

A gateway guide to the arts helping families creatively connect!

10 Tips for a Great First Day of School

1. Read books about school together. See our list inside.
2. Talk to older children together about school, especially neighbors or older neighborhood friends
3. Visit school prior to the first day
4. Introduce your child to the new teacher before the first day.
5. Establish a regular bedtime and morning schedule at least two weeks before the first day.
6. Practice traveling to school and being picked up.
7. Play school! Role play imaginary scenes together like asking where to find the restroom.
8. Shop for school supplies together and place a special note inside the new folder or backpack.
9. Plan for a short goodbye once at school.
10. Take time at the end of the day to discuss your child's big adventure!



If You Take a Mouse to School

www.emeraldcitytheatre.com

The Story

Help your child know the story before the show

Today is no ordinary day. It's Science Day at school, and Mouse wants to come along with his best friend, Boy. But it's also time for progress reports, and if Boy has a positive report his Mom and Dad will reward him with The Ultimate Gamestation. Will Mouse ruin Boy's day at school and his video game dreams? From riding the bus, to doing science experiments, to writing a book, to playing soccer – the day certainly becomes more than both ever expected as Mouse and Boy learn the importance of problem solving, following directions, and friendship.

Theme: Problem Solving

Help your child be a creative problem solver

In the play, Boy has to do some serious thinking on his feet. Watching his dilemma on stage is a great opportunity to discuss problem solving with your young theater goer. Notice together how he is continually confronted with problems, brainstorming solutions, picking plans of attack, and then executing his ideas. Boy's behavior is an excellent example of how thinking outside of the box can lead to positive solutions to a day's challenges.

Problem Solving Activity:

Think about different ways to solve problems with your young theater goer before the performance. Take turns answering the following questions.

What would you do if...

you and a friend wanted to play different games while playing together?

you break a friend's toy while playing?

you see a lonely friend?

Create your own "What would you do if..." questions and ask each other.

Raising a Confident Reader

We all know parents play a valuable role in raising a confident reader. Here are three tips to help you make reading fun:

1. Instead of only reading the text, ask open ended questions like, "Why did Mouse want to ride a skateboard?," while sharing a story.
2. Choose a character series like *If You Give a Mouse...* so young readers can become attached to the characters.
3. Identify your child's literary taste by finding favorite themes and subject matter.

Spend time together sharing one of these back to school books.

Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Our heroine used to believe her name was perfect, but the kids at school think otherwise. Mom and Dad help her out with hugs and kisses and Parcheesi.

Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten by Joseph Slate

A fabulous teacher readies her empty classroom for the first day of school while her students also prepare.

My Teacher's My Friend by P.K. Hallinan

The story of a friendship between a boy and his teacher. Great for first time students.

Give the Gift of a Story

Help your child be giving like Mouse

In the play, Mouse writes a story as a gift for boy. Be like Mouse and as a family write a story together. Brainstorm ideas and write the story out. Grownups can type it up on the computer while kids can illustrate the story's events. Put it in a binder or have it bound. Have the family give the story to a special person like a grandparent.



Theme: Clowning

Help your child learn about this art form

If You Take a Mouse to School features **clowning**—a kind of performance that uses jokes, tricks, and the human body in lots of silly ways. Some clowns wear makeup, while other clown characters, like the ones in *If You Take a Mouse to School*, entertain the audience without wearing a painted face.

Clowning Activity

Introduce the concept of non-traditional clowns to your young audience member before the show. Gather around the computer and call up the following youtube.com clip of contemporary clown Bill Irwin by typing in "*Bill Irwin clowns around*".

Did you find the clip funny? Would you have thought of that as clowning? What was your favorite part?

