transition plans are daily goodbye rituals that families share together, often with the support of teachers. They involve a few simple steps and are successful because they are consistently followed. Consistency helps children feel secure as they are able to predict what will happen each morning, and this in turn helps them feel safe and comfortable in the routine once it is established.

Creating a Transition Plan

(1) Sit down together as a family. Talk about arriving at school each morning. Ask her how she feels about the transition, what it's like each day. Ask sensory questions to help her imagine the setting: "Who do you see everyday?" and "What sounds do you hear?" Express your feelings and needs about the morning transition as parents: "When you go to school, I go to work. I need to leave school quickly to get to work on time. I think about you and miss you while I'm at work, too. And I'm always excited to see you when I pick you up."

(2) Ask her how she would like to say goodbye. Parents and children usually create a unique way to say goodbye together that includes different elements like: one big hug, two small kisses, a high-five, saying "I love you," sitting on a teacher's lap, or waving goodbye to each other at the door or window. It can also involve special, transitional objects like a blanket, stuffed animal, or family photo. Together, share your plan with her teachers.

(3) It is usually helpful to write the plan down once you've talked about it. You can use words and/or illustrations in a simple list format: a picture of a hug, a picture of a kiss, a picture of a heart with the words "I love you" written underneath, and a picture of a hand waving goodbye. You can even use photographs of you doing these things.

(4) Practice the goodbye routine at home. Ask her how it feels and if she wants to change or add anything to the routine once you practice.

(5) Revisit the list every morning before you come to school. Talk about what's going to happen when you arrive at school, and reference the list.

(6) Every morning at drop-off follow through with the exact same transition plan.

The amount of time it takes a child to understand, and find comfort and safety in an established routine, depends on each child. But, given the consistent support of a transition plan, each child learns to transition to Wild Lilac comfortably and independently.