

The first day of school



THE SCOOP
MABLE HASTINGS

I've recently been following a friend's experiences in seeing her four-year-old go off to school for the first time. The eldest of her two children, listening to her brings back a flood of memories of my own three sons as each went through the milestone experience. The feelings of the one left behind as the school bus pulls away taking with it their companion, source of entertainment and co pilot seems to create an inconsolable little being who can't quite figure it all out nor why this is happening.

The build up to the big day is a melange of feelings for everyone in the house; joy, sadness, panic, sleeplessness and chaos for the parents who try to remember to follow the list. Identifying each pencil, buying new clothes, finding the perfect lunch box, book bag and accessories and then struggling with the lunch and snack allotments and no no's.

The beforehand talks around the dinner table in prep for the experience; road safety/bus reminders, how to be kind to your new friends, manners in

dealing with all, self-awareness and expression, fear and anxiety and how to handle them...the list is endless. The bedtime countdown to the big day and the excitement and nervous stomach (for all) the morning of; remain as fresh in my mind as if it was yesterday and I feel for my friend and the other parents who face this first day of school.

The morning of as the bus pulls up and the doors open to take your precious little being to a new experience; on of their first without you physically at their side. The last look as your child looks back at you from the top of the bus steps and then slowly saunters down the aisle to look for a seat. You smile, you wave, you feel your heart squeezing and your stomach turn as you find all the right words clasp the hand of the wee one who remains and who is experiencing many of the same feelings inside.

You make the day positive for all as you count the hours and before you know it, the bus returns with your child. Somehow, there is a difference but you can't quite put your finger on it. The first step toward independence has been taken and you both know it. The next morning, the independence voices itself as you are told, "I'm not going to school today." A new adventure begins with new parenting skills acquired. For the next twelve plus years are an ever changing learning experience for you both with obstacles faced that you could never have planned nor prepared yourself for.

In a very short time, routine will set in and by the time your second child begins the experience, you are better prepared but, with that come a whole new



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set of emotions. The first child will be instrumental in taking the lead and serving as temporary tour guide and protector (this wears off rapidly as they have other things to do with their own friends) but, in the beginning, the eldest will be a familiar face for the youngest in a strange place.

To my dear friend who has a daughter with a mind of her own and a will to survive and thrive, my only words of wis-

dom are, prepare yourself for a gambit of emotions as each year will bring an array of new experiences. BUT, also prepare for growth, expression, wonder and so much pride that you will feel you might burst. To the world...Kendra is coming and we are all in for a wonderful ride!

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