



News Letter

Alicia DiMarco, Child Development Consultant

Dear Caregivers,

I cannot believe that it is almost winter break! This year is sure flying by. With three weeks away from school, I wanted to share some reminders to help with holiday survival, what you can do to keep connected to SYC and what you may see when coming back from winter break. Every child is different so yours might just roll with all the changes and transitions but this amount of transition is likely going to shake up your child's world in a way that might need you to reach for different tools in your tool belt. Don't worry, we have your back!

Wishing you and yours a safe, joyful and meltdown-free holiday season!

Reminders for holiday survival

- It's important to give your child as much information up front as possible
 - this includes who they're going to see, what the environment will look like, strategies they can use if they're feeling overwhelmed, and how you will keep them safe
 - the more planning you can do, the greater the opportunity for success
 - celebrate their strengths & successes
- Prepare your family and friends
 - advocate for your child and your family's needs on affection, routine, sensory inputs, snacks, etc.
 - share strategies that work and highlight the strengths of your child
- Your child is the boss of their own body
 - they don't owe anyone (including family members & even Santa) forced affection
 - If it feels important for you that your child acknowledges someone, you can say, "how would you like to say hello/goodbye? You can wave, do a fist bump, do a high five, hug, or use a word."
 - remember this is about SAFETY- others comfort is **never more important** than your child's safety
- Reframe meltdowns as "They're having a hard time" and get curious as to why
 - remember: children do well when they have the skills to meet the demand
 - think about the environment: is it overstimulating- too loud, too many lights, too many people, too many layers, too overwhelming, etc?
 - think about time of day, when they last ate (and what), their emotional state, their energy level
 - be mindful of these things for yourself too- you cannot give from an empty cup.
- Build in down time, outdoor time and PLAY, PLAY, PLAY
 - remember: children process things through play- losing play is NOT a consequence that is logical or helpful
 - they need A LOT of time for outdoor time, physical play and free play
- Be gentle with yourself and your kids
 - everyone makes mistakes, repairing is important, holidays are stressful, rest is essential & we're all human

Tips for staying connected to SYC

- Set up playdates with classmates
 - ask your teachers who might be a good playdate for your kid
 - get contact information on Jovial or ask Holly (SYC@syccolumbus.org)
- Look at pictures of your child's classmates & pictures of what they've done from the class emails
- Utilize the caregiver section of the SYC website for songs & recipes
 - Songs can be found [here](#) & recipes can be found [here](#)
- Make a list about what kids like to do or play at school
- PLAY, PLAY, PLAY
 - remember to go outside, explore, get curious & be silly

What you may see when coming back from break

- Personal Growth
 - You might notice that your child is eager to come back, knows the routine and is ready to connect with their teachers and classmates! School that was once really challenging for them doesn't feel as big or overwhelming!
- Regression
 - It's only natural to lose some skills after being out of the routine for awhile. Don't worry – they're likely not completely lost but need some guidance and patience while kids are getting back into the swing of things.
 - Stick with the strategies you've already been using & remember that when kids are struggling they need caregivers to be confident leaders.
 - they might be struggling with routines, separation, coming to school but YOU know how to do this and can use your leadership to guide them through this difficult time
- New Separation issues
 - maybe your kid never experienced issues at the beginning of the year but now they are struggling
 - don't worry this is typical preschool behavior
 - refer to the September Newsletter for helpful tips & information, found [here](#)
- New behavioral responses to being at school
 - a preschooler's brain is rapidly growing it is only natural for their responses to managing changes and transitions to change
 - get curious with your child, this will inform adults on how to respond to these new social & emotional needs

Collective Wisdom

- "If possible, try to keep things low key the last few days before coming back to school, doing whatever you'd do on a normal weekend or not-school day. Jumping right from parties/travel/visitors into school can be a tough transition."
- "Just like at the beginning of the year, a few days before returning, start talking about the school day routine and what you know your child will do at school. Keep it factual, casual, and neutral. "After three more sleeps, we will wake up in the morning, have breakfast, and get dressed for school. Then we will drive to SYC. We'll walk in together, put your things in your cubby, wash hands, do our goodbye ritual, and I'll leave. You'll play and the teachers will be there to take care of you. [As applicable] You'll have small group, eat your snack, clean up, have gathering time, and then I will be back!" Make sure they know when you (or their grown-up) will be back to get them. Avoid telling them they're going to have so much fun or love going back to school, as this can create pressure and expectation around the return."
- "Depending on your child, you could ask if there's something they want to tell a teacher about their winter break when they return (out loud, in a note that they give to the teacher, etc.). Finding a point of connection upon return can help ease the transition and give them an "in" that they have some control over."
- "My experience as a parent was that the return from break was magical. My kid who had been somewhat hesitant and anxious came back in love with school and eager to see the other kids. And they were so warm and welcoming at her return. So for some kids it's really a wonderful time to realize how they like school"
- "I often notice a personal growth spurt in kids after the break. Maybe because I'm bracing for a rough re-entry and then they often just seem more at ease, more capable, ready to connect."
- "I might add some tips for kids who are having anticipatory anxiety about the return...for caregivers to make a list with their kids of things they like to do and play at school and revisit it prior to restarting"

Have any questions, comments or topic suggestions? Let's chat! e-mail me at alicia@sycolumbus.org

Office hours: Tuesday 9:30-10:30 am, Wednesday 1-2pm or by appointment