

COACH'S CORNER

Coach's Corner is a DIEEC blog dedicated to providing fresh ideas for all early childhood education professionals.



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Making the Most of Morning Greetings

A child's experience upon arriving at their early childhood education program each morning can set the tone for their entire day. Actually, the same can be true for adults coming into an office or meeting! Think about an adult walking into a meeting: they're more likely to feel comfortable engaging and collaborating if they are met with a friendly hello and a moment to settle in before diving into work. Similarly, a toddler who is greeted warmly by name and given a moment to connect with their caregiver is more prepared to smoothly transition to play. In both cases, starting with connection and predictability creates a sense of safety that opens the door to learning and growth.



iStock Credit: NickyLloyd

Early mornings can be busy for educators. You may be gathering materials, prepping for activities, or managing the children's needs alone until a co-teacher arrives. Regardless of these tasks, intentionally making time to greet each child and family is always worth the effort. In addition to setting a positive tone for the day, morning greetings can also enhance the child's sense of belonging. It's a reassurance each morning that the program is a safe space and a community to which they belong.

To build on that strong foundation, here are a few creative ways to enrich your morning drop-off routine, including tried-and-true strategies from our very own Delaware educators. Think of these as fun, flexible additions to enhance that essential morning connection!

MORNING GREETINGS ADD-ONS

Choice Board

Family child care educator Kena Trader offers several morning greeting options to the children each day. The greetings are listed on a poster by the front door (see photo) and are always optional. With choices like “heart hands” and “fist bump,” children are active participants in selecting a greeting to start their day. Family members are welcome to participate as well!



Photo credit: Kena Trader

Question of the Day

Choose a different question each day to ask as children enter. Some examples could be:

- “What is your favorite animal?”
- “What is your favorite snack?”
- “Tell me one thing you did over the weekend.”
- You can even invite preschool and school-age children to come up with ideas for the “question of the day!”

Morning Poll

Set up some chart paper, an easel, or a dry-erase board by the classroom door. Write down a poll question each morning. Some examples:

- “Chocolate or vanilla ice cream?”
- “Ocean or pool?”
- “Dogs or cats?”

As children arrive, ask them the poll question, and invite them to put a check mark on the section of the paper with their choice. Younger children may need some support!



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Emotions Check-in

Family child care educator Terri McGriff uses an emotions pillow for her morning check-in. The children point to the emotion on the pillow that matches how they feel. The children can return to the emotion pillow throughout the day if they need support expressing their emotions. This approach also helps educators to identify days when children may need some extra attention or support.

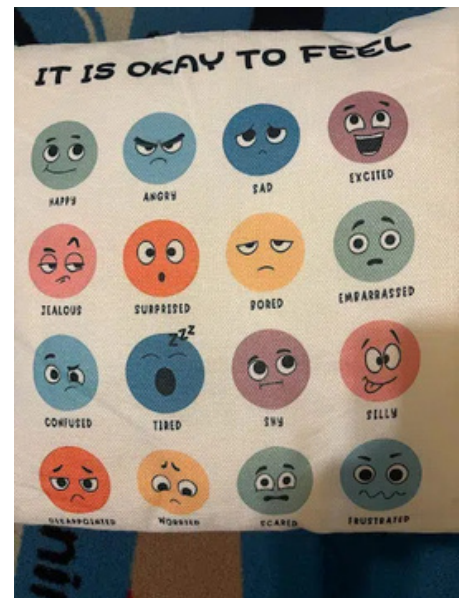


Photo credit: Terri McGriff



Photo credit: Erin Cantrell

Morning Meeting

Educator Erin Cantrell (Cadence Academy Preschool - Peoples Plaza) starts her morning meeting with her PreK students by acknowledging the children who are absent each day. The kids say the names of the children who are absent and move their pictures into the center of the heart (see photo). Then the children sing the following song, "We wish you well, we wish you well, all through the day today we wish you well (child's name)." Erin adapted this idea from a Conscious Discipline training.

GREETING INFANTS & TODDLERS

For infants and young toddlers, prioritize eye contact and connection. Be sure to get down to their level! For babies, repeat their name a few times. For example, "Mason is here, hi Mason! We are so happy to see you this morning, Mason." Educators can also use a simple morning song. Repetition is a good learning strategy for our youngest children, so using the same song each morning would be helpful. For toddlers, educators could incorporate a puppet or stuffed animal for the children to greet each morning.

In addition, be sure to check in with the child's caregiver for any information that will help the day go smoothly- did the child eat that morning? Did they sleep well last night? Gathering these daily details helps you anticipate their needs and tailor your care right from the start of the morning.

These are just a few of the ways for children to start their day with a moment of intention and connection. A small, intentional moment can really help start the day on a positive note!

We would love to hear about the ways you are greeting children each morning in your program!

Resources

- [The Power of Good Morning-NAEYC](#)
- [Creating Routines for Love and Learning-Zero to Three](#)