

S E P T E M B E R  
N E W S L E T T E R

# INVITATIONS FOR LEARNING

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## *"I Have Been Waiting for You"*

Arick came into my preschool program and I greeted him with,

"Arick, I have been waiting for you."

Arick looked at me and asked, "How long would you wait?"

My response was, "Until you got here."

He smiled and said, "I thought so."

Children need to know that you really care about them and they are an essential part of your preschool program.

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The most important goal for preschool programs should not be learning shapes, numbers and the alphabet, not the teaching of manners, not the learning of technology, but something that is crucial for all aspects of learning; a *strong sense of belonging*.

When a child enters your program the message that should be given to all children is, "I have been waiting for you". This message accepts the child that enters your program, who eagerly picks up toys at clean up time as well as the child who doesn't. This message supports the child who uses a "quiet" voice as well as the child who uses a "loud" voice. This message supports the child who uses a kleenex to wipe his/her nose as well as the child who uses your sleeve.

A classroom that supports a feeling of belonging accepts all children and welcomes their differences.

All children are looking at belonging to something. A family, a school, a neighborhood, a community. Without this feeling of belonging all other aspects of learning become more difficult and sometimes impossible to attain.

Creating a feeling of belonging isn't measured by how many toys or materials a preschool program has or the curriculum design or even the qualifications of the staff. A feeling of belonging is created by a "climate" that is established that supports and welcomes . It provides for warmth, respect and dignity. All children deserve this opportunity.

## *Creating a Feeling of "Belonging"*

- *Greet children at the door with, "I have been waiting for you"*
- *Provide a space for children to place their belongings (cubbies, suitcases, baskets, etc.)*
- *Allow children to move immediately to the area of choice*
- *Provide areas where children can be quiet as well as loud*
- *Encourage running, jumping and climbing*
- *Provide spaces for large group, small group and solitary experiences*
- *Allow children to express all feelings (happiness as well as anger)*
- *Avoid asking children to say they are "sorry"*
- *Call children by their names (avoid "honey", "sweetie" etc.)*
- *Allow children to eat snack when they want to*
- *Encourage children to problem solve*
- *Laugh with children not at them*
- *Let children change your activities*
- *Provide real and authentic experiences*
- *Get down to a child's eye level when you are talking to them or when they are talking to you*
- *Support spontaneous adventures*
- *Encourage curiosity and discovery*