

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

A Time to Review, Reflect, Reassure

WHAT WILL THE NEXT THING BE LIKE? Anxiety about change or upcoming events is actually part of the energy of excitement that propels us forward. Thinking about moving to the next level at school for children (or at work for adults) stirs the mind and body. Before a change, children often have unexpressed worries causing changes in behavior. It helps to stay aware that children wonder if they can handle the next challenge, even if they're excited.

At Circle Time, if preschoolers are asked if they are nervous about starting kindergarten, at first they usually deny having any fears. However, once one brave child shares her concerns, everyone wants a turn. What will the teachers be like? What if I can't do the work? What if I don't know anyone? The end of the year provides a wonderful time to reassure children about how confident and competent they are, and an important way to do that is by going back and reviewing the progress that they've made.

Parents are the keepers of a child's history, the ones who need to remind them how they've handled challenges in the past. Milestones can be recorded in a scrapbook of work, an album of photos ("Look how big you are now!") or simple reminiscences ("Remember when you didn't know anyone in your class? Look how many friends you have now!")

This is the time to review the year and all the progress that has been made, in order to ground children before they go through change. Reflecting on what they've done well balances out the human tendency to look ahead with some trepidation. When we stop to look at the evidence of all their growth, it fills their cups with the taste of past glory—and creates confidence that they can handle life with resilience.