



CliffordSchoolPTO.org

Kindergarten Survival Guide

For families with kids starting their elementary school education, entering Kindergarten is often a time of excitement and anticipation. To help you feel a little more at ease, dear parents, here are some tips and insights we gathered from some families in the Clifford community. See quotes below in italics from Kindergarten parents, from the 2014/2015 school year. We hope you find this useful and we are so happy to welcome you!

Getting used to a new routine

- Know it might take some time to get used to the new schedule and process. Learning a new routine takes time but you'll soon find your rhythm. (If that means rushing to line-up time with seconds to spare every day, that counts!)

"The first month was hard to get adjusted. I had three kids to manage all under five. None of us were used to parking up the big hill, walking in, dropping off, then walking back up the steep hill and doing it again in the afternoon for pick up. Physically it was a lot for all of us. But I would say to the next group of kindergarten families, somehow you get used to it and it becomes routine--just give it two months, haha! I became grateful later that drop off and pick up gave me the opportunity to get to know the other parents so well."

- Trust in the process and support the teachers who once described the first few weeks as "boot camp". The teachers are so experienced and they know they have to set the rules in those first few weeks.

"Follow the teachers' suggestions to make your child hang up their own backpack and jacket, put their own folder in the bin, etc. In a short time the kids go from a wiggly, tearful, and distracted bunch to forming a straight line, looking forward, backpacks up, jackets off, ready to start their day. It always amazes me."

"There are good and bad moments--remember it is a process, an evolution. Trust the journey. The teachers are AMAZING!"

- Remember you're in it for the long haul. You don't have to do **everything** in the first year--or push your child to be involved in every after-school activity that is offered (e.g. the school play, dance, etc). Kindergarteners need down-time too. Get your feet wet and learn about all the many activities and events and figure out which ones you want to be part of.

Helping a child who may feel homesick (a.k.a. My kid is crying at drop-off)

- Give your child a small token of comfort. No, loveys and toys are not permitted, but some families got creative:

"My son really had a hard time feeling homesick that first month, so I made him a bracelet out of embroidery floss, with a different color in it for each member of his family. Every time we would wave goodbye at drop off, I would watch him touching the bracelet fondly, it seemed to be comforting to him--he stopped crying after that."

"My older child cried every day at Kindergarten drop-off for over a month (felt like a year!), and we made a locket that had our family's picture for her to look at when she felt sad."

- "The Kissing Hand" by Audrey Penn is a great book that talks about a Mom's love for her baby when they have to be apart. She kisses his hand and he can always feel the imprint of her love when he has to go to school.
- Sometimes, crying is a part of a child's adjusting to their new school routine. Even though it might feel excruciating in the moment, 1) your child will most likely stop crying shortly after entering their classroom and 2) the crying will lessen with time! And you have the support of families who totally get it!

Communicating and partnering with your child's teacher

- Don't hesitate to ask your Kindergarten teacher for their thoughts. They are amazing with the kids and have probably seen just about everything at least once in their many years of experience.
- If something does not seem right, talk to the teachers first. They have the most experience with your child directly and with the whole experience of Kindergarten. And they have the power to enact change.

"Listen to others but do what is right for you and your family. Everyone comes into this experience from such different backgrounds. We all want our kids to be happy and succeed, but trust your instincts when making decisions about teachers, drop off, after school care, volunteering, etc. because you know your child best."

Community and the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

- Reach out and meet your fellow Kindergarten class families. Get to school a little early so your kids can play with their classmates in the Kindergarten playground and you can get to know the parents. At some point, room reps or your child's teacher will assemble a contact list for your class. Use it to set up play dates and "Moms' Night Out".
- Let your child's teacher know you're interested in volunteering in the classroom, and be sure to add your name to the sign-up sheets. It's fun to see the Kindergarteners in their class and kids love to see their parents helping out!
- Go to PTO meetings to stay updated on what's going on at Clifford, and get to know more parents and teachers. The PTO typically meets once a month, on Thursdays, at 7pm in the Clifford Library. For more information, visit <http://cliffordschoolpto.org/about-us!>

"Many parents want to volunteer but are not sure how. Go to a PTO meeting--kids can come too. Opportunities will present themselves and soon you'll have to turn down offers to help! You'll

meet other parents like yourselves who want Clifford to be a great school. Other parents are a great source of knowledge and support.”

“It is a great way to meet other parents and learn more information about the school. I feel it has been a nice way to meet parents with older kids so I have a better understanding of what to expect in the coming years.”

Have fun and enjoy the school year

- Savor the milestones and enjoy watching your Kindergartener learn! It truly does go by quick.
- After they get their bearings, have your child give you a school tour! They’ll probably know where everything is before you do!
- Attend the fun social events, open houses, science fairs, and fundraisers that occur throughout the year. Before you know it, your child will be filled with school pride and will enjoy being a part of the community! We hope you will enjoy it too!