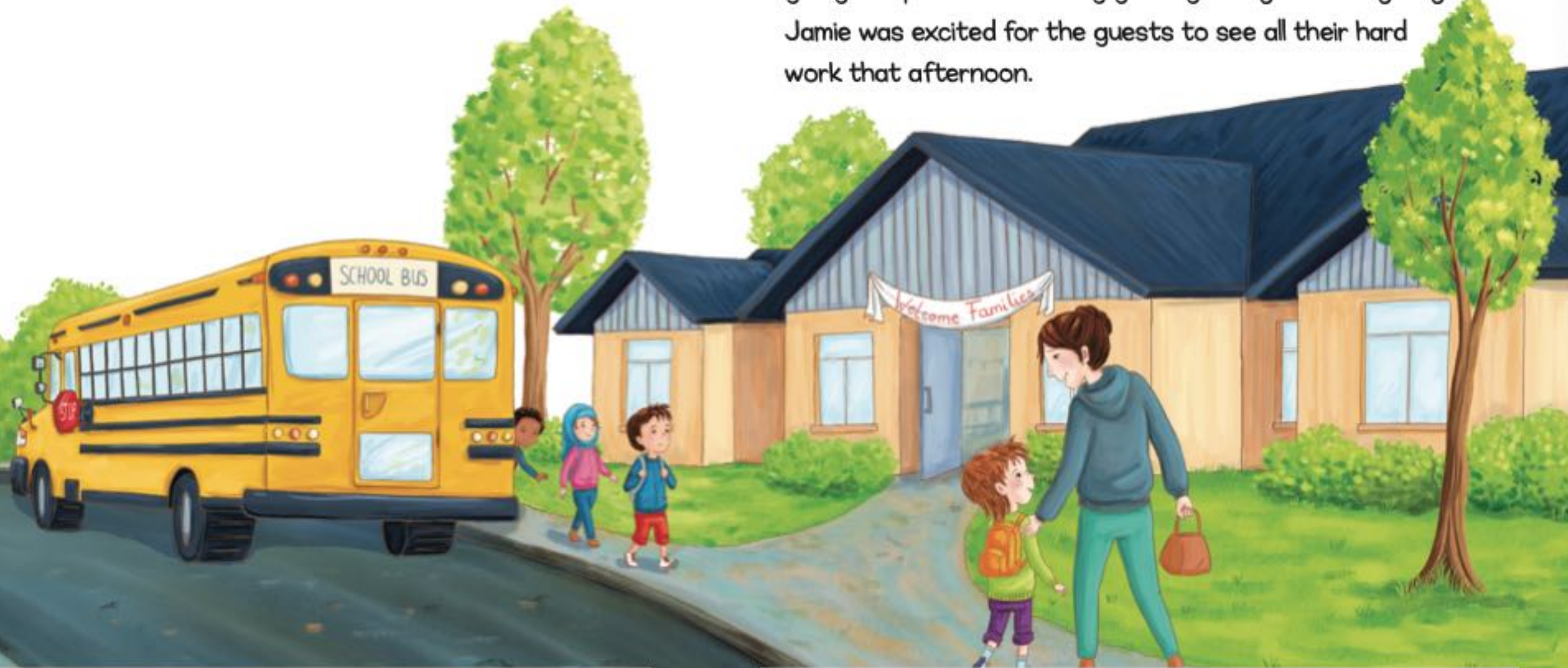
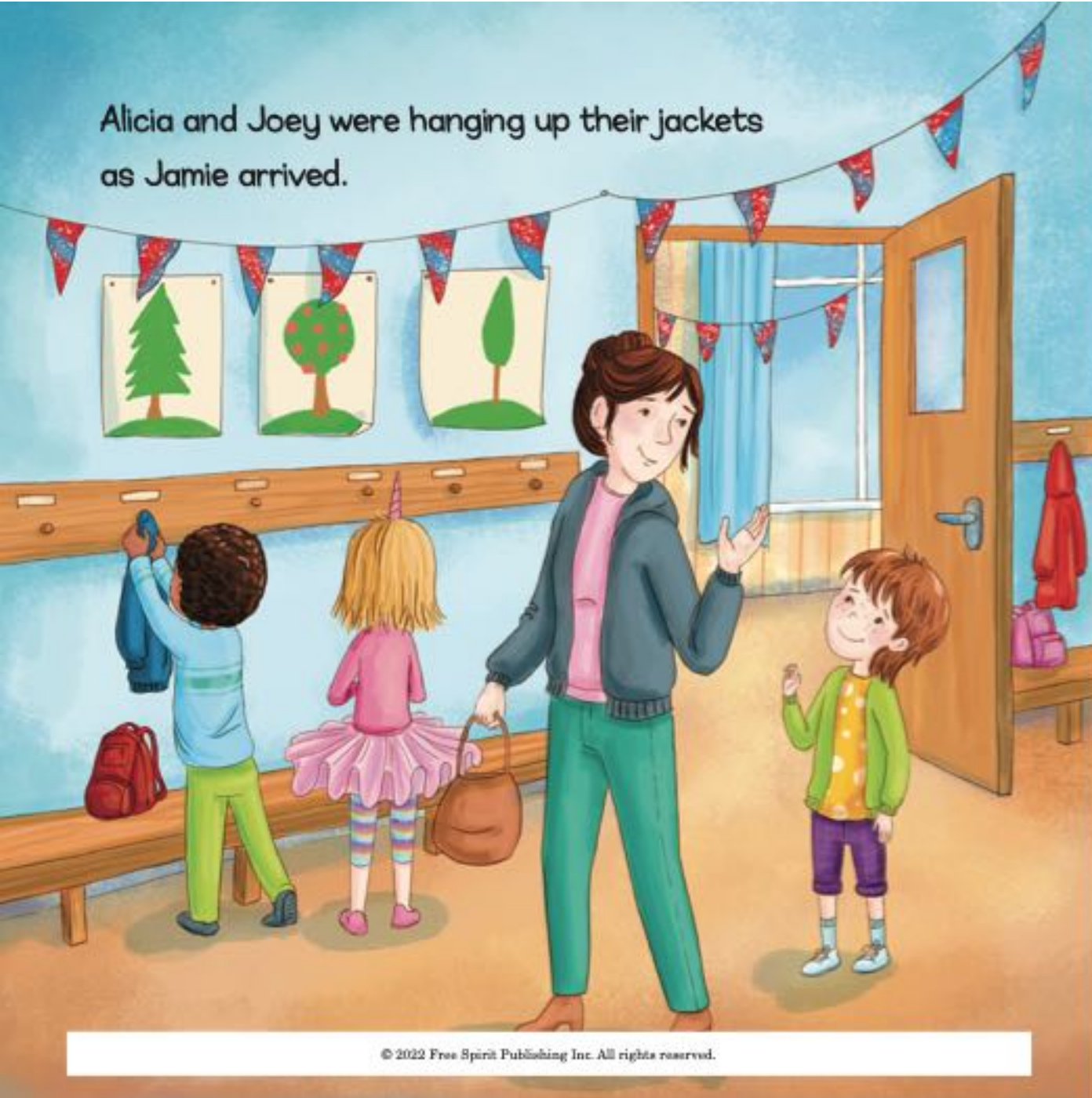


Jamie couldn't wait to go to school. The class was going to spend the morning getting ready for Family Day. Jamie was excited for the guests to see all their hard work that afternoon.



Alicia and Joey were hanging up their jackets
as Jamie arrived.



"I like your unicorn, Alicia," said Jamie.

"My mom made me wear it." Alicia frowned. "I don't like unicorns. I'm afraid their horns are going to poke me."

"Do you want to wear my sweater to cover it up?" asked Jamie.

"Thanks, Jamie," Alicia said, and put on the sweater.

Tips for Parents, Teachers, and Caregivers

When kids feel heard and respected by the adults in their lives, they also feel confident, safe, and self-assured. Having a few trusted adults to talk to is vital for children's development from early childhood through adolescence.

Also important for children is knowing how to speak up about what they need and what they do and don't like—especially when those things differ from what adults prefer or expect. Being able to express likes, feelings, and needs, and knowing they will be taken seriously, is a crucial skill for building relationships and a strong sense of self.

Here are some strategies and activities you can try in your home or classroom to help children feel heard and respected.

Encourage Sharing Likes and Dislikes

Invite children to share their likes and dislikes as a regular part of circle time or classroom discussions, and model how to do this. For example:

- At snack time: "I am going to say 'no thank you' to the graham crackers because I don't like them. What is your favorite snack? What is a snack you don't like?"
- At playtime: "I don't like when someone uses something I was going to use. I feel angry. When someone takes your toy, you can say, 'I don't like when you take my toy. Let's take turns playing with it.'"
- During class: "I raise my hand when I need something. If it's really urgent and I can't wait, I walk over to my teacher and say what I need."

Ask Children's Opinions

Finding out why children like or don't like something and asking about their interests shows children that you care about what they think. There are many ways to do this:

- Ask about a popular show or book. What do children like or dislike about the characters or story?
- When a child shares a preference, hold onto that information and use it later so the child knows you care enough to remember. For example, "I put a strawberry on your plate because I remembered that you like strawberries," or "I remembered that you didn't like the swings at that playground, so we're going to a different one today."
- When a child reacts negatively to an activity, item, or experience, ask questions so you can understand the reaction. Keep that information in mind for future interactions.

Let Children Make Decisions

Try to give children a couple choices whenever possible. Some children may not care what dishes they eat off of or what they wear, while others will care deeply. Involving children in making these decisions helps them know that they are included and that their opinions matter. Here are some ideas for incorporating choice:

- Involve children in planning meals or snacks.
- Empower children to choose a group or family activity.
- When assigning classroom responsibilities, let children volunteer for the job they prefer.

