

In Sweden, I got paid time off to settle my child at school. Here's why I want US families to have the same right ^[1]

Parents can do inskolning as part of their 480 days of paid leave per child – as an American abroad, this was a foreign concept. But here's what the US could learn

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Source: The Guardian

Format: Article

Publication Date: 16 Apr 2025

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpt

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Lindsay Baker, an American parent of two and teacher living in Sweden, agrees: her child's US daycare felt like "a service provided so that you could go to work ... It's very nice for the kids [in Sweden] to get used to the school at their own pace. Having worked in schools for my whole career, I think that all preschool-age children wherever they live would likely benefit from this model of making a secure connection between home and school."

As Baker points out, the crucial difference is not a matter of simply a "fast" or a "slow" introduction to school. In the US, many Americans privately pay childcare providers directly for a service provided. In Sweden, taxpayers collectively fund a system seen as valuable to society for the secure start it provides to all children, regardless of income or background. Baker notes that best practices in US early childhood education recommend involving parents in some kind of school or home visit at the time of introducing preschool, but that such visits are not typical: "Often preschools who offer [such visits] are the most coveted and consequently expensive ones. Here [in Sweden] every child and parent begins preschool in the same way."

It might feel luxurious – maybe absurd – to think about implementing inskolning or other family-friendly policies in the US, when oligarchs are dismantling federal systems (including hobbling the Department of Education) at a fast clip. Not to mention that the US lacks national curricular standards for preschool education, national paid parental leave or subsidized childcare systems. That leaves families to navigate a patchwork of initiatives that create tremendous local variance even on the state level.

Yet it is perhaps this very decentralized, non-structured structure of the US childcare and preschool space that makes implementing inskolning an experiment that could be adopted by any school that wished to. Americans don't need yet another story lauding a seemingly utopian thing the Nordic countries are doing; we need small, implementable strategies to move our nation towards trust, respect for others and respect for the enormous labor involved in raising emotionally and physically healthy children.

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/25/04/sweden-i-got-paid-time-settle-my-child-school-here%E2%80%99s-why-i-want-us> ^[2]

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