

Assist Your Child's Adjustment to School

Children who have watched older siblings and playmates begin school are likely to greet this new experience with excitement and joy. However, it is perfectly normal for children to feel uncertain when attending school for the first time. Here are some ways you can help prepare your child for kindergarten.

Read to your child, preferably daily. Select a variety of books of different lengths and different subjects. Relate the pictures to the story. This enhances language development and stimulates children's curiosity and imagination.

Talk with your child about daily activities – what he/she is doing; what you are doing. Strong oral communication skills will become a solid foundation for later academic achievement.

Encourage other adults in your child's life to emphasize the positive aspects of school: new friends, a caring teacher, and opportunities to learn, grow, and have fun. Find out the teacher's name and use it when discussing school activities.

Recognize it is sometimes just as difficult for you to face the separation from your child as it is for your child to face separation from you. Take comfort from understanding that these feelings are normal and they will pass as you and your child grow accustomed to a new routine.

Discover the route your child will travel to and from school and obtain information on walking distances. Several dress rehearsals will build your child's confidence and help establish safety conscious routines. Make sure the child walking to school is accompanied by an adult. Children on buses are met on arrival at, and departure from, school by the teacher or school supervisor. Children must be met by an adult when they are dropped off following their day at school. Visit the school. Use the playground and apparatus.

Develop opportunities for your child's exposure to music, rhythm and rhyming activities which help the development of reading skills.

Accustom your child to consistent routines such as getting up at a certain time, getting dressed, and so forth.

Help your child to develop fine motor skills. Fine motor skills are those skills involving the small muscles of the body and include such activities as drawing, cutting and gluing, as well as handling Playdough, building towers of blocks, stringing large beads on a string, catching a beanbag or large ball.

Discuss personal safety, busing, and strangers. Be sure children know their name, address, and telephone number.

Review the calendar with your child. Circle the day on which your child starts school. You may also wish to mark gym and library days, class trips, birthdays, and special occasions.

Label all your child's belongings in an inconspicuous place: indoor and outdoor clothing, shoes, boots, snack container, drink container, and backpack.

Prepare your child for successful experiences. Provide opportunities at home with situations that challenge your child to manage alone when toileting, dressing, tidying, and eating. Such independence helps children feel good about themselves. It helps them realize they can solve their own problems and be supported while doing so.

Find the time and the patience to let your child work through these challenges:

- choosing clothes to wear
- putting both arms into a jacket without assistance
- zipping a coat independently
- putting shoes on the correct feet
- fastening shoes and boots
- turning on water so it runs slowly
- pouring sand or liquids into containers
- soaking up liquids with a sponge
- using only a little glue
- cutting with children's scissors
- defining which space or materials belong to whom
- finding and stating answers to questions in her or his own way.
- holding a pencil or crayon

Provide opportunities for your child to play with other children.

Welcome to Kindergarten Information for Parents



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

www.ocdsb.ca

Information for Parents

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's kindergarten program provides children with organized educational activities appropriate for young learners, taking into account their physical, intellectual, social, and emotional needs. The young child's natural world is one of curiosity, exploration, and imagination; the richest gains are likely to occur when these capacities are promoted in the classroom through play. Children investigate and develop an understanding of their world through play. Play provides a context in which the teacher observes the children's handling of materials and social situations, assesses their stages of development, and encourages experiences to further growth.

- **Social/Emotional Development**

In order to learn effectively, children must feel good about themselves, about school, and about others. A prime goal of kindergarten is to foster social and emotional growth through play. Children practice socially appropriate behaviour and develop self-help skills to assist them in working with new people and situations.

- **Physical Development**

In indoor and outdoor play, children use balls, hoops, water, sand, and climbers, to strengthen large muscles. Fine motor skills enhance small muscle growth and coordination and include such activities as manipulating stacking toys, picking up small objects with the thumb and forefinger, tracing over simple shapes and designs.

- **Intellectual Development**

Kindergarten encourages children to develop critical thinking such as observation, compare/contrast, categorization and sequencing skills, to question, to experiment, and to develop creativity through language, music, the arts and drama. As individuals and in groups, children explore topics of natural interest to young learners.

- **Language and Communication Development**

Activities in kindergarten enhance speaking and listening habits in young children. Games, music, stories, and discussions build necessary oral language skills such as vocabulary, concepts and grammar which are required for later instruction in reading, writing, and oral communication.

Kindergarten provides a learning program developed from guidelines provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Great Beginnings Start with Caring Staff

Kindergarten teachers have a genuine love for small children, show a lot of patience, kindness and empathy toward the needs of the young child. They realize the initial years in the kindergarten environment provide an extension of the home and provide a warm, caring environment for your child in order that he/she may develop in the above

areas. At the same time your kindergarten teacher will help your child to develop a sense of responsibility and beginning independence.

Your Child's Introduction to Kindergarten

Once your child is registered in kindergarten, you will be notified regarding school entry procedures. You and your child will have an opportunity to meet your child's teacher alone, prior to regular attendance of all children. This meeting will occur during the first two weeks of school. Its primary focus is to share information about your child: preschool and health history including allergies, along with developmental milestones and pertinent details relating to your child's history in your family. At this time, there is no attempt by the teacher to assess your child's academic readiness for formal learning. Rather, the emphasis is on creating a relaxed, joyful transition from home to school.

In order to foster a climate of warmth and comfort, the entry of kindergarten children is staggered over several days. This means each child enters school for the first time as one of a smaller group, whose needs can better be met by the teacher during the first busy days of school.

City of Ottawa Public Health Branch

Although the City of Ottawa Public Health Branch gathers information about your child's immunization record, it no longer provides visual and auditory screening. Parents who notice their child having difficulty seeing or hearing should contact their family doctor. Parents who are concerned about their child's communication development before the age of five years, should contact the Parent-Child Information Line of the First Words Program at 724-4179. If your child has lived outside Canada or in a First Nations community in Canada for more than three months in the past five years, contact the City of Ottawa Immunization Line at 724-4108 for information.

French Instruction

Children in junior and senior kindergarten are introduced daily to French through songs, rhymes, movement, stories, and a variety of other activities. The Core French Second Language Program is delivered each school day. Early French Immersion is an option in senior kindergarten with instruction given in French. Further information is available from schools offering these programs. Please call the Program Division at 596-8292, for a list of these schools.

Kindergarten Class Time

The time children spend in a kindergarten class includes:

- **Play Time at Learning Centres**

Children engage in small group and individual play at learning centres, some permanent and others short term. Learning centres may include water, sand, crafts, blocks and other building tools, nature, puppets, dress-up, library, puzzles, carpentry, climbing and computers. Much of the subject content is pursued through activities at these centres. Teachers modify

the focus at various centres to accommodate changing needs and interests. Many classrooms are equipped with computers that have software programs to reinforce readiness skills. During play time, the teacher interacts with the child, or small groups of children.

- **Circle Time**

Children assemble in a large group for storytelling, songs, games, finger plays, rhythm band, creative movement, math, science activities, and discussion. The focal point of this part of the day is literacy development: the growth of oral expression, the fostering of interest in books and reading, and related language activities.

- **Indoor/Outdoor Play**

Most frequently, students play together in the classroom, in the gym, or outside. Enjoyment of energetic activity allows students to use large and small muscles to improve coordination and to build self-confidence.

Kindergarten Parents are Important

- **Partnership**

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board believes in a strong partnership between school and home. An active role in your child's education is vital.

- **Volunteering**

Children, teachers, and parents gain from active parent volunteer programs. Kindergarten teachers often welcome parents, older students, teachers-in-training, early childhood educators, senior citizens, specialists such as story-tellers or musicians, and other members of the community. Volunteers enrich the kindergarten program in many ways. Parents gain valuable insights by observing their children in the preschool setting; children feel special pride and pleasure by having parents with them.

- **School Councils**

All our elementary and secondary schools have a school council. Parents and guardians are encouraged to take an active part in this advisory group.

To volunteer or find out more about your school council, speak to the principal, or the kindergarten teacher.

For Further Information

Talk to the staff at your neighbourhood school. These caring individuals are able to provide you with support, guidance, and information on kindergarten. Information sessions are held in individual schools. These meetings highlight program possibilities, children's needs and preparation for school, as well as parent concerns.