

Supporting children to transition into a new school year



Positive Minds Australia

Worried about your child's class placement in 2022? It's perfectly normal for you and your family to be thinking a lot about this. After all children spend all day at school.

It's only natural to have a preference for a particular teacher and normal to feel worried or disappointed if they don't get them.

It's important to know that a child's emotional adjustment to leaving this year's teacher and preparing for next year's teacher is interconnected with your feelings about it.

Make sure if there are any special reasons you feel your child will benefit from a particular teacher or cohort, that you express these to your school early, before they start configuring classes.

Here are some ways you can help make the transition smoother for your child if you or they didn't get the news you were hoping for.

- ❖ Hear out your child's feelings but try and avoid fixing their feelings by adding your own feelings, judgements and solutions. Feelings need to come out, be present and move through. They don't have to be excited about the teacher they got, to learn from that teacher in the long run.

The feelings you see in that initial moment aren't necessarily reflective of how they will feel long term - especially if you don't react with them. Humans need time to process change. When news is fresh, we can go through many feelings of resistance and uncertainty. That doesn't mean that what's coming is necessarily bad.

You can gently say something like, 'you really wanted X, so of course you're disappointed. I understand. We can talk more after a cuddle/ play/ hot chocolate. (Basically, you want to avoid talking while their logical brain is switched off and emotions are high). Listening calmly and quietly is golden.

- ❖ Avoid looking upset about the placement in front of your child. If they are upset, they will naturally look to you to help them feel better. This doesn't mean you have to fake being excited if you're not (they'll see through that) but it does mean you do your very best to be calm, confident and if you can't be hopeful, try and be neutral. Children need us as an emotional compass when they experience uncomfortable feelings.
- ❖ Before you go in to pick them up on the day they receive their placement, remind yourself to try and trust the process. There are multiple layers to how class placements are allocated that couldn't possibly be explained completely.

School leaders and staff put in huge amounts of thought into student personalities, learning styles, teaching styles, class size, who asked to have who in their class and much more that is happening behind the scenes we're not aware of.

- ❖ Schools genuinely do their best with this decision. If you're upset, it's possible they are too but when weighing everything up, had no other direction to turn. Supporting your child's teachers and school is a crucial part of your child's psychological and academic success there.
- ❖ Your reaction to next year's teacher news is hugely important to your child. Your confidence, hopefulness and regulated emotion is crucial. If you're not happy, try and keep these feelings in the back ground and discuss them privately with another adult. Children are too young to take on their parent's worries.

If there is a genuine problem, take logical action without involving your child in the stress associated with it.

- ❖ Your child's emotional connection to and respect for their teacher and school is deeply connected with your connection to and respect for their teacher and school.
- ❖ Children learn, grow and strengthen in resilience by being with a broad range of personalities and communication styles. When things are unrealistically perfect and easy, they can get stuck in their comfort zone.

To build confidence for later on in life, you need to experience a broad range of peers and situations and discover that through talking about feelings, asking for help, establishing boundaries and building your social emotional skills, you can handle a lot of what life has in store.

Be there to hear their thoughts and feelings out, but above all show you have confidence in your child to get through. If situations are dangerous, toxic or damaging your child's learning and psychological health, always talk to school staff and if necessary, other experts to ask for and seek help.

Seek out the support of a health professional too if necessary. On the surface, do your best as your child's most important adult and leader to show your confidence that your child will be safe and cared for, always.

- ❖ Do something heart-warming and compassionate for yourself. If you're upset and stressed it's not because you're weak or incapable. It's because our children hold our hearts and when they hurt, we hurt. You need to look after yourself first and foremost.

The advice above is general and based on general child development, resilience and confidence research. It is written with the very best intention to help you. Without knowing your individual circumstances it's not intended to replace your expertise as a parent or the expertise of educators and health professionals. Always seek tailored expert advice if you feel your child's physical or psychological health is at risk in any way.

Wishing you all the very best with class placement news if you live in the Southern Hemisphere.

Hang in there beautiful parents

xx  Madhavi Nawana Parker

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