



OAFCCD *Parents As Partners*

Fact Sheet #1

Getting Your Special Needs Child Ready for Kindergarten

Starting school is a big step in every child's life. Parents are often anxious about sending their child to school for the first time. This milestone can be especially stressful for the parents of a special needs child. You may be feeling scared, sad, excited or even relieved!

There are a number of things you can do to make sure the transition to school is smooth. Here are a few tips:

1. Decide which school board your child will be attending. You may want to find out more about the philosophies of each board if you are undecided. Prepare a list of questions that you would like to ask.
2. Register your child for kindergarten at your home school. Check with your school board as to which is your home school. You will need to bring your proof of residency (realty tax bill), your child's birth certificate and proof of vaccinations. For the Catholic board, you may also need a Catholic baptismal certificate.
3. Make an appointment to speak to the Principal and/or Vice-Principal at your child's school.
4. Prepare your list of questions for the school. Remember to include things like child's diagnosis, accessibility, communication skills, safety, equipment use and storage etc. (See the OAFCCD Parents As Partners Website for information on creating an "All About Me" booklet.)
5. Prepare your "All About Me" document, and take this along with you to your meeting. Don't forget a picture of your child! You may leave a copy of this document for the school or share it at the meeting with the Principal. You can also create a smaller, less detailed, "All About Me" flyer that you can give to all professionals that work with your child.
6. If you are receiving services from the Preschool Speech and Language Program or other community services, talk to your staff contact about transition planning. They will have information about the transition to school and will be able to help you. They may be able to attend meetings with school staff with you.
7. Attend Kindergarten Registration or Information evening as offered by local school boards, usually in January, February or March.
8. Create an information Binder about your child. (See the OAFCCD Parents as Partners Website for information on creating a Parent Binder.) Add information to your resource binder including; assessments, reports, information, helpful articles, handouts, etc.
9. Attend a kindergarten readiness workshop, like "Kindergarten is Kool", as offered by the Ontario Early Years Centres.

10. Contact agencies, associations or support groups that may be able to help ease your child's transition process. (See the "OAFCCD Parents as Partners" Website Community Resource for more information.)
11. Remember – **you** are the expert on your child. Share successful strategies and interventions, and be sure to offer insights into your child's behaviour, likes, dislikes, talents and abilities. You know what he is good at and when he will need help.
12. Attend other workshops in the OAFCCD Parents as Partners series. (See OAFCCD Parent As Partners Website for dates of workshops near you.)
13. The Ministry of Education has a document called, **Planning Entry to School, A Resource Guide**, that is available on their Website or on the OAFCCD *Parents As Partners* Website. This guide includes tips on planning for students with special needs.