

End-of-the-Year Celebrations

Elaborate graduation ceremonies for children who are moving on to kindergarten can be costly, time consuming, and stressful for the young and old. Teachers and families can use some or all of these simple ideas to achieve the same goal—celebrating children’s accomplishments and supporting them as they move on to the next class or school.

1

Class photo albums. Include a page of photos and memories for each child and pages with photos of ordinary and extraordinary activities taken throughout the year. Laminate and bind the pages to create sturdy volumes that can be examined over and over again. As children thumb through their copy of the album, they can tell their families about the fun times they had with their friends and teachers.

2

Favorite songs concert. In most preschool classrooms, children have been singing songs all year long. Ask the children which songs they want to sing with their families. Arrange for musical accompaniment—a CD or a volunteer pianist, perhaps. Pass out copies of the lyrics so everyone can sing together.

3

Family picnic, breakfast, or game day. Ask parent volunteers to help plan an event that will include parents, grandparents, siblings, and others. Suggest familiar activities that children and families can do together, such as face painting, story times, singing and dancing, making favorite snacks, playing games, dressing up, and enjoying water play.



© KAREN PHILLIPS

4

Pajama party. Plan a family-friendly party at the center on a Friday or Saturday evening. Children and adults can listen to a storyteller or watch G-rated movies in their jammies, snack on popcorn, and stay up a little later than usual to celebrate their moving up. Some centers plan a similar event using a beach party theme. Everyone plays beach volleyball (lower the net and use a beach ball) and then eats on blankets spread on the ground.

5

Repeat of a field trip to a favorite local site. Discuss with the children the field trips taken this year. Which one did they like the best? Can you arrange to revisit the pizza parlor or the trolley car museum? If so, make a return visit—this time with family members. Take lots of photos and make a book to send home with each child as a keepsake.



© ELISABETH NICHOLS

Jackson's Memory Book



© MARIA WYNNE

6

Community service project. Children and families can work together on a project at the center—planting a butterfly garden, for example. Or they can contribute to the community at large—visit a senior center, make sandwiches for a homeless shelter, take part in a park cleanup day. After completing the project, have a picnic or a pizza party.

7

T-shirt decorating. Ask parents to send in a plain white T-shirt (or buy shirts in bulk at a craft shop). Provide fabric paint and markers. Have children decorate their own shirts (maybe reserve the front for self-portraits) and then “sign” each other’s shirts. Children can wear the shirts as long as they still fit, then stuff them to make memory pillows.

8

Individual memory books. Invite children to choose samples of their work and photographs that show them playing and learning throughout the year. Help children write captions, and have them choose a completed drawing or painting for their book cover.