

What do elementary school age children worry about?

Failing a test, new teachers, more homework and different classmates are all things elementary school students think about as they work their way toward the doors of their school buildings.

Sue Porembski, a counselor at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Elementary in Essex and Our Lady of Hope-St. Luke School, Dundalk, said her third-grade son is worried about getting “real grades” this year. She said many children have this fear, and they worry if their teacher will “be nice or fun.”

“Kids worry about who will be in their class and if their friends will be in the class with them,” said Ms. Porembski. “There are some kids who have some issues with other kids and are afraid they will be in the same class.”

Ms. Porembski sees more children afraid to go to school and not wanting to leave their parents because of what is happening in the world. Sometimes they see things on television and become anxious about fires, earthquakes or severe storms because they feel if it can happen in a movie it can happen to them, she said. Another big concern for young children is their home life; many children are going back and forth to different households.

“They worry about who is going to pick them up today,” said Ms. Porembski who helps the children make a schedule of who picks them up on what day. “You have extended families and kids may have issues with step-siblings that they don’t get along with.”

To calm a child’s worries, Ms. Porembski said it is important to talk with them about what is bothering them. Some students don’t feel comfortable talking to their parents so that’s where she comes in to help. She said sometimes parents accidentally put their children in the middle of their disagreements, and she is there to be a mediator and take the pressure off the child.

“It (worrying) causes a lot of stress, it can cause headaches, stomachaches or the feeling they are going to throw up,” said Ms. Porembski.

She recommends parents not walk their children into their classroom because it just prolongs the goodbye and it takes the child longer to calm down. Ms. Porembski suggests parents speak to the child’s teacher to see if they can give the child a

“special” job to do in the morning. This will give them a reason to want to go to school and leave mom or dad for the day.