

Infant/Toddler Rituals: Providing Connection for Children and Families

With infants, you create connections and build your School Family by implementing rituals with the family and staff. With toddlers, you create connections by implementing the rituals with the children themselves. Here are some ritual ideas to get you started in creating a culture of caring.

Ritual	Infant	Toddler
Greeting	Select a location where you will stand every morning to greet the parent/child. Greet them both nonverbally and verbally. Nonverbally using eye contact and touch. Verbally by saying, "Hello _____(parent name)! Oh, you brought your precious _____ (child name) and _____ (child name) brought his/her _____ (ears, eyes, mouth, etc.)." This balances novelty and structure.	Use a greeting apron with two choices. Child selects the way she'd like to be greeted. If parents drop off their children, select one parent per week to teach an I Love You Ritual during the greeting time.
Goodbye Ritual	Tell the parent a specific positive thing the child did during the day ("Karen reached up and grasped my finger today." "Dennis smiled when I sang to him today.") As you're handing the child to the parent, say, "Here's my kiss goodbye. Mom, where will your kiss be for hello?"	Use a goodbye apron with two choices. Child selects way he'd like to say goodbye. Sing your goodbye song. Focus on eye contact, touch and playfulness.
Absent Child Ritual	Create a "We Missed You" card for the family. The message to send: "We noticed your precious one was gone, we missed him and we're glad he's back."	"You've been gone and you've been missed, where would you like your welcome back kiss?"

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Ritual	Infant	Toddler
New Child Ritual	<p>Have a bulletin board or display for new families. “Welcome _____ Family.” Interview the family and post the answers. Put up a picture of the new family. Have a place for other families to write a note to the new family. At the bottom of both boards, write the words, “We wish the _____ family well!”</p>	<p>Sing the “Hello” song to child: Hello to our new friend, Hello to our new friend, Hello to our new friend, Hello to Katie! We’re dancing with our new friend, We’re dancing with our new friend, We’re dancing with our new friend, Dancing with Katie!</p> <p>Put a photo on the Friends and Family Board. Send “Welcome!” card to family.</p>
Leaving Ritual	<p>Make a picture book for the family with the following poem: It may seem we are so little that we wouldn’t know, how important you were, to helping us grow. Yet each of us is connected, in ways no one can see. So goodbye, so long, from your infant School Family!</p> <p>Take pictures of each caregiver holding the infant Under each picture, write a note as to what the child and family has meant to you. End your comments, “I wish you well!”</p>	<p>Sing a goodbye song to the child. Give a recording to parents. Create a goodbye book of classroom pictures for the child. Send home a favorite class book with notes from the caregivers inside. Make a class video with each child being coached to say, “Bye Bye,” and send home.</p>
Event Ritual	<p>Rituals for specific events like potty training, first words, first steps, new siblings, etc.</p>	
I Love You Rituals	<p>At specific times during the day, take time to do I Love You Rituals. Diapering, circle, greeting, napping and activity time are ideal. Each child needs one-on-one time every day with this type of activity.</p>	

