



Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Wayne County

Ready or not, it's Time for Back to School

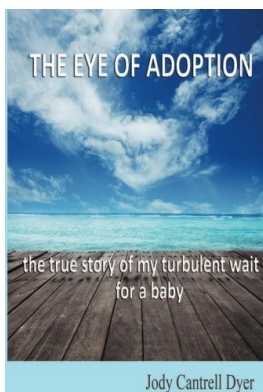
Nicole Nicholls

While preparing to send the children back to school, you are probably making a list of tasks that need to be completed as the new school year approaches. If you are a parent to a child that has been adopted, your list likely has additional tasks beyond buying school supplies, books, and clothes for the new school year. Each year our children have to start all over again, with a new teacher and new classmates, and this task alone can be difficult, but when you add adoption into the mix it complicates the transition even further. If your child's teacher is not familiar with adoption, it can make things particularly difficult, especially in the beginning. When our children start school they will likely have to re-answer many of those tough questions with new peers and a new teacher about his/her birth family or where he/she was born. You can try to be proactive in helping your child have the best start to the school year by following some of the following tips:

- **Write a letter to the teacher:** (sample letter on page 3)
- **Schedule a parent/teacher conference:** Teachers shouldn't be blindsided by behaviors that they may experience from your child the first day or week of school. Give them a heads-up and tips for dealing with specific behaviors. If your child has specific triggers such as loud noises, violence, being left alone, food or holidays, let your teacher know how best to handle those topics. Parents need to keep in mind that their child's story is private and personal and that information should only be shared if it is significant to their child's daily care or education.

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Suggested Read



The Eye of Adoption

Author: Jody Cantrell Dyer

"No one just adopts." From the very first steps of acknowledging adoption as a choice to the final document that seals the deal, including the sorrows of infertility and the demands of adoption, Jody Cantrell Dyer paints a raw, warm, heartbreaking and eventually triumphant portrayal that narrates the entire adoption process through compassionate and humor.

Orchards
Children's
Services

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*For more information
on the Post Adoption
Resource Center
please contact us at
313-530-9746*

*Or visit our website at
PARC-orchards.org*



Ready or not, it's Time for Back to School (Continued)

(Continued from pg. 1)

- **Provide adoption resources for teachers:** Resources might include children's books like *It's Okay To Be Different* by Todd Parr, *A Mother for Choco*, by Keiko Kasza, or *Rosie's Family: An Adoption Story* by Lori Rosove. You can also recommend books to help teachers understand more about trauma and adoption like *Help for Billy* by Heather Forbes, or *The Connected Child* by Karyn Purvis, David Cross and Wendy Sunshine.
- **Prepare for difficult assignments:** Provide information on how and why to rethink certain assignments that may be difficult for children who were adopted. Typical class assignments that require baby photos or family tree exercises may be problematic for children who joined their family through adoption. These assignments can be easily adapted to still meet requirements and accommodate children with different histories.
- **Raise racial awareness:** There is no such thing as being "color-blind". Even children are aware of racial differences at an early age. Books like *The Sneeches* by Dr. Seuss along with a good anti-racism classroom activity can help promote racial awareness. As a parent of a child of color I want to know that my child's teacher understands racial discrimination and what it looks like in the classroom. Teachers should enforce a zero-tolerance policy and take action to educate students early on to have a positive and knowledgeable racial identity. Bring in your child's favorite food, dress-up clothes, or music from your child's culture of origin to share with the class.
- **Review tough questions:** There will always be tough questions in new beginnings, especially with new classmates or a new school. Before school starts, it's important to review with your child how to answer questions she may be asked. The Wise Up! Powerbook is a great resource to use with children to help them learn how to answer tough questions. This book teaches children that their story is personal and unique and they can choose how and when to share it.
- **Evaluate Education Plan:** Determine if any changes or adjustments need to be made to the child's current education plan, and discuss progress or changes that have occurred with your child over the summer.
- **Get involved:** Find ways to get involved at your child's school, like volunteering in the classroom, chaperoning field trips, donating supplies, attending PTO meetings, offering to talk to your student's class about adoption, or sending teachers information on upcoming training sessions.



Completing all of these tasks before the school year begins may be impossible, but they are important to keep in mind throughout the school year. Many of these tasks are ongoing and may



require re-visiting several times. For example, when a classmate makes your child cry by saying that your child's "real" parents didn't care about him/her, or when there's a fire drill at school and your child was not prepared in advance and panics at the sound of the alarm. You do not have to be a helicopter parent, but you should stay involved and keep open communication with those in charge of caring for your child daily. Adoptive parenting requires that we not only educate ourselves but that we also educate others around us, and advocate for our children when needed.

**Information expanded from: MLJ Adoptions*

Sample Letter to Your Child's Teacher

Dear Teacher,

My child is excited about this school year and so are we. I wanted to share some information about my son/daughter that will help you get to know him/her a little better.

My child was adopted at (age) and we have (limited information on his early life, are in an open adoption with his birth family, etc.)

You are in a powerful position to send a message about adoption to both our child as well as to other children in the class. We would like for you to send a positive message that families are formed in different ways. Some children are born to their parents and some children are adopted by their parents. Regardless of how families come about, they are all "normal" and all are good.

I thought it might make your job easier if I shared some appropriate responses to some typical questions children may ask.

Where are his/her real parents?

He/she has two sets of real parents—the parents that gave birth to him and the parents that will raise him and be his mom and dad forever. That's Mrs. and Mr. Smith, who you know.

Why didn't his/her birth parents keep him?

His/her birth parents weren't ready to raise a baby when he was born.

Why doesn't he/she look like his/her mommy?

Children usually look like the parents that gave birth to them. He/she probably looks like his/her birth parents.

I also wanted to share that some school assignments may be difficult for us. I'm not asking that you change the assignment, but I would like advanced warning when possible and some creativity of how we can adapt the assignment to fit our circumstances. An example of challenging school assignments might include a family tree, baby picture, birth or childhood stories and information, and inherited traits.

I would love the opportunity to meet with you after you have had a chance to get to know my wonderful child. Can we schedule a time to talk in about three weeks? I would also love to come in and read some books about adoption to the class, we have quite a collection.

We are looking forward to working with you to make this a great year for my child. Thank you so much for being on our team.

Best wishes,

(Child's) Loving Parent(s)

Optional additional information to include, depending on your child and whether you think this information needs to be presented up front or if it can wait for your meeting, you may want to include the following type of information. Adapt it to fit your child, but always start with the positive.

-My child is enthusiastic about everything and loves school. He/she tries hard to please.

-Due to his/her early life experiences _____ He/she carries around a lot of stress. When more stressed is added, you may see him/her _____. He/she usually responds well when you _____.

-He/she struggles to remember boundaries and you may see him/her _____. He/she usually responds well when you _____.

-He/she has some developmental gaps including _____ that make learning hard.

-He/she does not have an IEP, but we have found that the following techniques work well to help him/her learn:

What has Been Going on in PARC?!

This summer PARC hosted the annual Island Lake Family Fun Picnic, a day out at Greenfield Village and the annual Dodge Park Family Day. We enjoyed a BBQ together, fishing, the beach, splash pad, games, and so much more!



You can stay up to date with PARC by:

- 1)"liking" PARC on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OCSPostAdoptionResourceCenter>
- 2)vising our website: <http://parc-orchards.org>
- 3)signing up for our Wayne County e-mail list: http://eepurl.com/gxZ_MP

Upcoming Trainings and Support Groups Dates

Parent & Teen Support Group

5:30-7:30pm

**24901 Northwestern Hwy.
Southfield, MI 48075 Suite #500**

- ◆ No Meeting
- ◆ October 1, 2019
- ◆ November 5, 2019
(Human Trafficking Training)
- ◆ December 3, 2019

Wayne County Support Group **5:00-8:00pm**

Wayne County Community College
8200 Outer Drive W Detroit, MI 48219
Welcome Center

- ◆ September 12, 2019
- ◆ October 10, 2019
- ◆ November 7, 2019
(Human Trafficking Training)
- ◆ December 12, 2019

**Dinner and childcare provided.*

**For more details and to RSVP for any of our events,
please contact Jennifer Harmon at 248-530-5381.*