



BRINGING JOY TO THE CLASSROOM

A Back-to-School Guide Inspired by Early Childhood Educators



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Introduction & Welcome

Thank you for downloading our back-to-school guide!

At HiMama, we value the importance and the impact of early childhood education and recognize early childhood educators for the invaluable contribution they make to support to children, families and society. Everything we do at HiMama is rooted in the belief that the role of the early childhood educator is critical to not only the future success of a child, but the ability for today's working families to thrive. We are motivated and inspired everyday by the challenging, meaningful and vital work of early childhood professionals.

We know the back-to-school season can be a complex and stressful time of the year. It can be so easy to get caught up in all the administrative and operational work that has to get done, that we often forget what is most important for children and their development, and that is taking learning back to the basics: joyful experiences; loving, nurturing relationships; and daily opportunities to explore, discover and play.

Our goal with this guide is to elevate the voices of educators as experts in the field, and give the early childhood community a chance to share their most successful back-to-school strategies with each other.

With this guide we hope to remind you of the magic and excitement that is the back-to-school season, we hope to inspire and motivate you about the importance of the work you do, and we hope to inspire and motivate you with the tools you need to feel confident and empowered.

With this guide you have the voices of over 2000+ early childhood professionals sharing their words of wisdom, most successful classroom strategies and top performing activities, as well as their reminders for how to always see the beauty and magic in the work you do.

Be sure to check out the additional back-to-school resources and downloadables at the end of this guide!



From the team at HiMama, we wish you a magical back-to-school season !



Insights and voices from the field

This back to school guide elevates the voices of early childhood professionals to better understand how they find magic in the back-to-school season and what strategies they use to bring the excitement of back-to-school to life.

After the launch of our back-to-school survey, we received an overwhelming response from over **2000 early childhood professionals**.

This survey gives rise to the voices of those dedicated educators, directors and administrators across the globe.

Who participated?

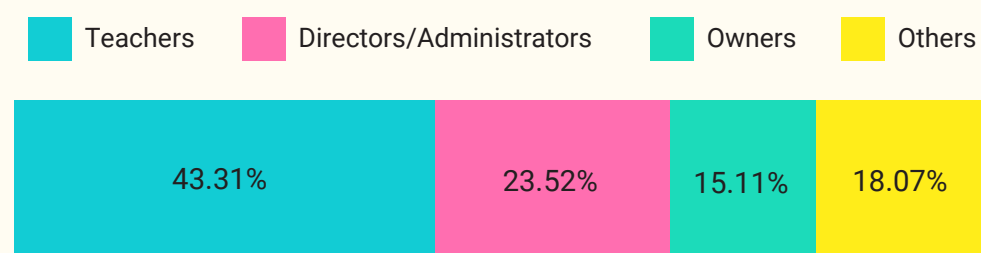
We surveyed Owners, Directors, Administrators and Teachers in the field of early childhood and received the highest response rate from educators. The majority of survey respondents were located in the US and most respondents had been in the field for 20+ years.

Throughout the survey, some questions allowed for selecting multiple

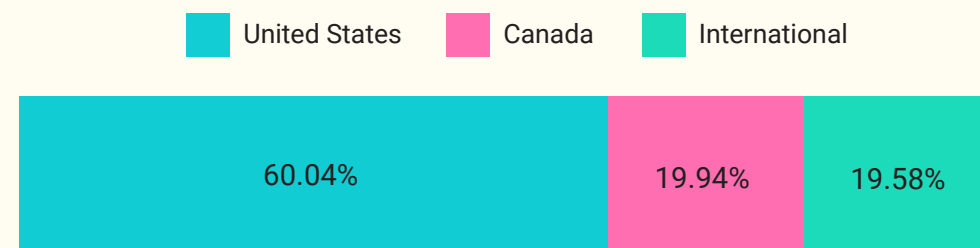
answers. For example participants were allowed to “select all that apply”. They also had the option to skip any questions that they preferred not to answer or did not suit their situation.

The data presented in this guide will be presented in the form of graphs and charts, and due to the option of choosing more than one response or opting not to respond, the total percentage in the graphs show may not add up to 100%.

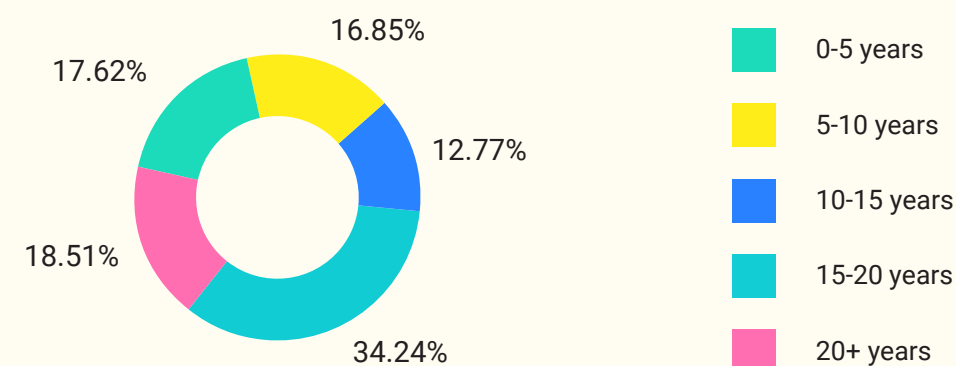
Participants' Roles



Participants' Locations



Length of time in the field



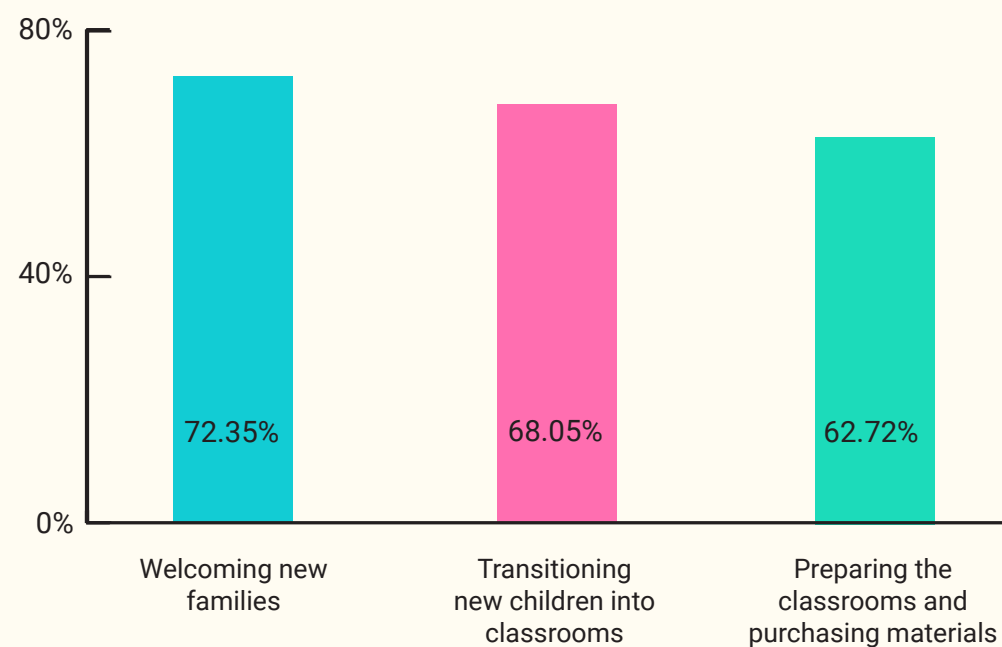
PART 1

Understanding the Hearts and Minds of Early Educators: How do you feel during back-to-school?

What are early childhood professionals thinking about as they prepare for back-to-school and how are they prioritizing it all?

Without much surprise, the majority of early educators shared that **welcoming new families was their biggest priority** during this time of the year. The beginning of the school year is one of the most critical times to create an atmosphere of warmth and joy and begin to set the foundation for strong family relationships that will set everyone up for success. Beyond being prepared to welcome new families, educators are focusing their energy on transitioning new children into classrooms, as well as preparing the classrooms and purchasing new materials.

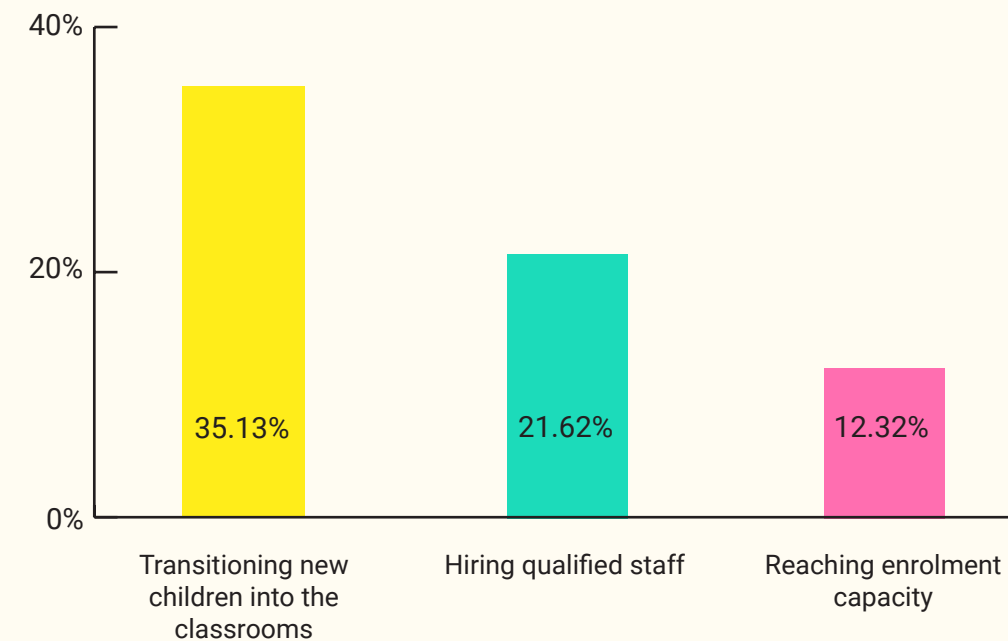
Biggest priorities for the back-to-school season



Back-to-school is an exciting yet complicated season. While trying to focus on the joy of welcoming new families, educators also shared that **transitioning new children into the classrooms is one of the biggest challenges they face**. Change is never easy, and it can prove itself to be extra difficult for young children. While working to help our youngest learners feel safe and welcome in a new environment is not easy, it is one of the first steps in building a rewarding and joyful relationship that will have long-lasting effects.

Transitioning new children was the most common challenge during back to school, followed closely by hiring qualified staff and reaching enrolment capacity.

Biggest challenges during the back-to-school season



We know the back-to-school season can be a time where the focus and energy starts to shift towards administration and preparation for the year to come. We also know that this is a special time as you welcome children, meet new families and discover new learnings and opportunities for the year ahead. We wanted to help you see the magic of the work you do and remind you why you do this work to begin with. We asked our survey participants **“What are the most magical moments and what excites you the most about the back-to-school season?”** The most common responses were “Meeting new children” and “meeting new families.”

Check out some of our favorite responses below:

“ Seeing the children’s excitement about being in a new environment and watching them thrive and grow.

Shireen Blackburn | Director | 20+ years | USA

“ Building a sense of community, helping my children feel comfortable and excited to be in school and making sure families feel good about where their children are and what they are doing.

Jennifer Martin | Teacher | 20+ years | USA

“ When I’m able to settle kids that are scared and uncertain of the new environment and parents actually seeing their children involved in activities they previously doubted.

Doris Hadassah Maibani | Teacher | 10+ years | Papua New Guinea

“ Seeing the wonderment in the childrens’ eyes and getting to know the families

Deb Skyler | Teacher | 10+ years | USA

“ Helping children feel loved and safe as they separate from their parents and enter a new world of learning.

Brooke | Director | 5+ years, USA

What would you do with 5 extra hours?

With all the excitement that happens during those first few weeks back at school, we know how easy it can be to feel like there is simply not enough time for everything you need and want to accomplish. What would early childhood professionals do if they could get five extra hours back in their first week?

The most common themes that emerged were spending more time with children, organizing the classroom environment, and focusing on building a positive classroom community.

Educators shared the following:

“ Getting one-on-one time with each child to better learn about them and their learning style.

Herlinda Alvarado | Teacher | 10+ years | USA

“ Sitting down with the new parents for the upcoming year to talk about working together to make sure their child has a successful school year.

Shonda Bruce | Teacher | 5+ years | USA





Being able to take time to meet children and families before they enter the class.

Hughena Covill | Mental Health Coordinator | 15+ years | USA



I would use the time to set up the classroom schedule for the week ahead and make sure I know how to properly balance the documentation workload and the time being present and engaged in activities with the children.

Jectone Ochola | Teacher | 10+ years | Kenya



Playing individually with each child to establish a trusting relationship early on with each one.

Susan | Teacher | 15+ years | USA



Making sure each family felt comfortable and was getting the attention they needed to get all their questions answered.

Theresa Becker | Director | 20+ years | USA

It's clear that early childhood professionals are looking for more time to be present and engaged with the children. Building relationships, trust and a sense of belonging and safety is key for children and families in that first week.

Our survey participants have reminded us that offering quality childcare in that first week is not just about policies and procedures, but about what is most important for children and families - and that is taking the time to create loving and nurturing relationships, and offering meaningful and magical opportunities to help establish your center as a place where everyone is safe, loved and valued.

PART 2

Helping you thrive: Expert tips from Early Childhood Professionals

We wanted to give early childhood professionals the opportunity to share how they set themselves up for success during the back-to-school season. With advice ranging from how they manage the administrative workload, to what songs they sing during transitions, this section will give you strategies that you can take away and start implementing immediately so you can step into back-to-school season with all the tools you need to feel calm, cool and confident.

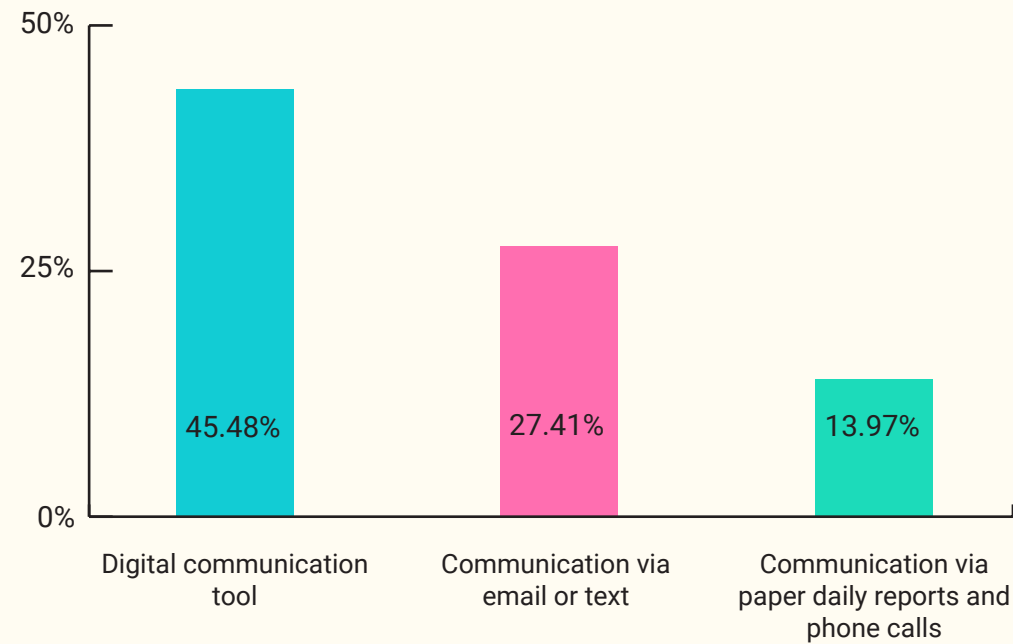
Parent communication

Knowing how important parent communication is during that first week back at school, we asked our survey participants ***“How do you maintain regular communication with families?”***

In an overwhelming vote of popularity, the number one recommended strategy at almost half of participants was using a communication tool, like [HiMama](#), to share real-time messages, photos and updates.

Early educators noted using a digital communication tool to offer parents easy, flexible and real-time communication as their number one strategy for effective parent communication. Having a digital communication tool helps to not only make communication easier for families and educators, but also as a way to help put parents at ease when they leave their child for the first time. Following digital communication, a subset of educators send communication via email or text, and the least relied on method for parent communication was paper daily reports and phone calls.

How do you maintain regular communication with families during the first week of school?



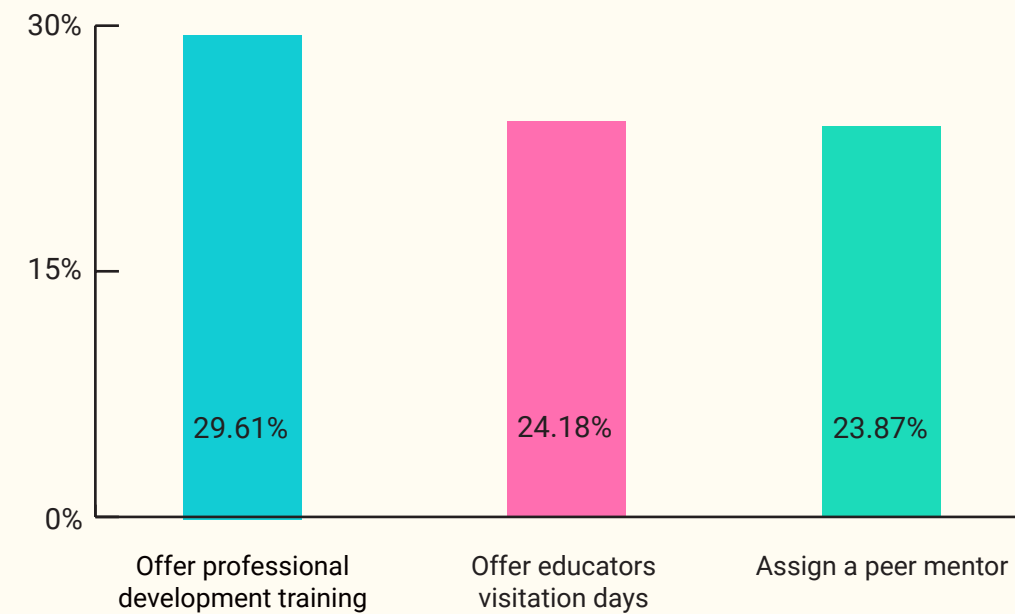
Preparing new staff

Back-to-school isn't just about welcoming new children and families, its about welcoming and onboarding new staff members at the same time. Setting your staff up for success is the first step in setting your families and children up for success and ensuring a positive experience for everyone at your center. We asked our survey participants ***"How do you prepare educators who are new to the center?"***

The most recommended strategy was to offer [professional development training](#) to both current and new staff members to keep their knowledge up-to-date, and to re-ignite their passion and excitement for the year ahead. Professional development, on top of enhancing their skills and knowledge, often has the power to remind educators of the meaningful and critical work they do. Helping educators start the year with a strong sense of purpose and ownership over the success of their classroom will have the power to uplift your center culture and enhance the experience for everyone.

Following closely to professional development, was offering new educators visitation days at the center prior to their first full day to help them feel comfortable, and assigning a peer mentor to guide them during their first few weeks.

How do you prepare educators who are new to the center?



The most common themes related to new teacher engagement were the importance of forming strong relationships during this key transition period, and making sure new educators feel welcomed and supported as they find their footing in their new role. It was also clear that small gestures go a long way during these first few weeks. Ideas such as a welcome self-care bag, or getting them their own coffee mug for the kitchen were listed as ways to welcome a new teacher to the team.

“ We do an hour with the Director to review policies and procedures on their first day, then shadowing a team member while being actively engaged with the children, then finally reviewing the program plan which shares the reasoning behind what we do.

Lindsay | Director | 20+ years | Canada

“ The start of a teaching career can be overwhelming, however pairing a veteran teacher to share experiences with a new teacher helps a lot! This way the teachers can build a partnership and give each other tips on how they handle various classroom situations.

Milagros Vargas-Neu, Tessa | Teacher | 20+ years | USA

“ At our facility we highly encourage introducing our new staff members to the families. We have previously built a relationship with those family members so helping new staff members form a relationship with those parents is very important. We love to watch our new staff create a bond with families and find it helps them find their place and build their confidence.

Lindsay Carter | Teacher | 5+ years | USA

Administration

Focusing on building personal relationships with new families, children and staff is critical, but making sure your administrative responsibilities are set up ahead of time is still a necessity. We know that finding time to complete all the necessary forms and documentation, while still making the effort to be present and engaged in meaningful interactions with staff and families can feel overwhelming. So how do you balance both? We asked our survey participants **“How do you prepare your center administration for back-to-school (i.e waitlists, reports and forms, accounting, documentation)?”**

The most common strategy was to use a center management tool like [HiMama](#), to take the bulk of the documentation and reporting off their plates.

“ Getting time back in my life is the number one piece of value I have found with HiMama. There are so many value-adds, but if I have to narrow it down to one it is time. Time is critical and is something we can never get back.

Miriam Owens | Director of Bright Beginning Childcare | LLC

A number of participants also shared that proper delegation of tasks was one of the best ways they found they could get all the necessary work done without feeling burnt out and still being able to spend quality time with the families and children.

“ We delegate various administrative tasks within the team to avoid overwhelm or burnout on one or two specific people

Carol | Content specialist | 20+years, Cherokee Nation Early Childhood Unit



Morning drop-off and daily transitions

First Time Drop-off

At any time of the year, morning drop-off can be challenging. As all early childhood professionals have experienced, transitions can be difficult for young children, and a new transition like first time drop-off is no exception. Tears are to be expected and they are a normal part of a child saying goodbye to their family. With this in mind, we wanted to get some advice from those who have mastered the morning drop-off routine at their center.

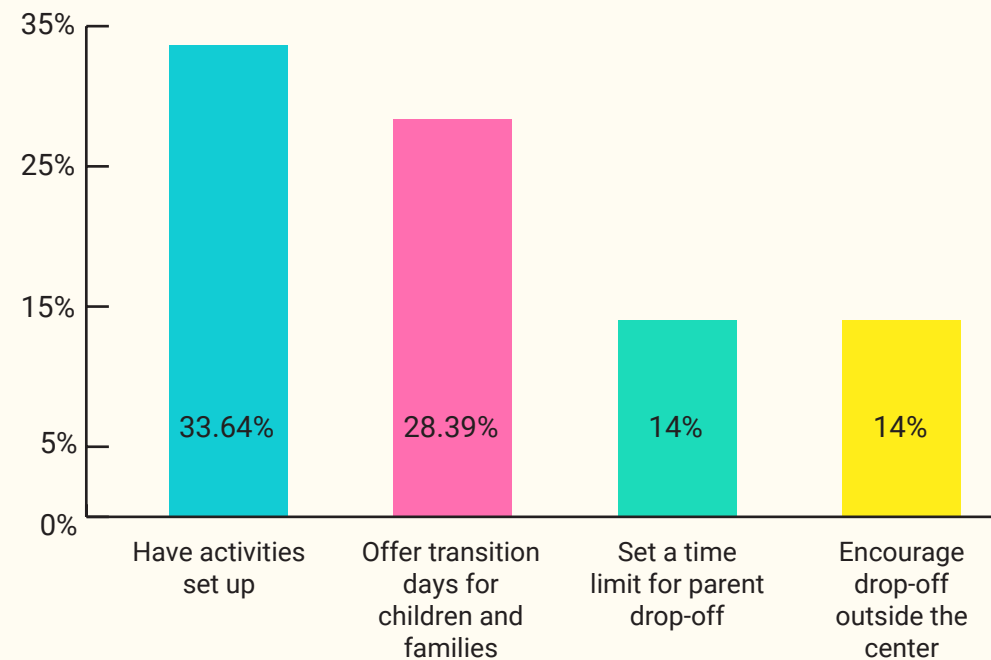
We asked survey participants ***“What is your most successful drop-off strategy?”***

The top recommended strategy that educators shared was to **have activities set up on some of the tables in the classroom** to encourage play and help the child feel welcome, curious and engaged as they enter the space.

The second strategy was to **offer transition days and short visits for children and families leading up to their first full day** to help both the child and to help everyone feel comfortable in the environment and build trust with teachers.

Additional recommendations included **setting a time limit for parent drop-off**, and **encourage parents to drop their child off outside the center or classroom doors**.

What is your most successful drop-off strategy?



The most common theme that emerged was to focus on making sure children and parents feel a sense of safety and belonging during drop-off. The main priority with whatever strategy you may choose, is making sure children feel safe, accepted and loved. With this as the foundation, the routine will fall into place over time and will only get easier.



I believe that having a relationship with the parents helps the child feel more comfortable at drop-off! As the child sees their parents excited to interact with their teacher the child will then feel more comfortable!

Lindsay Carter | Teacher | 5+ years | USA



Making the time to get to know the new children coming into your classroom so you can have something ready for them that aligns with their current interests help the child feel welcomed and the parents feel secure.

Robin | Director | 20+ years | USA

Daily transitions

At the start of our survey we asked survey participants what were the biggest challenges they faced during the back-to-school season, the most common response was “transitioning new children.” With this in mind, we wanted to know, **“What do you do to support new children in their childcare transition?”**

The most most common recommendation was to **have children bring in a photo of their families and put it up on the classroom photo wall.** This can then be used as a space for the children to look at their family and the families of their peers, as well as creating an opportunity for educators to engage in conversation with children about their families and what they did over the summer.



On top of a family wall, we always offer a window wave. This offers an easy first step into the parent transitioning away from the center, and allows the child to understand where they will then see their parent return at the end of the day.

Lynn Day | Owner | 10+ years | Canada

Similar to first-time drop off strategies, the second most common strategy for daily transitions is to **schedule transitional days prior to their first full day of school.**



Offer a 1:1 school visit the week before the first day of school to show them their room, new toys, new books, cubby, all the things that will help them get excited to come back!

Jen Mooney | Director | 5+ years | USA

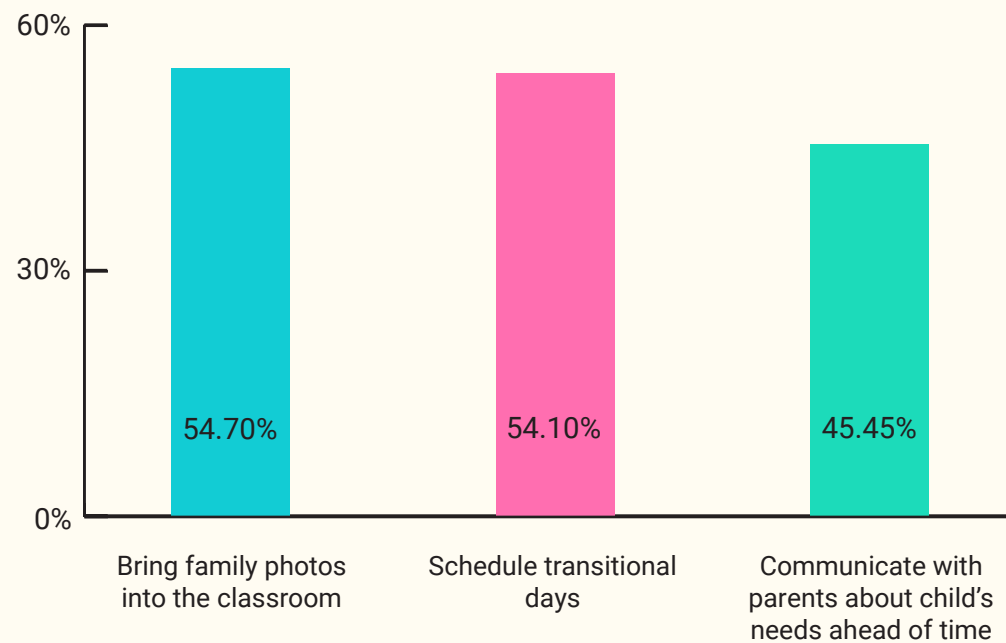
Lastly, having an effective parent communication tool was listed as a helpful strategy for transitioning children into childcare. With the help of HiMama, educators and parents were able to connect prior to the first day of school so teachers had a deeper understanding of the child they would be welcoming and their needs on that first day. This helps to establish a relationship of trust early between the parents and the center.



Being able to communicate with the family throughout the day is very helpful. We also try to learn about the child's interests beforehand so we can pick out a toy for them and even send them a photo via our childcare management app to show them what is waiting for them in the classroom the next day.

Terri | Teacher | 5+ years | USA

What do you do to support new children in their childcare transition?



Favorite transition songs and activities

We asked all participants what songs or activities they found to be most successful when it came to supporting a young child as they transitioned into the classroom for the first time, or even as they transition from inside to outside or within various classrooms at the center throughout the day. We have pulled out two of the most common themes from our community of participants. Here is what they had to say!

Keep the children moving

“ We find that any song that involves movement with the children’s bodies is always the most successful.

Lynn Day | Owner | 10+ years | Canada

“ We have 3 songs that work like magic - ‘hokey pokey’, ‘this is the way we...’ and a finger play song called “open shut them”. Mostly any nursery rhyme that gets the children moving is key.

Doris Hadassah Maibani | Teacher | 10+ years | Papua New Guinea

“ We always do dancing and little exercises to get us ready for the next activity.

Tanna Berg | Owner | 20+ years | USA

Give them choices

“ During the first few days, I like to ask the children their favorite songs and how they like to move their bodies from inside to outside and around the center

Natalia | Teacher | 15+ years | USA

“ Give children options so they feel ownership over how they move their body from one area to another. I.e do you want to hop or walk, do you want to hold my hand or walk by yourself. Choices are a powerful way for the child to feel like they have agency over their body and are a part of what is happening.

Maddie | Teacher | 10+ years | Canada

“ We offer children a transition greeting that they can select from a list of options (high-five, handshake, wave, hug...)

Carolyn Kimani | Director | 10+ years | Kenya

Activities

During the first few weeks of school, there can be a lot of hustle and bustle in the classroom as new routines are built, new teachers are being introduced, and new children and parents are being welcomed into the center. To help provide some stability we asked early childhood professionals *“What is your favorite activity that keeps children engaged during their first week?”*

With almost unanimous agreement from over 2000 early childhood professionals, the most common activity recommendation was anything **sensory**.

“ **MESSY ARTS AND CRAFTS!!!** Messy arts and crafts are a huge way to encourage new students to participate.

Lindsay Carter | Teacher | 5+ years | USA

“ Any and all sensory activities are always our biggest hit!

Rose | Director | 15+ years | USA

“ I plan for a lot of sensory activities, which allows me to get to know the kids better. I also start with things that I think they know so that they feel confident, before introducing them to new material, concepts and activities.

Tanna Berg | Owner | 20+ years | USA

The second most common theme was the recommendation to be **outside** as much as possible and keep activities **child-led**.

“ Playing outdoors in sand, dirt and water. They love the sandbox & the mud kitchen.

Carol Breedlove | Educator | 10+ years | Germany

“ We do plenty of outdoor play to keep the children excited and active! Normally we even try to have our midday snack and lunch outdoors where we create a picnic setting with the children.

Noela Oyugah Sangiza | Director | 5+ years || Tanzania

“ We allow plenty of play time that is not structured so they can have space to develop friendships without being constantly directed in their instruction.

Kimberly | Director | 5+ years | USA



The final theme we pulled was offering active **learning opportunities**.

Classroom scavenger hunt: organize a scavenger hunt around the classroom to help students familiarize themselves with the environment.

Amanda | Teacher | 5+ years | Canada

I love to do scavenger hunts around the classroom that encourages the kids to explore the classroom, and become more familiar with the new space and materials!

Alyssa | Teacher | 5+ years | USA

PART 3

Rekindling your spark: Insights and Inspiration from Early Childhood Professionals

The back-to-school season can be filled with emotions such as excitement, joy and wonder. Understandably, it can also be filled with some nerves and feelings of apprehension from new families and teachers who are joining your center's community for the first time, or are experiencing their very first back-to-school season.

With this in mind, we know how important it is to build trust with parents on that very first morning to make sure they feel confident and secure in leaving their child in your care. So we asked survey participants, **"What do you say to ease parents' worries on their child's first day?"**

The number one recommendation was to offer parents an **an easy way to communicate with the center** so they could check in on their child throughout the day.



I always inform them to check their HiMama updates! I also let them know that their feelings matter and it's okay to feel anxious. I then promise them that we will send a sweet message and a picture of their child enjoying their new class within the first half hour of them leaving to put their minds at ease!

Lindsay Carter | Teacher | 5+ years | USA



We tell them that it's ok to show their emotions as we know how difficult this can be. We also reassure them they will receive an update through HiMama before pick up to let them know how their child is doing.

Melissa McLauchlan | Director | 5+ years | Canada



I like to invite the parents into the classroom and allow them to feel a part of the space, ask them how they're feeling, and provide reassurance and positive words for them! On the first week of school I often provide mid day updates online via our childcare management app.

Alyssa | Teacher | 5+ years | USA



We always tell parents to reach out to us with questions and let them know we will share photos and information with them in their app! We also fill them in on the plans for the day so they can anticipate something fun in their child's day.

May | Teacher | 5+ years | Canada



The second most common theme was to make sure that parents felt heard and supported during these first few days. Parents, as well as the children, need to feel taken care of as a first step to establishing trust.



We give parents a little self-care packet with a sweet poem attached. We also tell families to call or message us on HiMama if they want to check in on their child

Rica | Teacher | 20+ years | USA



We let parents stay the first morning to play with their children. When the children are settled in and playing, the parents are then taken to a separate room for coffee and an orientation. All of their questions are answered, and we give them time to meet and bond with the other parents.

Carol Breedlove | Educator | 10+ years | Germany



We provide parents with resources to help them feel more prepared and less alone. The NAEYC has an excellent brochure on strategies for dealing with separation anxiety which we review with parent members before school starts and then coach them to follow as the school year gets underway.

Melissa Jordan | Director | 20+ years | USA



Give families an overview of how the first day will go via your parent communication tool ahead of time, share expectations and discuss best way to communicate so they are prepared.

Lisa | Director | 5+ years | USA



I usually reach out a week before the first day with an introductory email newsletter about me, the school and program and answer as many concerns and questions they may have to ease anxieties about the transition. I will also emphasize that the parent communication app we use will have updates on how their child is doing, and what they are doing!

Kimberly | Director | 5+ years | USA

It can be easy to get bogged down in documentation and feel lost in an abundance of administrative and operational work in the field of early learning. During this busy time, many educators noted they often feel bogged down by administrative and operational priorities, so much so that it can be easy to forget why they entered the field of early childhood education to begin with. We want to help bring educators back to the basics of early learning, reminding them how influential and important their work is, and how the simple joyful experience of play, coupled with loving, nurturing relationships can foster a lifelong love of learning. We asked our survey participants, ***“Why do you believe play in quality early childhood development is so important?”***

Here is what they had to say:

“ *Play in early childhood allows young children to express themselves, find their voice, and role-play in connection with others. Play develops their creativity and ability to problem solve, and so much more!*

Jamie | Director | 5+ years | USA

“ *Play is the way children LEARN! It is their work in early childhood! Without play and quality early learning experiences, children lose the stamina and curiosity that drives them to be motivated in their individual journey.*

Danielle | Teacher | 10+ years | USA

“ *Play is a fundamental aspect of childhood that promotes holistic development. Combined with quality care it supports children in developing cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and creative skills, fostering their curiosity, joy, and lifelong love for learning. It is through play and connection that children make sense of the world, develop meaningful relationships, and actively construct their knowledge and understanding of the environment around them.*

Dena | Director | 5+ years | Canada

When engaged in play, children have the opportunity to explore who they are and develop an understanding of the world around them. Let's make play a priority this year, and give children the opportunity to experience the magic, wonder and creativity in their classrooms.

Final words of inspiration from early childhood professionals

Early childhood educators carry one of the most meaningful and important roles in our society. They are dedicated and passionate professionals who are helping to raise our future generations. We want teachers to walk into their classrooms feeling confident, inspired and motivated this back-to-school season. So we asked our survey participants, ***“What is your advice or words of inspiration for early childhood educators?”***

Here's what they had to say:

“ *Take your time with all that there is to learn. Focus first on getting to know each child and building a connection. All of your teaching will flow from that relationship*

Dina Savitz | Director | 20+ years | USA

“ Be prepared, be confident, and above all be yourself. Do not be afraid to ask for help if you feel overwhelmed.

Amelia Van Vollenstee | Vice principal and curriculum specialist | 20+ years | South Africa

“ Even though it can be stressful at times, this is one of the most rewarding jobs out there.

Haylee Harris | Owner | 10+ years | USA

“ You’ve got this! Your role in these children’s lives is so critical, and it’s all about the relationships you build with them that show how important they are, and how important their learning is.

Danielle | Teacher | 10+ years | USA

“ As educators, we have the privilege of being a part of the children’s journey, helping them to discover their strengths, passions and endless possibilities.

Alicia | Teacher | 5+ years | Canada

“ Give yourself the grace to make mistakes, it’s ok. Children have lots of resistance and flexibility for us as we learn the best methods for being the best educator we can be.

Kris | Director | 5+ years | USA

“ Keep going. There are many rewards ahead <3

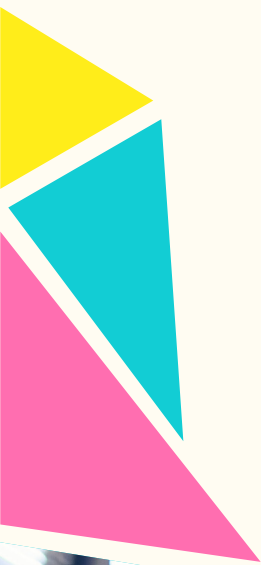
Debbie | Director | 10+ years | USA

“ Being an educator is the hardest and best thing you’ll ever do. Having a trusting, fun relationship with coworkers can help a lot. Remember that you can’t care for others when you’re in crisis, so take your vacation days and find ways to care for yourself outside of work.

Emily | Teacher | 10+ years | Canada

“ Wear comfortable shoes and be ready for anything :)

Alexis | Teacher | 10+ years | USA





Additional Resources: Back-to-school Preparation



How to prepare your center for the back-to-school season

As you prepare for “back-to-school” it’s important to make sure you have certain systems and procedures planned, besides making sure your facility is in top shape. Here are some ways you can prepare your center for “back-to-school” and ensure you are ready for the students, staff, and their families.

- 1.** Have an “open house” for any new and prospective families.
- 2.** Deep clean
- 3.** Update your website
- 4.** Offer a “trial” day before the first day
- 5.** Provide supply lists for families
- 6.** Host a “back-to-school” night for all enrolled families
- 7.** Have an impactful and inspiring teacher inservice

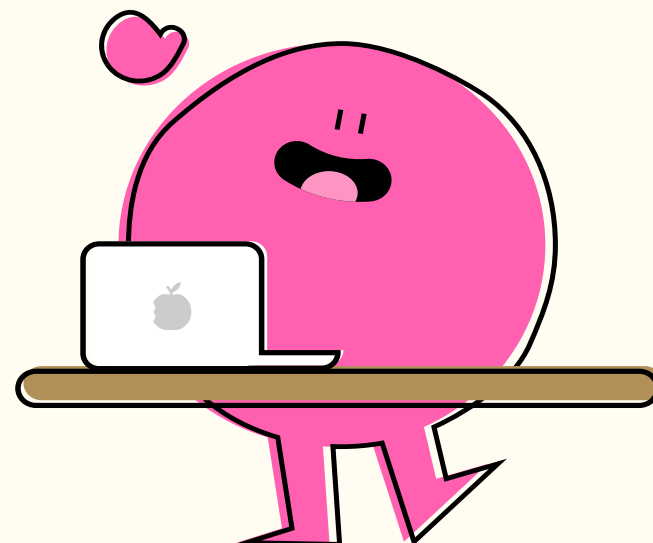
There are many ways to get the families ready for this time of year. But it really starts with getting your teachers geared up and excited. As my mentor always says, “vision drips down.” When the leadership team has passion and excitement for the program, it will be contagious for those under that leadership, and it will then drip down to the children and families.

While everyone loves their summers, families are also excited to get back into routines and structure. Having your program ready to receive these families with a fresh vision and clear mission is key to a great start to the year. You’ve got this!

[Read the whole blog here!](#)

10 questions Directors should ask every new family

1. Has your child been in childcare before? If not - what kind of social settings have they been introduced to? Ex. extra curricular activities.
2. Has your child ever been away from parents/main guardians?
3. How does your child like to learn? Books, drawing etc.
4. How does your child like to be comforted when they are upset?
5. Are there any areas of learning that your child has shown special interest in?
6. What are your social/learning goals for your child while attending childcare?
7. Please explain your discipline approach for your child at home.
8. Does your child have any allergies or restrictions?
9. Any areas of concern regarding your child?
10. What are your expectations between the Director and yourself and between the teachers and yourself?



Prepare for questions from new families

1. What is your sick policy?

2. When was the last time you had a serious occurrence?

3. Where is your emergency evacuation location?

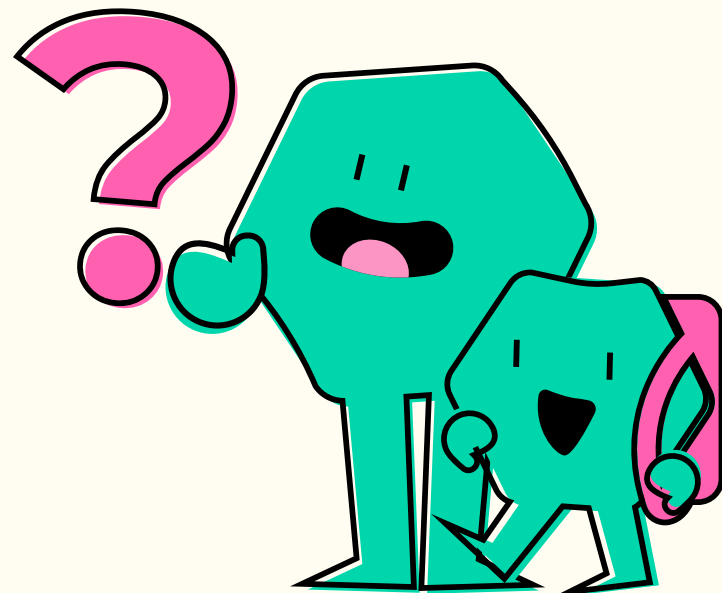
4. When was the last time you conducted a fire drill?

5. How often do you go outside and what is the weather policy as to when they can and cannot go outside?

6. How often do toys and equipment get sanitized?

7. What do you use to sanitize?

8. How are families communicated with?



Cue cards for talking to new parents during challenging situations

Prep yourself and your educators for challenging conversations that may arise with new families joining your center.

1. How to talk to parents after sending home your first incident report.

2. How to explain your philosophy of play (i.e if parents are frustrated after their child is sent home messy.)

3. How to set expectations for photo and update sharing.



4. How to discuss overdue bills.

Empty rectangular box for notes.

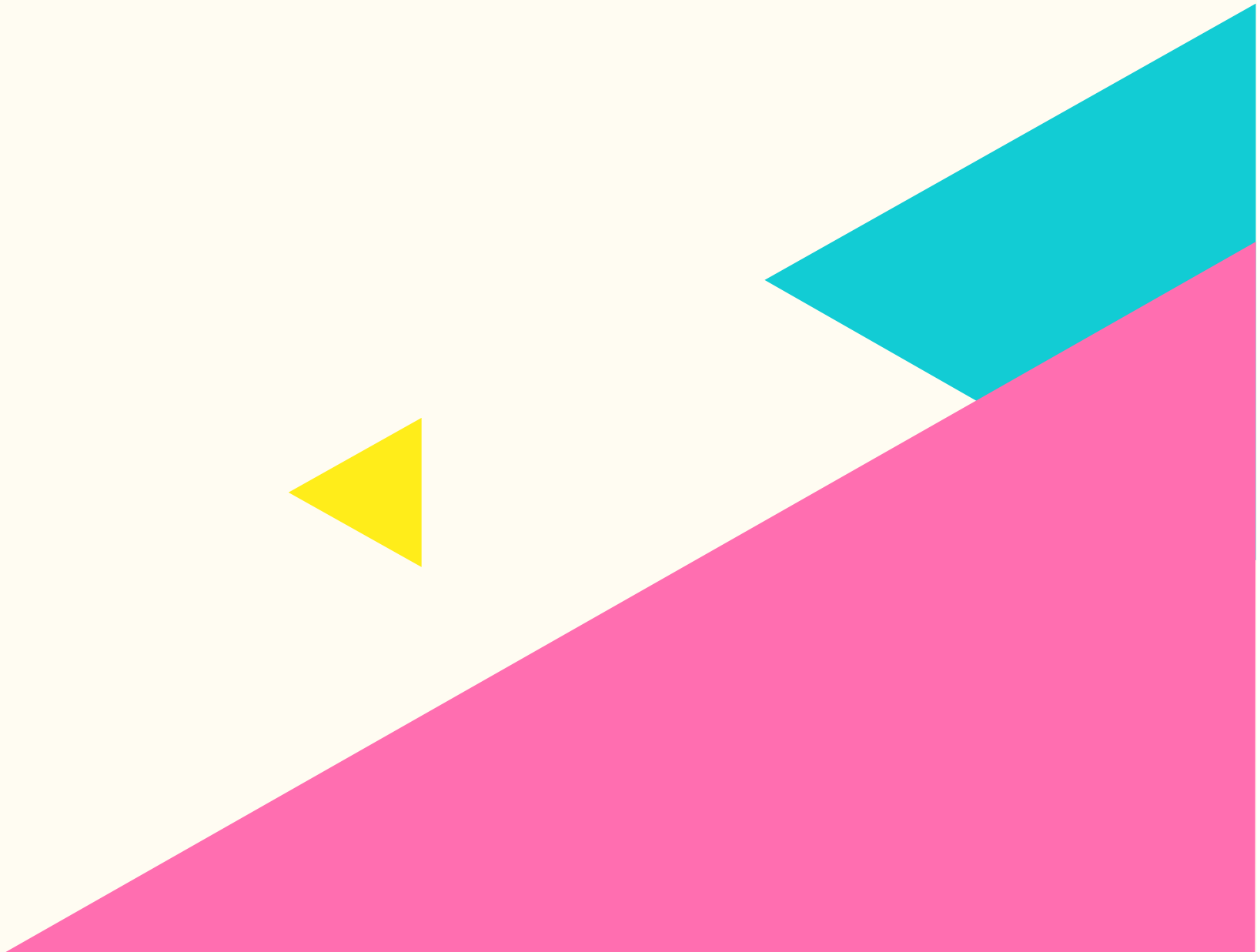
5. How to set sleep expectations.

Empty rectangular box for notes.

6. How to set potty training expectations

Empty rectangular box for notes.

Additional Resources: Child and family onboarding

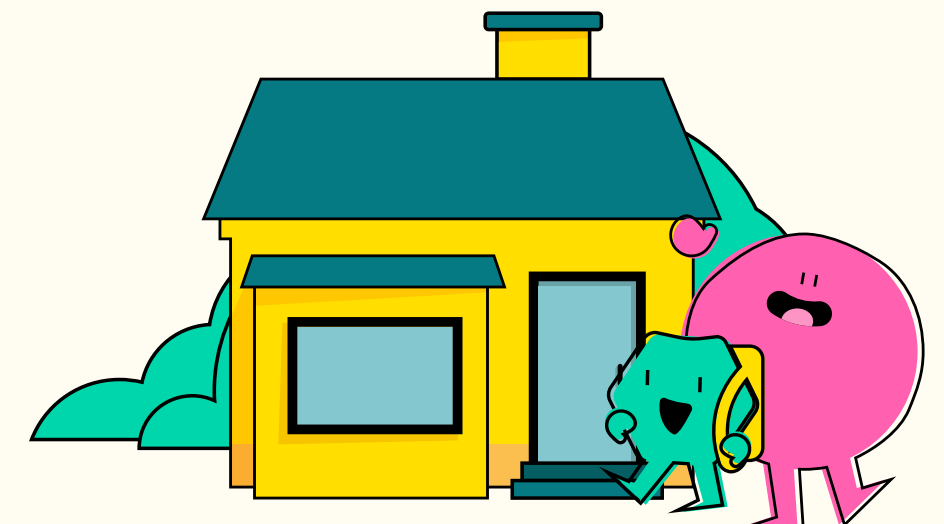


Back to school checklist for parents

We are so excited for you to be joining our family! Please ensure you have completed the following before your first day of school.

- Send all enrolment and registration forms to the center administrative team (including payment information, allergy information, media consent, and emergency contacts)
- Review the center's policies and schedule for the week ahead
- Get set up on the center's communication platform (for daily reporting and messaging)
- Prepare your child's backpack with the following **[printable supply list below]**
 - Water bottle
 - Sunscreen
 - Extra clothes (socks, indoor shoes, tops and bottoms)
 - Extra diapers (or underwear)
 - Diaper cream
 - Wipes
 - Favourite item from home (stuffed animal, blanket)
 - Family photo
- Share the upcoming weeks classroom schedule with your child so they know what they will be doing

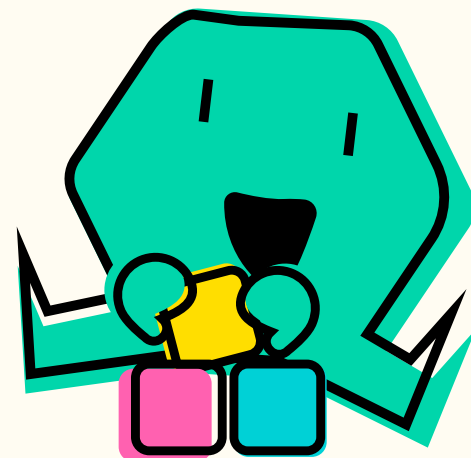
- Read books with your child about back to school. Some recommendations are:
 - The King of Kindergarten by Derrick Barnes
 - First Day Critter Jitters by Jory John
 - The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson
 - The pigeon has to go to school by Mo Willems
 - Pete the Cat: Rockin' in my school shoes by Eric Litwin
- Connect with your child's educator on the classroom schedule and start implementing the classroom routine in your home when possible
 - Set bedtime and wake up time to what will be needed for the first day
 - Practice transitions from indoor to outdoor play
 - Set nap time to the same routine as the classroom setting
- Visit the center in advance with your child
- On the first day, let your child know that you will be back to pick them up at the end of the day.
- Have fun! Transitions can be hard but they are important and we are so excited to have you!



Printable supply list for families

Help us help you! Set your child up for success by sending the following supplies with them as they start childcare:

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Diaper cream
- Sippy cup
- Bib
- Blanket / sleep toy
- Soother if they use one to nap
- Extra clothing sets
- Outdoor gear(hats, gloves,mittens, boots, etc.)
- Indoor and outdoor shoes
- Labels
- Medications (with instructions)
- Water bottle
- Sunscreen



Back to school checklist for educators

- Review the list of children coming into your classroom and make sure to document all allergies and medical needs in a visible space
- Get all children (including primary caregivers and emergency contacts) set up on your center's communication system
- Print labels of all children's names for their cubbies and their beds
- Organize and prepare classroom supplies (including learning materials, cleaning supplies, extra diapers and wipes)
- Organize lesson plans for the week ahead (and share with families if possible) and make sure all learning materials are ready for the first day of school!
- Save time with ready-to-use, state aligned lesson plans that are conveniently shipped right to your door with [FunShine Express!](#)
- Review center's policies and learning philosophy
- Scan the playground for safety hazards
- Motivate yourself with some high-quality professional development. In [HiMama Academy](#), you can choose from courses such as:
 - Environment as the third teacher
 - Play: How children learn
 - Promoting empathy and prosocial behavior
- Have books ready for new children who may be struggling with the transition. Such as:
 - Llama Llama misses momma by Anna Dewdney
 - Find spot at preschool by Eric Hill
 - Bye Bye Time by Elizabeth Verdick
- Have a team meeting with your co-teachers to get to know each other and align on best practices for the classroom
- Send "Get to know your teacher" emails to the families with a photo and bio of who you are to help them feel comfortable with you on their first day of school

Back to school checklist for Directors

- Schedule new family visits and orientation days
- Review and update where applicable all center policies
- Send all policies and registration forms to new families (Including emergency contact, allergy, medical and banking information)
- Ensure all classroom furniture is in good condition and all classrooms have first aid kits
- Ensure all classrooms have ready-to-use learning materials
 - Save time with ready-to-use, state aligned lesson plans that are conveniently shipped right to your door with [FunShine Express!](#)
- Review center's policies and learning philosophy
- Scan the playground for safety hazards
- Motivate yourself with some high-quality professional development. In [HiMama Academy](#), you can choose from courses such as:
 - Talking to parent about developmental concerns
 - Managing burnout in early childhood care settings
 - Empowering and supporting educators to succeed
- Schedule a staff meeting to make sure all staff are prepared and everyone is ready and excited for the week ahead!
- Have fun! The work you do is extremely valuable and HiMama has your back with time-saving and parent engagement tools to help make sure you succeed.

New child onboarding checklist for childcare staff

| CHILD'S NAME | TEACHER'S NAME | ROOM # |
|--------------|----------------|--------|
|--------------|----------------|--------|

Please ensure the following items are set up for your new start:

- Caregiver registration forms are complete (including payment information, allergy information, and media consent)
- Cubby photo has been taken and displayed in the cubby
- Caregiver added to the email communication list
- Child's supplies on-site (extra clothing, medication, etc)
- Child's information added to the child care management system (for daily reporting etc.)
- Ensure all teachers know of this new start and any background information (how to say their name, their pronouns, etc)
- Confirm pick-up/drop-off times, safe list of caregivers and drop-off process with the caregivers
- Emergency contact information has been provided
- Make sure the classroom and classroom supplies are ready to accommodate any unique needs of the child

New child and family welcome letter



Welcome!

We are so excited to have you join our family!

In order to set up your first few days for success, please ensure the following steps have been taken:

- All registration forms are filled out and submitted, including payment information, allergy information, and media consent
- Profile set up in the child care management system
- Confirm drop-off and pick-up times as well as safe drop-off and pick-up contacts
- Ensure all necessary supplies are on-site (including change of clothes, cold weather gear, indoor and outdoor shoes, water bottle, extra diapers, wipes and creams, any medications, etc - checklist below!)
- Ensure you know how to reach your child's educators in the event of an emergency and vice versa
- Ensure all teachers know of this new start and any background information (how to say their name, their pronouns, etc)
- Ensure your child's clothing and belongings are labeled with their name and even compile them in a labeled bag if you can!
- Consider sending along a family photo for the first day of school!
- Expect some tears - they are an important milestone for growing children to learn to adapt to different social situations. They've got this and so do you!

We look forward to seeing you on your first day!

Allergy Form



Child Information:

| FIRST NAME | LAST NAME | MIDDLE INITIAL |
|------------|-----------|----------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

| Allergy | Symptoms | Remedy |
|---------|----------|--------|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |

Parent/Guardian Information:

| PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME | WORK ADDRESS | WORK PHONE |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| | | |
| CELL PHONE | HOME ADDRESS (IF DIFERENT FROM CHILD) | |
| | | |
| CELL PHONE | HOME ADDRESS (IF DIFERENT FROM CHILD) | |

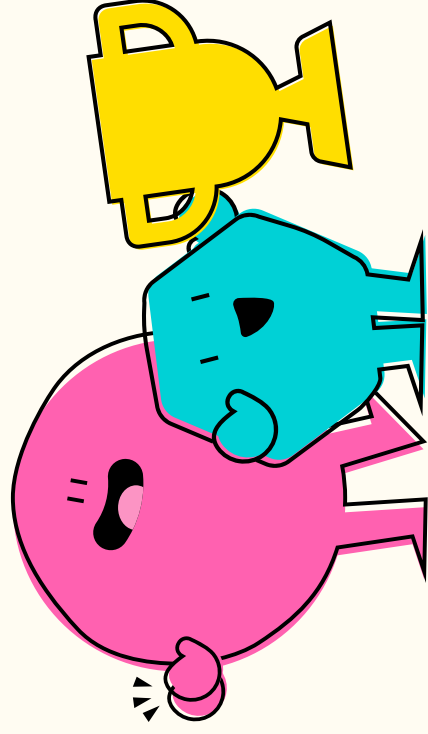
Emergency Contact Information:

| CONTACT NAME | WORK ADDRESS | WORK PHONE |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| | | |
| CELL PHONE | HOME ADDRESS | |

Physician Contact:

| PHYSICIAN NAME | ADDRESS | PHONE |
|----------------|---------|-------|
| | | |


**HIP HOP
HOORAY!**



Had a great FIRST DAY!

Teacher Signature

Date

This free template was brought to you by your friends at  **himama**

**Additional Resources:
Classroom and staff
management**

New staff onboarding checklist

Prepare your new hire paperwork and share your center's employee handbook.

Gather all documents that your new educator has to sign on their first day, such as tax documents. Prepare a benefits package and share the employee handbook. Make sure to include contact information for where the new educator can go if they have questions. It can also be helpful to print the job description as a reminder of the company's expectations for the role.

Schedule orientation

During your new educators first day, set some time aside for orientation. This will give them the time to sign paperwork, read through policies and procedures and also learn about the center's culture. It also gives them the much needed opportunity to ask questions.

Conduct a formal tour of your center

It can feel overwhelming when starting a new job in an unfamiliar environment. Giving a tour to a new educator allows you to introduce them to current employees and helps make them feel welcome and a part of the team.

On your tour be sure to cover:

- Emergency exits
- Classroom responsibilities
- Signing in and out
- Daily schedule
- Drop off and pick up procedure
- Cleaning protocol
- Signing in and out
- Parking details

Have new educators shadow a teacher

As early childhood educators know, the best way to learn is to observe someone else. Have new employees shadow in a classroom that they may be working in to learn more about the ins and outs of the daily routine. This can also be valuable time for educators to start building relationships with the children.

Assign a peer mentor

A peer mentor is an amazing resource for a new educator. They are their go to person who will be available for questions, introduce the educator to others and share knowledge about the center. Having a peer mentor helps new educators feel comfortable and prevents them from feeling alone while they navigate their new role.

Schedule a monthly check-in

A monthly check-in is a great way to learn about the new employee and how they are feeling in their role. Here are some questions you can ask at your first check-in

- What are some challenges you've had?
- What do you like about your role?
- Do you feel like you have the right training and resources to do your job?
- Is there anything you need clarification on?
- What are your goals for the next month?
- Do you have any feedback for me?

Introduce new staff to families

A great way to get teachers to acclimate at your center and start to feel like they belong, is to provide opportunities for them to connect with families. [HiMama's](#) parent communication feature is a great way to send a message to families and introduce them to a new employee. You can also encourage families to introduce themselves and say hello during drop-off and pick-up.

Creating peaceful and harmonious classrooms

Here are some suggestions on how early childhood educators can help children stay mindful and calm during the first week back at school.

- 1. Establish a daily routine:** A predictable daily routine provides a sense of security for young children, making them feel more at ease. Clearly communicate the schedule to the children, using visual aids like charts or pictures, to help them anticipate transitions and understand what comes next.
- 2. Create a calming corner:** Designate a peaceful space in the classroom where children can retreat when they need a break or feel overwhelmed. Fill it with soft cushions, sensory materials like stress balls or textured objects, and perhaps even some books on mindfulness or relaxation techniques.
- 3. Model deep breathing techniques:** Introduce simple deep breathing exercises to the children, such as “bunny breaths” or “flower breaths.” Encourage them to take slow, deep breaths to calm their bodies and minds during moments of stress or excitement. Provide supply lists for families.
- 4. Practice mindful listening:** Engage children in activities that promote active listening, such as sound identification games or mindful listening exercises. Encourage them to notice and identify different sounds in their environment, fostering a sense of presence and awareness. Have an impactful and inspiring teacher inservice.
- 5. Incorporate movement breaks:** Encourage regular movement breaks throughout the day to release energy and refocus attention. Incorporate activities like yoga or stretching exercises that promote body awareness and relaxation.

Childcare cleaning checklist

| Ongoing Tasks | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keep high chairs, seating, tables, and play areas wiped down. | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect entrances, doorways, etc for tripping hazards. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wash dishes, clean and disinfect food prep station. | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean and disinfect diaper changing tables after every use. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up toys, and organize in bins. | <input type="checkbox"/> Empty trash and diaper pails more than half full. |

| Daily Cleaning Tasks |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect and clean toys at the end of the day. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check nap mats, cot sheets and blankets. Fold, store, launder. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean and sanitize food prep surfaces, sinks, and equipment. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disinfect touching points: light switches, doorknobs, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweep, mop and vacuum. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scrub toilets and sanitize bathroom surfaces. |

| Weekly Cleaning Tasks |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean everything in storage cubbies with disinfecting wipes. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Launder nap mats, cot sheets, blankets and repair any rips or frays. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean out refrigerators and check food freshness. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dust furnishings, light fixtures, ceiling fans, and wipe down walls. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean behind toilets and under sinks. |

| Monthly Cleaning Tasks |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean and reorganize storage areas. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Polish window, doors, clean blinds, and freshen drapes. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dust window sills, door frames, baseboards, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disinfect touching points: light switches, doorknobs, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect doormats for wear and tripping hazards. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check drains and plumping for signs of clogs or leaks. |

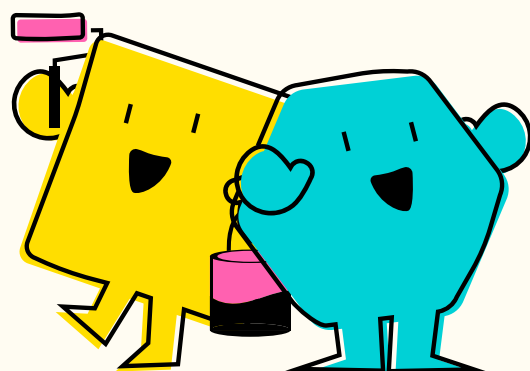
| Outsource Deep Cleaning Jobs |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deep carpet cleaning. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air duct cleaning. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deep tile and grout cleaning. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upholstery cleaning. |

Checklist for a Child Transitioning into a New Room

| | | |
|--------------|----------------|--------|
| | | |
| CHILD'S NAME | TEACHER'S NAME | ROOM # |

Please ensure the following items are set up for your new start:

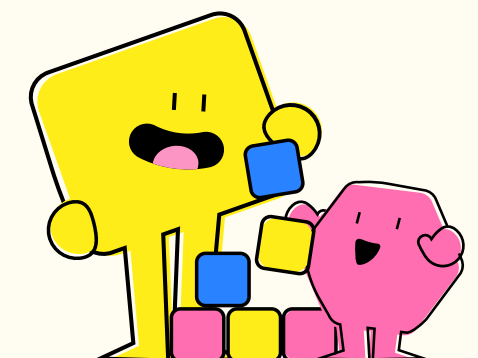
- Child's supplies on-site (extra clothing, medication, etc.)
- Be aware of any allergy or dietary restrictions the child may have.
- Set up space and supplies for the child in your room.
- Review the child's developmental assessments and milestones they have hit.
- Introduce yourself to the caregiver(s) in advance of their child moving to your classroom.
- Arrange for the child to visit their new room for a short period of time leading up to their transition.
- Inform the co-teachers in your room of the new child transitioning.
- Inform the co-teachers in your room of the new child transitioning.
- Connect with the child's current educator about the child's needs in the classrooms



New educator essentials

We asked hundreds of early childhood educators in our [Circle Time Group](#) what their must-have items are for their first few weeks in the classroom. Here's what they said!

1. Pens.
2. STEM toys.
3. A good pair of shoes and comfortable clothes.
4. An extra outfit in the staff room, just in case!
5. Notepads or post-it notes
6. A good water bottle
7. A circle time bag filled with props and books that you can take out whenever you need it.
8. Children's music on your phone and a Bluetooth speaker.
9. A good planner to manage your time and priorities.
10. A watch
11. Stain remover
12. A bag of books of varieties and age groups. When in doubt, read a book!
13. Puppets
14. Patience and a sense of humor!



About Us

Everything you need to deliver a high-quality early childhood program!

HiMama is the only early education platform designed to support administrators, educators and families. Find out how our suite of tools and resources can help your center!

Communicate with parents

Connect with parents and keep them informed about their children's day

Manage your center

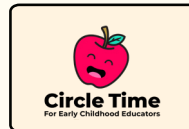
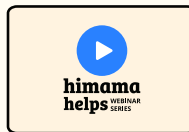
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