

Head Start certified teachers and assistants work with parents to determine the strengths, interests, and needs of each child & to plan an individualized education program.

Teachers plan an environment & activities that are based on developmentally appropriate practices and Head Start early childhood standards. Focus is on the 8 domains:

- Mathematics
- Science
- Literacy
- Language
- Social/Emotional
- Creative Arts
- Physical Health & Development
- Approaches to Learning



330 Oakwood Drive
Pocatello, ID 83204

Phone: 208-233-6606
Fax: 208-232-4906
www.pochs.org



Tips for Parents: Helping your child adjust to Pre-school



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Parents' Separation Pangs

Many loving parents get anxious sending their children off to school. The strategies below are designed to help you let your child go. Keep in mind that the more secure you feel, the more confident your child may be.

Look around the classroom. If you drop your child off in the classroom, look around to see what is changing every day. What's new on the walls? Which books are in the book corner? Noticing the details may help you reconnect with your child later and talk about them together.

Talk about school at home. Specific questions might get your kids talking. "What was the best part of the story your teacher read today?" "What's it like to be line leader?" "What did you do on the playground?"

Discuss what the teacher writes in the newsletter. When your child brings home work, comment on it with specifics.

Acknowledge your own separation pangs. Parents worry when their kids start school.

"They worry if the teachers will really know how to care for their child. They feel loss because this may be the first time their child is away from home this long. They may also feel loss because

they work full time and can't be there - at school - to help their child adjust in person. They may feel guilty if they have to leave a crying child at school and go off to work. But they too can find ways to work things through by talking with a friend, their partner, and the teacher or family advocate if needed.

Understand your role in the separation process. "Your separation issues could be feeding your child's," reminds Diane Levin, Ph.D. "If you are having trouble separating, your child will always pick this up. One way you can help you both feel better is by developing a trusting relationship with the teacher."



Starting Head Start



There are many benefits of pre-school - it can be a wonderful place for children to interact with peers and to learn valuable life lessons such as how to share, take turns, and follow rules. Preschool can also prepare children for kindergarten and beyond.

But going to preschool does come with its fair share of emotions, for both the parent and the child. For a child, entering a new preschool environment filled with unfamiliar teachers and children can cause both anxiety and anticipation. For parents, there may be mixed emotions over whether the child is ready for preschool. The more comfortable you are about your decision to place your child in Head Start and the more familiar the setting can be made for your child, the fewer problems you - and your little one - will encounter.

You and your child will have the opportunity to receive a home visit from your child's new teacher and teaching assistant prior to the first day of school. This can help both of you feel more at ease with the first day of school, and gives you both some familiar faces in the classroom.

The First Day

The first day of Head Start is also designed to help your child adjust to the classroom setting. Half of the children in your child's class will begin school on one day, while the other half remain at home. The next day, the second half of the class will attend school, while the first half remain at home. All of the children will attend together after this has occurred. By beginning the program year this way, the children are introduced slowly to their new friends and have a more relaxed introduction to the classroom environment. The idea is to familiarize your child with the classroom and to let them get comfortable.

Although it's necessary for you to acknowledge the important step your child is taking and to provide support, too much emphasis on the change may just make your child's anxiety worse. Young children can pick up on their parents' nonverbal cues. If you feel guilty or worried about leaving your child at school, he or she will probably sense that. The more calm and assured you are about your choice to send your child to preschool, the more confident your child will be.

When you enter the classroom on the first day, calmly reintroduce the teacher to your child, then step back and let him or her set the tone. This will allow the teacher to begin forming a relationship with your child. Your endorsement of the teacher will show your child that he or she will be happy and safe in the teacher's care.

If your child clings to you or refuses to participate in the class, don't get upset - this may only upset your child more. Suggestions for leaving your child at preschool are simple but can be hard on a parent. Always say a loving good-bye to your child, but once you do, you should leave promptly. Never sneak out. As tempting as it may be, leaving without saying good-bye may make your child feel abandoned, whereas a long farewell scene might only serve to reinforce a child's sense that preschool is a bad place.

A consistent and predictable farewell ritual can make leaving easier. Some parents wave from outside a certain classroom window or make a funny good-bye face, whereas others read a short book before parting. Transitional objects such as a family picture can also help comfort your child.

Also, keep in mind that most children do well once their parents leave. For most kids, the anxiety of being separated from a parent passes without any need for medical attention. But if you have concerns, talk to your child's doctor.



The best way to work through any anxiety you have about your child attending Head Start is to get involved. Volunteer in one of many ways, spend time in your child's classroom, get involved in committees that make decisions for the program and be an active part of your child's experience at Head Start.

Parents are welcome to spend as much time in the classroom as they like! We need volunteers to help us with:

- **Checking back packs**
- **Taking attendance**
- **Meals & Snacks**
- **Small & Large Group Time**
- **Outside Time**
- **Free Time**
- **Reading to Children**
- **Food Experiences**
- **Field Trips**
- **Many, many, more activities!**