

Reading suggestions to calm those first-day jitters

By JENNIFER COSTLEY

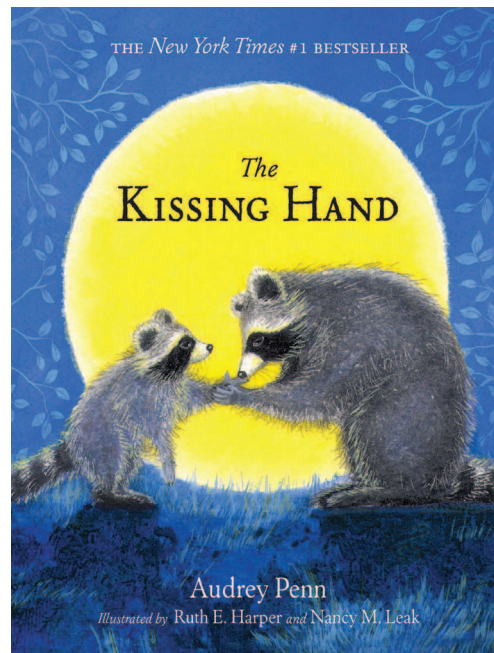
On a recent trip to my hometown of Sherwood, Oregon, I drove past my old elementary school. The playground had changed and there were more outbuildings surrounding the property, but for the most part Hopkins Elementary was still Hopkins Elementary, right down to the giant brick entrance we all spent so much time lining up against.

At age five, school was an exciting new adventure for me. I fondly remember the outfit I wore my first day: yellow culottes, red yarn hair bow, black and white saddle shoes, and cute little fold-over socks with lace trim around the ankle. I was ready – in fact, I'd been counting down the days till school started all summer.

Not every child welcomes change so readily. My niece Natalie, for example, will begin full-day kindergarten this year. Her thoughts on the subject? Home-school please! She has it all figured out. Mom can cover arts and crafts, maybe even reading, but for math, she will need a tutor. Even at the tender age of six she is aware that mom shows some deficiencies in the subject.

Natalie isn't intimidated by the work. She's been reading Bob books for a year now. She can craft like a champ and I would go as far as to say she is the most popular girl in her preschool class. (Okay, so she's the only girl, but who's counting?)

So what is it that makes this usually outgoing girl afraid to start school? Your guess is as good as mine. And probably better than her mother's. (Natalie would need a tutor in psychology as well.) But I do



know she is not alone.

A simple Google search for "first day of school anxiety" will show you just how real the struggle is. I'd love to be qualified to give advice on how to conquer first-day-of-school fears, but since my expertise is in literature and not people, I'll do what I do best – recommend books.

Here's a round up of picture books ideal for talking to your child about first day of school jitters. Good luck!

"School's First Day of School" by Adam Rex. You think you're nervous about the first day of school? Imagine how the school feels! This humorous picture book demonstrates how everyone (or thing) experiences first day jitters.

"It's Your First Day of School, Busy Bus" by Jodi Jensen Shaffer. Is your little one wondering what it is like to ride a school bus? Learn how the bus gets ready each morning as Busy Bus goes through his first

day transporting children to and from school. This would be a great book to pair with a nice round of "Wheels on the Bus."

"Monkey Not Ready for Kindergarten" by Marc Brown. Monkey has a list of fears about kindergarten — fears that are addressed by his parents and big brother as they spend a week preparing Monkey for his first day of class. There are some great strategies introduced in this book such as visiting the library to check out picture books about school and hosting a playdate with kids in Monkey's future class.

"The Kissing Hand" by Audrey Penn. An old favorite, "The Kissing Hand" addresses the separation

anxiety some children feel when leaving Mom and Dad for the first time.

"Lena's Shoes are Nervous: A First-day-of-school Dilemma" by Keith Calabrese. Lena is psyched to start school. Her favorite shoes, however, have reservations. A girl cannot start an important day like the first day of kindergarten without her favorite shoes! Bonus points to the author for not only addressing school jitters but also encouraging children to think creatively to solve their own problems. How does Lena convince her shoes to go to school? Read and find out.

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