



Integration in nursery school

The process of adaptation in the school environment, where the conditions and requirements are different than the ones in the family, marks a significant change in the lives of both the children and their families. This change is necessary to occur in order for children to become sociable.

When parents are separated from their children for the first time, they are concerned about the way they will react and whether the teacher and the classmates will show acceptance.

Most children initially find it difficult to be away from their parents, having, at the same time, to adapt to a system with rules and a group of unfamiliar faces. However, this difficulty shouldn't be a concern for parents, as it can be overcome by taking the appropriate actions.

How can the parents make the child's integration easier:

- Pay an introductory visit to the school in order to familiarize the child with the school environment and establish a personal relationship with the teacher.
- Schedule a parent/teacher meeting to discuss the child's preferences and any difficulties s/he may be facing. This information will help the teacher in getting to know the child better as well as the parents' point of view.

- If you have difficulty in communicating in the school language, you could ask a relative or friend for help, but not the child.
- On their first day of school, escort your children and stay as long as it is necessary for them to feel safe.
- Show understanding for the child's reactions during the first days (ex. complaints, delay in getting ready).
- Encourage the child to get to know his/her classmates, especially the ones with whom it is possibly easier to talk to (the ones you live close to or whose parents you may know).
- Prepare the children for the school reality by talking in a convincing way, without frightening them. Do not emphasize the demands; focus on the positive aspects (eg. do not tell them that the teacher is strict but instead that they will learn new things, make new friends, etc.)
- Reassure the children with respect to any worries (eg. tell them that whatever they need they can ask the teacher, assure them that you will pick them up on time).
- Show your trust in them (eg. say: "I am sure that you will make it on your own and that you will have fun").

**We must remember that:* each individual reacts and experiences hardship in their own way; the time needed to adjust to new conditions varies from person to person. As a result, some children display persistent and intense difficulty integrating and, therefore, they may need additional support. It is important to recognise and respect the issues that these children have to deal with.

Children are considered to have difficulty when for a long period of time:

- They do not want to be separated from their parents and seem sad for as long as they stay in class.
- They react strongly before going to school; they cry, protest or complain about having pain (eg. stomachache, headache).
- They display sleeping disorders or changes in their alimentation habits which did not occur before starting school.
- They complain that they cannot manage or they display toilet problems.
- They have a noticeable change of behaviour (eg. aggressiveness, lack of communication).
- They complain about other children's or the teacher's attitude towards them and they avoid being close to them during their stay at school.
- They refuse to talk about what is happening at school.

What can parents do to help children who face difficulty?

- Do not worry too much. The problems are usually temporary and the teacher will help in dealing with them.
- Discuss with the teacher in order to find a way to achieve gradual adjustment. You should not hesitate to talk about your concerns. The role of the educator is not only to help the children but also stand by, and not judge, the parents.
- Listen carefully to the child's concerns and try to find solutions (eg. say: "Although I am not there, you can ask the teacher for whatever you might need or he/she can even call me if it is an emergency").
- Share the child's feelings but set clear boundaries (eg. say: "I understand that you are sad but I have to go. Parents are not allowed to stay at school").
- Do not underestimate the child's problems and do not make negative remarks (eg. do not say: "You should be ashamed of crying, you are grown up now, you shouldn't be sad").
- Do not compare your child with other children (eg. do not say: "Look how happy the other children are and how well they behave").

- Comfort your child and offer reassurance that he/she can count on you (eg. say: "Don't worry, if something bothers you we will figure out what to do together").
- Encourage your child to socialize with other children; cultivate relationships in different environments (eg. invite children to your house or arrange a meeting in a playground).
- Make it clear that some things are not negotiable despite the fact that they might be unpleasant (eg. tell the child that he/she has to go to school even though he/she does not want to).
- Suggest taking some objects from home in order for your child to feel safe (eg. a teddy bear, a doll, a toy car).
- Suggest both to the child and the teacher to talk in class about subjects or stories which interest him/her (eg. wild animals, cars).
- Emphasize the pleasant things he/she can do (eg. say: "After school we will go to play").
- Talk to the child about your personal difficult experiences and the way you dealt with them (ex. say: "I was sad too when we were about to move here but then I made some friends and I was happy").
- Read books aloud to the child that deal with experiences similar to theirs (ex. "First day of school", etc.).
- Talk to the child in a positive and realistic manner regarding the teacher and the other children. Say for example: "I'm sure that your teacher cares, maybe she didn't understand what you wanted" or "Someone must have pushed you by accident while you were playing."

After having a discussion with the teacher, **it would be good if the parents consulted a specialist (ie. a psychologist) when:**

- The difficulty their child is facing is intense and persistent and they do not know how to deal with it.
- The child finds it hard to respond to any stimulus given.
- The child experiences physical symptoms (such as vomiting, pain, etc.).
- The child cannot create relationships with the other children, for example he/she is isolated or very aggressive.



Programme Implementation

POLYDROMO: Group and Group and Periodical for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism in Education and Society



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