

Dear Owen's Future Teacher

I know that you are overworked, under paid, and certainly not appreciated enough. Thank you for taking the time to listen to the concerns of a silly Nana who is tearfully watching her precious first grandson take the important step of going to preschool.

Please give him plenty of time to play. Provide lots of fun, stimulating materials in an organized, friendly classroom (he is the kind of child who puts his markers into the box in rainbow order, right side up!) Help him to be brave and take risks – like telling you when he needs to go potty or that he forgot to help himself to a snack.

Please introduce him to wonderful, exciting stories, and make sure he can see all the pictures! Find some stories that encourage him to join in and become friends with special characters. Find a way to talk about books – enjoying them, reenacting them, and recalling events that he relates to.

Please treat his mistakes (including misbehaviors) as wonderful opportunities to teach him! Gently help him to remember that everyone makes mistakes, they can almost always be fixed or overlooked. Help him to understand the power of making good choices and the importance of saying he's sorry. Of course, your most important job is to keep him, as well as all the other children safe.

Help him to grow into a good friend, who is happy and excited to play with other children. Please take the time to show him what it looks like to be generous, caring and kind; and able to use words to solve those inevitable problems like sharing, and taking turns. Give him lots of opportunities to practice and take the time to notice when he shows those wonderful skills.

Please encourage him to be creative and playful. Help him to draw, build, construct and create throughout his time in your class. Help him to value the products he makes, and appreciate what other children create too.

Please include letters and sounds and numbers in playful ways through the day. He already loves chanting them and naming them, and finding them all around him. Let him enjoy the magic of how letters and numbers help all of us make sense of the world. Show him how important letters and numbers are, and help him develop a desire to use them in real ways that make sense to him.

Please use the power of music, songs and poetry to help him feel part of your school family. Help him to sing and laugh and love the music and movement that we know are so vital to his precious growing brain. Teach him songs that make him laugh, teach him songs that make him jump and twist and stretch, and teach him songs that help him learn!

Please, please let him pretend. Provide materials and time and modeling that encourage him to take on roles and use materials in fun fantasy play. Help him to go beyond the boundaries of time and place realities – let him take a spaceship to the moon, keep a rhinoceros in his pocket, or become a bone digging paleontologist. Sometimes you might make suggestions, but mostly please encourage him to be free to make believe.

Thank you for using the precious limited time in your classroom to interact with Owen and his friends one on one so each child feels special, and in small groups so they can learn to share and cooperate, as well as in a big group so they can learn to listen, take turns, curb their impulsiveness but never their exuberance!

Most of all, please enjoy Owen. Please notice him, smile at him, give him lots of hugs. Thank you for helping him fall in love with school.

Owen's Nana