



Getting Ready To Learn

*A Guide to
Preparing Your
Child for the
Kindergarten
Years*





Upper Grand District School Board

Developed by:

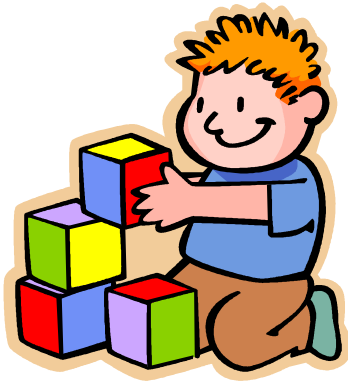
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Stepping into Kindergarten

Starting school is a big step for your child and your whole family. It's a wonderful and exciting experience, but it also means a big change for you and your child.

We want to help you get off to a good start by giving you and your child information that will help you prepare. This booklet gives you:

- An overview of the kindergarten program.
- Suggestions for ways to help your child get ready for school expectations and routines.
- Information about how children learn and develop through play.
- Activities to help make the most of those important learning opportunities at home.



It's time for school!

The Program

In the Upper Grand District School Board, your child has the option of a regular English program or French Immersion. French Immersion is an optional program designed to provide students with opportunities to acquire a high level of proficiency in French and at the same time maintain and develop English skills. French will be the language of instruction in the classroom and students are expected to attempt to use French wherever possible. French language is introduced in a gradual manner in Junior and Senior Kindergarten. Students are able to enter the program in either Junior or Senior Kindergarten.

Admission to French Immersion

The French Immersion program begins in Junior Kindergarten and is available to any student in the Upper Grand District School Board. Admission to the program in subsequent grades is available only to students who have a comparable proficiency in the French language.

Questions

Is your child a good candidate for the French Immersion program? Consider the following:

- Does your child have good oral and auditory skills?
- Does your child have a good grasp of his/her first language?
- Is your child a risk taker with language?
- Does your child follow instructions well?

Registration

French Immersion Kindergarten registration coincides with the regular English Kindergarten registration. Parents interested in enrolling their child in the Immersion program should contact their neighbourhood school. Dates for Kindergarten registration and Immersion Information Nights will be publicized in local newspapers and school newsletters well in advance.

Learning and Growing in the “Kinder-garden”

The word Kindergarten comes from German and literally means “children’s garden.” It is a place where your child will grow and learn. You can expect your child’s kindergarten class:

- To be a stimulating learning environment.
- To be alive with activity centres, artwork, toys, learning spaces, creative materials, books, letters and words, dress-up clothes, art supplies, calendars, child-size furniture, blocks, puzzles, games, paper, pencils, erasers and much more.
- To have computers, plants, learning centres, sand and water tables.
- To have a variety of learning activities.

What is Kindergarten?

- Kindergarten is a two year program that includes Junior (year 1) and Senior (year 2) Kindergarten.
- A child is eligible to be enrolled in Kindergarten if they turn four on or before December 31st of the current year.

The Upper Grand District School Board believes that “blended classes” (JK/SK combined) will offer many advantages to our students. Research demonstrates that advantages of mixing ages far outweigh the disadvantages.

- Students will have the same teacher for a two year period wherever possible. At the beginning of the school year, only a portion of the class will be new to the school. This fosters a “family like” atmosphere and less anxiety at the start of school. Routines in September are established more quickly because many in the group know what to do from the year before. Parents also benefit since there is greater opportunity to get to know the teacher and program.
- Teachers will have greater ability to structure the student program around the learning needs of students, rather than according to age.
- Students will benefit socially by learning with younger and older children. Lifelong skills such as flexibility, patience and leadership are developed throughout each week as part of the program.
- Mixing ages helps children learn. As older students help younger students they increase their self-confidence and practise their skills.

What should I expect?

- Younger students develop more sophisticated language skills and imaginative play as they imitate their older classmates.

In Kindergarten:

- Talk is the basis for literacy. The kindergarten program is rich in language activities. Children are encouraged to talk about their experiences, listen, ask questions and share ideas.
- Teachers combine subject areas to create learning opportunities that resemble real life – for example, playing store as a way of learning letters, numbers and social skills.
- There are times when children are expected to sit quietly and listen – but most of the time, kindergarten classes are filled with sound and activity.

Every day, the teacher will spend time:

- With the class as a whole group.
- With students in small groups and one-on-one.
- Reading stories.
- Singing songs.
- Teaching literacy and numeracy skills.

The children will:

- Work on their own and in groups.
- Learn through play.
- Participate in indoor and outdoor physical activity.

In the average kindergarten class:

- Each child is slightly different in how he develops as he did when he learned to sit up, crawl, walk and talk.
- Children come from various racial and cultural backgrounds.
- Children may speak different languages.
- Children have different learning styles.

These differences are respected and celebrated. The kindergarten teacher designs a program with each child's unique learning needs in mind.



First Steps – Preparing for Kindergarten

How ready is my child for school? That's a question many parents ask. Generally, any child who is excited and enthusiastic about learning is well-equipped to do well in Kindergarten.

Think about how much your child has learned already. Before ever starting school, your child has learned some of the most important lessons of life.

- She knows the difference between herself and others, between family and strangers.
- He grasps the connection between cause and effect.
- She has a developing sense of time - past, present and future.
- He understands and can express spatial relationships - up from down, in from out, front from back.
- She can use the grammar of her language and has a large vocabulary of words.

These are tremendous achievements, and you were the teacher who helped your child accomplish them.

Your child will build on these skills during the early years of school. However, there are additional skills and knowledge you can help your child learn during the upcoming months that will ease the transition from home to school. They are listed at the back of the booklet in the form of a game you and your child can play. As your child takes each step in the game, provide a small reward – a stamp or sticker to indicate that step has been mastered and perhaps a small prize at the end.

Dress for Kindergarten Success

When you're shopping for school clothes for your child, here are some tips in choosing the best wardrobe for "power learning".

- In the course of an average kindergarten class, your child will sit on the floor, jump, run, walk, bounce, stretch, crouch, bend and sit in a chair. Choose clothes and footwear that will be comfortable during all of these activities.
- Choose clothes, jackets, shoes and boots that are easy for your child to put on, take off and fasten by himself. Spend time practising with him.
- Accidents happen! Be sure to send your child to school with a full change of clothing in case the need should arise.

- Kindergarten children learn best when they are exploring, discovering, experimenting – in other words, getting messy. Choose clothes that are durable and easy to clean.
- Outdoor play is an important part of the kindergarten program. Your child needs outdoor clothing for all types of weather.

Sleep

Sleep, like healthy eating and exercise, is important to a child's health and well-being.

- Both the amount and quality of sleep your child gets will influence her learning.
- Sleep is important for healthy growth. A well-rested child does better at school, in the classroom, with friends and in dealing with daily routines.
- They have more energy for play, a better appetite and feel better about themselves.

Breakfast, Snacks and Lunch

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Prepare your child for the day by providing a well-balanced meal before she leaves for school. Healthy snacks and lunches are an important part of the kindergarten health and nutrition program.

- At school, children begin to learn about the value of certain foods for their growth, strength and general well being.
- Canada's Food Guide discourages foods with high sugar, salt or fat content.
- It is suggested that children bring a light, nutritious snack. Fruits and vegetables or crackers and cheese would be considered a great snack.
- Litterless lunches and snacks help children understand about caring for our environment.

Making the First Day Great

Do you remember your first day of school? Were you excited? Frightened? Sad? Your childhood memories about starting school and the feelings those memories bring back will influence how you feel about your child starting school.

You may have mixed feelings about your child starting school:

- You may be feeling excitement for your child on one hand and a sense of loss on the other.

- You may be worried about how your child will cope with new routines.
- Your attitude toward the start of school can help set a positive tone. If you feel anxious or worried, try not to pass those feelings along to your child.

Your child may also have some mixed feelings:

- She may feel worried that her teacher won't know her name.
- He may feel that he won't know the children in the class.
- But, most likely he also views the start of school and his new independence as an adventure and a challenge, especially if he feels prepared and knows what to expect.

The Upper Grand District School Board's Staggered Entry Process:

- Is designed to make the transition from home to school easier.
- Is a special timetable at the beginning of the school year.
- Is organized so your child will come to school with only part of their class.
- Allows your child to interact with peers in a smaller group before he or she must interact with a larger, more formal group.
- Is designed to allow children to begin to learn routines.
- Allows the kindergarten teacher to get to know your child and his individual skills, needs and interests.

Here are some ways you can help your child have a good experience during the first few days of school.

Before the first day and in the weeks leading up to school:

- Practise walking to school or to the bus stop often, so it begins to feel like a familiar routine.
- Attend the bus orientation and go over the bus safety rules a few times, if your child will be riding the bus.

A few days before school starts:

- Begin getting your child and yourself used to the bedtime and wake-up schedule that will be required during school.
- Teach your child to independently unpack her snacks, lunch bag and to open containers by herself.
- Have your child practise packing and unpacking his backpack - provide a backpack that will hold a lunch kit, library books, change of clothes, schoolwork and crafts.
- Ensure that your child knows how to tell adults and other students about any allergies (i.e. peanuts) or food restrictions she may have.

The day before:

- Let your child pick out what she is going to wear on the first day of school.
- Let her choose a favourite outfit from clothes that are already “broken-in” and comfortable.
- Try to get your child – and yourself – off to bed a bit early, so you are both well rested in the morning.

The first day:

- Get yourself and your child up early enough to eat a calm, unhurried breakfast.
- Keep things as normal as possible – if your child normally has cereal for breakfast, make him cereal this morning.
- ***When you say good-bye to your child on the first day, make it quick, light and reassuring.*** She will be reassured by a warm hug and a reminder that you – or her usual caregiver – will be picking her up or waiting at home after school is finished. ***Try not to communicate your feelings of anxiety and separation.***

Many parents feel a temporary sense of loss when their children go off to school. If you are feeling that way, plan a special activity for yourself that you can look forward to during the first days of school.



Exploration is the way: How kindergarten children learn

Kindergarten classes have learning activities:

- Teachers do direct teaching with the whole class - such as identifying letters of the alphabet and their sounds, understanding numbers and science.
- Together, the class looks at the calendar every day as a way of learning about concepts such as days of the week, seasons, weather and special occasions.
- Students spend time putting pencil to paper - printing letters, words and numbers.

Children learn best when they are:

- Experimenting, doing things, taking on different roles, imagining and pretending – these are all important learning techniques.
- Discovering through play. This is also an important part of the kindergarten program.

When children are playing in the kindergarten class, they are not taking a break from learning. Through their play-like activities, children are learning important academic skills such as:

- Reading, writing, math and science.
- Problem-solving and creative thinking.
- Learning to get along with others.

At this stage, play is an important way of learning for your child. As he plays, he learns about the world and how it works, about other people and about himself.

Curriculum Markers and Expectations

The Upper Grand District School Board has developed a Kindergarten program based on Ministry of Education expectations. It includes Year One markers (checkpoints) and Year Two expectations. Our curriculum is based on the knowledge and understanding that children develop at different rates and in different ways. These markers and expectations have been developed for each subject area and are available from your child's teacher or Principal.



How and what will my child learn?

Step by Step: Measure Your Child's Progress in Kindergarten

The Kindergarten teacher will continuously assess your child's progress and communicate with you informally through phone calls, notes, drop-in visits, etc. In the first year of Kindergarten, your child will receive one formal report card. In the second year of Kindergarten, your child will receive two formal report cards.

How does the teacher assess how well your child is learning and meeting the provincial kindergarten expectations?

- The most important method is through observation - watching and talking with your child. Every day, for example, your teacher will observe students' language development, and she will assess what each child's responses tell her about that child's knowledge of language.
- Your child's teacher will also use many other strategies to assess your child's learning – such as small tasks and assignments. Each strategy gives the teacher another part of the picture about how and what your child is learning.

What does the teacher measure?

Young children go through many stages as they grow and learn. One of the things your child's teacher will be considering as he does his assessment is your child's stage of development. That is important information to help him plan a learning program suited to your child's needs.

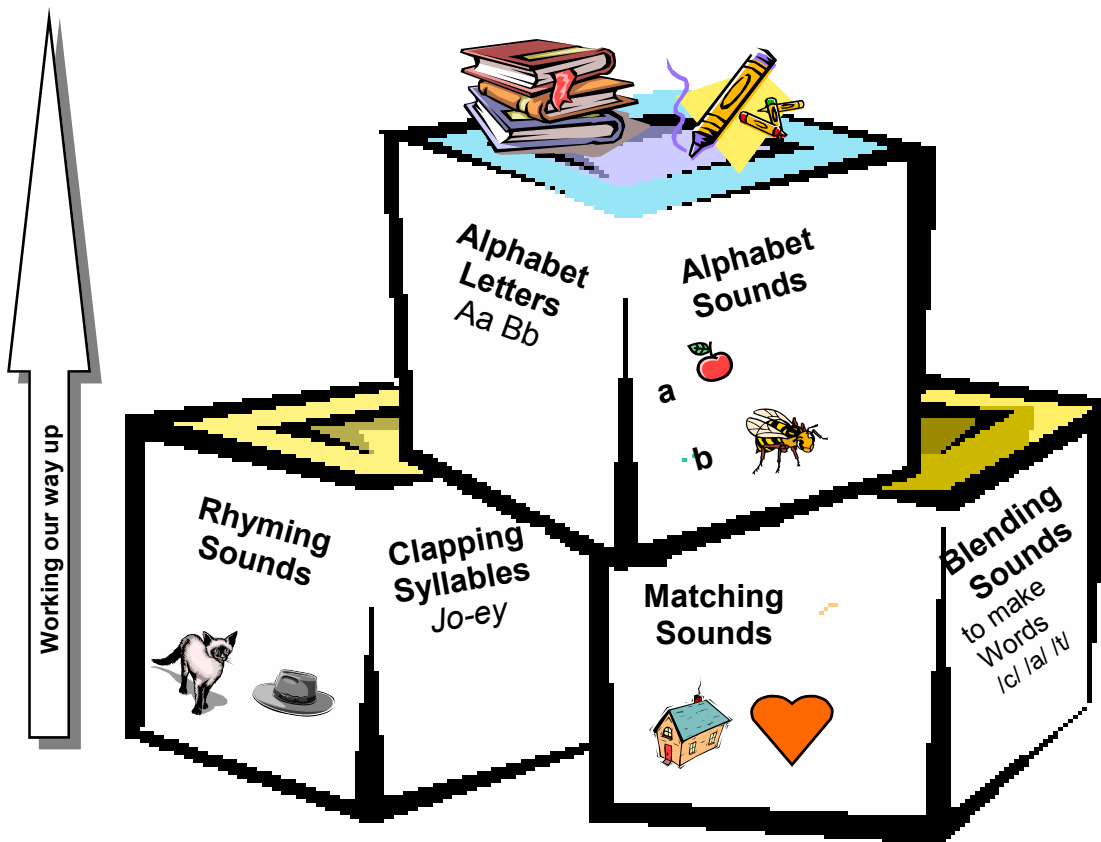
Each child develops in his own way. Some areas develop more quickly than others. Here are some things we know about kindergarten children:

- Children see the world differently than adults. Teachers need to find out each child's level of mental maturity and make sure the learning program meets the students at their level.
- Since children's thinking at this age is closely tied to concrete objects and experiences, they learn best by doing. Telling is not teaching. Teachers help kindergarten children to learn from their own personal experiences.
- Since children make sense of their world through make-believe and play, some of their learning needs to resemble play.
- Since children develop mentally through a series of stages, they need time to learn and grow. It is not a race - rate of development is different for each child.
- Since children learn from their direct experience in the here and now, the most important goal of Kindergarten is to nurture their development. We place most emphasis on experiences that reward curiosity, thought, and imagination.

Literacy development begins long before your child enters Kindergarten. Your child will benefit greatly from:

- Being read to regularly.
- Developing a love of books and reading.
- Talking with you about experiences, things and events.
- Being encouraged to speak in full sentences. You can model speaking in full sentences for your child.
- Reciting nursery rhymes and making up their own.

The Building Blocks to a Strong Foundation of Reading and Writing Success



Supporting Your Child's Learning

Talking about the events of the day

Use the first day of school to start some routines that will help make sure the whole school year is great. One of these is to talk with your child every day about what happened at school.

Because young children are often not talkative about school when they are at home, here are some suggestions that can help to start the discussion:

- Tell me about the story your teacher read today.
- Name two good things that happened today.
- Tell me about your special friend or someone you met today.
- Where did you go at activity time? What did you like best?
- What are you looking forward to doing next time?

Developing Home-School Partnerships

- Consider volunteering in your child's school. Volunteers enrich classrooms at all grade levels.
- Talk to the teacher. The teacher wants to hear your concerns and to work with you to find ways to support your child.
- Join the School Council.
- Participate in school activities.
- Read the monthly classroom and school newsletters.
- Build routines at home that support the routines at school (i.e. nightly reading or "homework" time).

Together, you and the teacher can create and maintain the nurturing environment that will lead to student success!

Play is your child's homework

- Watch your child at play – your observations will give you insight into how she prefers to learn.
- All play – in fact, anything your child is doing – can be a learning experience.
- Provide opportunities for your child to be with other children to learn to share, wait and take turns.

"The Kindergarten years are rich in play-based, language oriented activities and resources that are meaningful to the lives of young children and provide opportunities for thinking, problem solving and exploration." From the *Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading, 2002.*

The next few pages provide some helpful ideas that will support your child.

Fun and Learning in a Cozy Corner

- Read to your child every day and ask questions to develop understanding.
- Re-read favourite books encouraging your child to chime in.
- Provide opportunities for children to enjoy a variety of types of books (stories, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, alphabet books, information books, taped story and books).
- Talk to your child in complete sentences and often.
- Listen carefully to what your child says.
- Ensure that your child has a wide range of experiences to talk about with you and others.
- Encourage your child to make needs known and to solve problems (i.e. asking for help).
- Encourage your child to say “please, thank you, sorry, excuse me”.

Fun and Learning in the Kitchen

- Talk with your child during activities using words such as more, less, shortest, tallest, half, full, empty, all, some, etc.
- Pour the milk so each glass has the same amount.
- Tidy a cupboard by arranging boxes from tallest to shortest.
- Set the table for the family, counting the spoons, forks, knives, etc.
- Share an apple by cutting it in halves or quarters.
- Choose the best sized bowl for leftovers.
- Cook together measuring ingredients.
- Have writing and drawing materials available (paper, markers, pencils, crayons, chalkboards, magnetic letters).
- Let your child see you writing your grocery list and reading a recipe.
- Make letters in playdough or salt.

Fun and Learning in the Bathtub

- Find things that will float or sink and talk about why.
- Provide an egg whisk to propel a toy boat along the water.
- Provide plastic containers and measuring cups to allow for measuring.
- Have fun in the bath with foam alphabet letters.



Fun and Learning in the Outdoors

- Give your child a magnifying glass to inspect things up close – bugs, leaves, grass, dirt and talk about how they look.
- Use water and paint brushes or sidewalk chalk to make letters and numbers on sidewalks, fences, etc.
- Use a plastic jar to collect and measure the rainfall.
- Encourage your child to collect rocks, leaves, shells or flowers.
- Look for shapes in the outdoors – squares, triangles, circles, etc.
- Talk to your child about the things that you see or hear on walks or trips. Notice changes that occur (i.e., seasons, growth, construction).

Fun and Learning in the Hallway

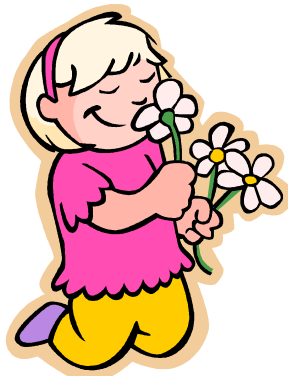
- Count as you walk up and down stairs.
- Recite nursery rhymes as you walk along (i.e. 1, 2 Buckle My Shoe).
- Say a rhyming word with each step.

Fun and Learning in the Car

- Sing songs and say familiar rhymes to develop awareness of rhyme, words and sounds. Examples include: “Pat a Cake, Pat a Cake”, “Mary Had A Little Lamb”, “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” and the “ABC” song.
- Draw attention to the sounds in words (house, mouse - those rhyme; big bumblebee - those words start with “buh”).
- Play “I Spy” games using rhyming words or first letter sounds.
- Make silly rhyming words that rhyme with your name.
- Listen to CD’s, taped stories, songs, nursery rhymes.
- Spell the letters of familiar signs (e.g. S-T-O-P spells stop).

Fun and Learning in the Playroom / Family Room


- Encourage your child to act out familiar stories using toys and props.
- Play games like “Go Fish” and “Concentration” with alphabet letters.
- Clap the syllables in your child’s name, names of family members, food, etc.
- Play with Lego, puzzles, building toys, board games, etc.




You Are A Superstar!


Recognize that your child is unique and that everyone develops at his or her own rate. Here are some things to try! You can put a stamp or sticker on each star when you have finished that step. When you have completed all the steps, you will be ready to start school!


 Tell your first and last name.

 Tell the first and last name of each of your parents.


 Know the way to school if you will be walking to school, or the way to the bus stop if you will be taking the bus.




 Print your name. It's okay for your mom or dad to print your name at the top of a piece of paper and for you to either trace over top or copy it underneath.


 Say the colours in a small crayon box.


 Recite a favourite nursery rhyme.


 Tidy up your toys when you're finished playing.


 Clear your own dishes from the table.


 Go to the bathroom, flush the toilet and wash your hands by yourself.

 Put your shoes on and fasten them yourself. If you can't tie shoe laces, Velcro is okay.

 Take off your sweater or jacket by yourself, then put it back on. Zip or button it back up.

 Count to ten.

 Listen quietly when someone reads you a story.

 Sing and say the Alphabet Song. ABCDEFG (clap) HIJKLMN (clap) OPQ (clap) RST (clap) UVW (clap) XYZ (clap). Now I never will forget. How to sing my alphabet.