



OAFCCD *Parents As Partners*

Fact Sheet # 3

The Kindergarten Curriculum and Your Special Needs Child

The Ontario Curriculum for Junior and Senior Kindergarten is a continuum of skills that are developed over a two-year period. Copies of the curriculum are available online at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

There is also a summary of the Kindergarten program and expectations available on the OAFCCD Parents As Partners Website. The key areas of the Kindergarten Program are:

- Language – talking, learning to read and write
- Mathematics – number recognition, counting, sorting
- Science and Technology – nature, telling time, water and sand activities
- Personal and Social Development – safety rules, gym, sharing and helping others
- The Arts – painting, drawing, cutting and gluing

The provincial model for kindergarten in all school boards is inclusive, which means that your special needs child will be integrated into the regular classroom. Your child may receive in-class assistance for specialized equipment or for health or safety-related needs.

1. There are many things that you can do at home to get your child ready for kindergarten:

- The most important preschool skill is language: talk, listen, sing and read with your child
- Take your child places and talk about what you see. Visit the museum, library and zoo.
- Point out sounds around you. Imitate the sound of windshield wipers, animals, appliances and musical instruments. This builds awareness of sounds and prepares children to make the link between sounds and letters.
- Read to your child every day!
- Encourage your child to read or look at books just before bedtime, or during a quiet time. Handling books, turning pages and looking at pictures all help towards learning to read.
- Point out familiar street and store signs (“STOP”, “Loblaws”, “MacDonald’s”). Often the first words that children “read” are these common signs.
- Encourage your child to draw and write. Have markers and crayons available and spend time regularly drawing and writing. Write your child’s name on their pictures and hang them in the house.
- Help your child put toys away before getting out new ones. Put toys away neatly and stack them in sets, or put back in the box. This helps build organizational skills and encourages neatness, etc.
- Encourage your child to finish chores before playing or taking breaks. This helps her learn to follow through with tasks and to “work first and play later.”

2. The more your child knows about kindergarten, the less scary it will seem. Find out when the Kindergarten Information session will be held (usually it is in April or May) where you and your child can meet her teacher and classmates, and get a feel for the classroom before school actually starts.

3. Prior to the beginning of school, call to see if you and your child can visit the classroom. Introduce your child to the teacher. Let the child become familiar with classroom activity areas and the playground while you get to know the teacher. Good communication is essential; ask questions.

4. In Kindergarten your child will be getting to know new adults and making friends with other children. Perhaps your child already has had opportunities to develop social skills at a childcare program, or through enrollment in a summer program, such as swimming or crafts. Interaction during these sessions will foster sharing, learning a routine, and following rules.

5. Talk about kindergarten. Prepare your child for this new adventure:

- If your child is already going to preschool, talk about what will be the same and what will be different
- Look at maps or pictures of the new school (the principal, teacher, custodian). For children who have difficulty with change you could make a book about the new school using photographs you take on your visit to school.
- Act out or role play games about making new friends, asking for help. "Let's play school"...highlighting what might be different (taking the bus, having lunch at school, doing seat work, hearing announcements over the intercom, gym and art class, recess, calling teachers by Miss/Mrs./Ms./Mr.)
- Take field trips to the new school. Have a picnic in the schoolyard during the summer break.

6. Read books that are about starting kindergarten. Here are a few:

- ***David Goes to School*** by David Shannon (Scholastic). For ages 3 to 7. A funny book about the trials of an active child that just can't seem to follow the rules.
- ***Off to School, Baby Duck*** by Amy Hest (Candlewick Press). For ages 3 to 5. The plot involves Baby Duck's first day of school. A simple and comforting story.
- ***Vera's First Day of School*** by Vera Rosenberry (Henry Holt). For ages 3 to 6. The story of a little girl who has waited for years to be old enough for school like her big sisters. When the day finally comes, her excitement quickly turns to fear. There is, of course, a happy ending.
- ***Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come*** by Nancy Carlson (Viking). For ages 3 to 6. Similar to the book above, this is the story of Henry, which is true to life. On the first day of school, Henry decides he wants to go home.
- ***Day Care Days*** by Mary Brigid Barrett (Little, Brown). For ages 3 to 7. This book is in lighthearted rhyme and depicts a weekday in the life of a family as seen through the eyes of a young boy. Families with young children will recognize themselves in the morning rush and the sometimes-difficult task of saying goodbye at the day-care center.
- ***My School is Worse Than Yours*** by Tom Toles (Puffin). For ages 7 to 10. This book is a funny fantasy about a school where the teacher is a robot.
- ***Welcome to School, Helping Friends with Autism*** by Melanie Barrette (Pyramid). For children with Autism or communication disabilities who use picture systems. This book uses photographs and drawings to help other children understand how the child communicates and how they can do the same classroom activities, with some minor changes.