



A Montessori School (Part-2)

First day at school - "Through the eyes of a preschool teacher"

By- Zahver Dhabhar

“ Although I am not their Mother, I care for them each day. I cuddle, sing and read to them and watch them as they play. I see each new accomplishment; I help them grow and learn. I understand their language and I listen with concern. They come to me for comfort and I kiss away their tears. They proudly show their work to me and I give the loudest cheers. No, I'm not their mother but my role is just as strong. I nurture them safe, though maybe not for long. I know someday the time will come, when we will have to part. But I know each child I cared for, is forever in my heart! ”

Each year I customarily buy myself a brand-new uniform for my first day at school -after all for the children there will be only one first day at school! A hundred thoughts rush through my head – what will my new batch of children be like? What about the parents? Will I be able to handle the class and prove myself fit for the job of a preschool teacher?

My mind has memorised a hundred things to say to the parents – all neatly compartmentalised into a folder titled 'First Day Fears'. Am I ready to deal with the separation anxiety and the transition blues.

It's at moments such as these that I wonder what prompted me to opt for the youngest of the lot, but my heart tells me that I am cut

out for this, and am ready to make a small change in the lives of both anxious parents and excited children.

The first day arrives, the hustle and bustle begins and with it a three-dimensional nervous energy engulfs all - three dimensions because the parent, the child and of course 'I' the teacher are exactly in the same state of mind!

A million messages are conveyed, a million re-assurances given, as the little children step into a new world - some have tears waiting to spill, and others have anxiety written all over their faces. When I take her little child into my arms, I feel a slight resistance from the mother, a hesitance to part with her bundle of joy.



A re-assuring smile and a few moments later the children are in the classroom, some screaming, some crying, and the braver ones wandering around pulling things and strewing them in the furthest of corners. And all this time, my mind is on the neatly stacked papers, which reads 'I drew this on my first day at school'- an idea that seemed fantastic when we conceptualised it, but seems a distant probability now!

With the help of a few colleagues I manage to assemble the children in the centre of the room. My lesson plan for the day sits in the corner in a neat folder, untouched. I try to sing in the loudest of voices, hoping to calm down the perturbed children who suddenly find themselves in a new place, amidst new faces, in a whole new world that has no resemblance to the familiar world of their homes. The cries get louder, the smiles fewer, and the domino effect sets in. At this point all my lesson plans are forgotten, the crayons set in the trays remain



untouched and all I can see is the pain beneath the tentative smiles in some of the children and the strength behind the watchful eyes in a few, as my young class and I try very hard to hold back our tears.

We do a group cuddle and wipe away the tears and slowly from behind the anxiety a smile surfaces, a small hand reaches out and a bond is formed- a bond that will last forever in my heart and whilst the child will grow up to form new bonds and forge new relationships, we teachers will never forget the tentative hand that reached out to us. At this moment we realise that this is exactly what we were meant to do.

We meet and greet our young parents whose eyes are etched with a mixture of anxiety, trepidation and gratefulness at the same time. Their smiles thank us even as words fail them. They also, have gone through an entire gamut of emotions.

It was certainly not 'just another day at school', it's the start of a bright, promising future for yet another batch of youngsters.

