



From the Playroom

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Another year of goodbyes

As the school year begins to wind down, now is a good time to build in time to reflect on the year gone by – the strengths, challenges, missed opportunities, and moments of “wow, wasn’t that great?!”

After a lifetime of beginnings and endings of school years – first as a student, then as a school psychologist, and now working with schools through Children’s Institute – I am well aware of the mixed emotions that this time of year can bring.

There have been years when I have counted down how many days were left, feeling like one foot was out the door even as I began working with a new student. I would think about the house projects that needed to be done over the summer, a trip that was on the horizon, and golf clubs that needed to be cleaned. My mind was easily distracted and, in my eagerness for summer break, I would sometimes find myself saying, “We can talk about that next year!”

So, today, I offer you 10 things to do before your last day of work:

- 1) Write a one-page thank you to the teachers for their support and let them know how many students have benefited from Primary Project this year. (Be sure to Cc the principal in this!)
- 2) Invite your principal to the playroom for a conversation about the highlights of the year.
- 3) Develop a screening and selection schedule/timeline for next year, including who will do what and when.
- 4) For our readers in New York State: Complete and return the NYS Report.

- 5) Take a picture of your team celebrating the work you do and send it to me at Children's Institute (djohnson@childrensinstitute.net). I'd love to see your smiling faces!
- 6) Make a list of what went well and what didn't go so well and how you will address similar situations in the future.
- 7) Identify 3 skills you want to focus on improving next year.
- 8) Share with one another something special you are going to do this summer.
- 9) Identify 10 things to take out of your playroom and donate to a family in need.
- 10) Send "Bringing the Lessons Home" to the parents of each Primary Project child you worked with this year, along with a personal note about how special their child is.

This is your challenge. The Primary Project team at Children's Institute will take it on as well, and we look forward to hearing about your accomplishments!

*–Deborah Johnson, Ed.D.
Director of National Services, Children's Institute*

*"Goodbye may seem forever.
Farewell is like the end, but in
my heart is the memory and
there you will always be."*

–Walt Disney Company



Healthy Goodbyes

We encounter many goodbyes over a lifetime. We say “goodbye” to people that we know and love, jobs, homes that we have lived in, pets, and the list goes on! Often times with “goodbye” comes a mix of emotions – we may feel relief, sadness, excitement for new beginnings – sometimes we even feel all of these emotions at the same time!

In Primary Project, child associates and the students they serve must learn to say “goodbye” to each other. Even at the start of the program, associates structure each weekly session with a beginning and an ending. Students begin to know that their time in the playroom each week will come to an end. After several sessions – typically 12-15 one-on-one sessions with students – we finish working with students either partway through or at the end of the year. This is tough for both the student and for the child associate and can cause a mix of emotions. Let’s face it, child associates and children have built a wonderful relationship based on trust, consistency, predictability, warmth, and genuineness. Children are listened to, their play is noted and reflected upon, and their feelings are heard and acknowledged. At the core, what could be better than this?! This relationship has been special, and goodbyes are an equally important part of honoring the child’s time in Primary Project.

Here are some considerations when ending with students:

- Decide how you will prepare students for their time coming to an end and be consistent, e.g. marking off weeks on a calendar. This typically begins when there are about 4 sessions remaining.
- Be aware of the child’s non-verbal and verbal cues and acknowledge them. For example, “You look sad that our time will be coming to an end.” Or, “You wish we had more time to spend in the playroom.”
- Remember, it is the time in Primary Project that’s coming to an end – your relationship with the child will not change. For example, students that “graduate” mid-year may end their time in the program, but it is likely that you will still see them in school. It is appropriate to say, “You will not be coming back to the playroom, however I will still see you. We can give each other a high five or a hug.” Choose something that works for both the child and you.
- Use your weekly time in supervision to process your own feelings about endings. You have worked hard at developing relationships with students, and endings are difficult for the child associate as well.

Through Primary Project we have the opportunity to build relationships, see children grow, and connect to their school experiences. We are fortunate to be able to have these experiences and model healthy goodbyes.

“How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.

–Winnie the Pooh

–Lynn Smith, LMSW
Social Worker, Children’s Institute

Bringing the Lessons Home

Anticipating the end of the school year

At times, the first day of school feels like a distant memory, but at other times it feels as if it were not so long ago. As the end of the school year quickly approaches, find time to reflect back on your child's accomplishments, milestones celebrated, and new learning that has occurred.

Soon children will say "farewell" to teachers, friends, and a schedule that they have come to know and expect over the past nine months. For some students, saying "good-bye" to teachers and friends, transitioning from school to summer, and anticipating moving up another grade or classroom can be fun and exciting. For others, the same transitions can bring uncertainty. Knowing your child and being prepared to acknowledge their feelings is important during this time of the year.

As the summer months bring a different pace for families, here are some helpful tips:

- Whether children attend summer camps or spend time at home, they find comfort in simple routines.
- Summer rules may be a bit more relaxed, so establishing guidelines around the use of electronics and television viewing is important to do early on.
- Find time to enjoy activities around you. Your local library, community center, or school often provide events throughout the summer at little to no cost.
- There is nothing more important than the relationship that you have with your child. Find time to PLAY together! By playing together, parents and children take time to connect, have fun, and promote health and wellness.



—Lynn Smith, LMSW
Social Worker, Children's Institute

Please feel free to copy this page and share it with Primary Project parents.

Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar

Anticipando el fin del año escolar

A veces, uno siente el primer día en la escuela como una memoria distante, y otras veces, como algo de no hace mucho. Al aproximarse rápidamente el fin del año escolar, busque tiempo para reflexionar en los logros de su hijo(a), las etapas de desarrollo que se celebraron y el nuevo aprendizaje que ocurrió.

Pronto los niños dirán “adiós” a sus maestros, amigos y a un programa que ellos han llegado a conocer y esperar durante los nueve meses pasados. Para algunos estudiantes, decir “adiós” a maestros y amigos, la transición de la escuela al verano y la anticipación de pasar a otro grado o salón de clases puede ser divertida y excitante. Para otros, las mismas transiciones pueden causar inseguridad. Conocer a su hijo(a) y estar preparado para reconocer sus sentimientos es importante durante este tiempo del año.

Ya que los meses del verano conllevan un ritmo diferente para las familias, aquí hay algunas sugerencias que pueden servir de ayuda:

- Ya sea que los niños asistan a campamentos de verano o pasen el tiempo en casa, ellos se sienten cómodos con rutinas sencillas.
- Las reglas durante el verano pueden ser un poco más relajadas, así que establecer directrices pronto para el uso de aparatos electrónicos y ver televisión es importante.
- Busque tiempo para disfrutar de actividades cerca de usted. Su biblioteca local, el centro de la comunidad o la escuela a menudo ofrecen eventos durante todo el verano que no cuestan dinero o solamente cuestan poco.
- No hay nada más importante que la relación que usted tiene con su hijo(a). ¡Busque tiempo para JUGAR juntos! Jugando juntos, padres y niños pasan el tiempo conectando, divirtiéndose y promoviendo salud y bienestar.



—Lynn Smith, LMSW
Trabajadora Social, Children's Institute

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Congratulations to

Copenhagen Central School, Copenhagen, NY

West Street School, Geneva, NY

Westmoreland Elementary School, Westmoreland, NY

for receiving Primary Project
National Certification



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