



KEEPING IN TOUCH

WINTER 2017

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:

Aisling Discoveries Child & Family Centre, Child Care Consultation

Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough, Special Needs Services

The Etobicoke Children's Centre, Special Needs Consultation

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Community Outreach Service

Humber College, Child Care Consultation Services

Toronto Children's Services, Special Services Unit

WoodGreen Community Services

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STEPS TOWARDS SCHOOL READINESS



Starting full day kindergarten will be a new, fun and terrifying experience all rolled into one for most young children. This event can be equally anxiety producing for parents as they figure out where or how to start the registration process. January seems so early to be planning for kindergarten readiness, but as Registered Early Childhood Educators we know how important it can be for children to have consistency in their daily routines. So we must support families to begin their planning and transition processes now. Here are some steps to support families with the process;

- ◆ identify the child's local home school
- ◆ register the child at their local home school
- ◆ at the time of registration it's important to share any additional needs the child may have
- ◆ consider sharing supporting documentation about the child's needs with the school
- ◆ have the child attend welcome to kindergarten events, if possible
- ◆ coordinate between the child care program and family various activities to introduce school to the child:



- walks to school carrying a backpack
- stories about school
- songs about school
- school props in the drama centre
- dressing activities in the drama centre i.e. putting on coats and shoes

Shondel Shaw, Special Needs Consultant ~ Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough



BRAIN FRIENDLY CURRICULUMS: EMBEDDING THE 5 R'S OF HEALTHY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS



Transition from child care to full day kindergarten is challenging for many children. The role of the Registered Early Childhood Educator is to attempt to support a seamless and positive shift for the children in their care. In 2012, ZERO to THREE posted a study, *Preventing child abuse and neglect: Parent-provider relationships in child care*, identifying five necessities for healthy brain development. Embedding these 5 R's in the philosophy and every day programming of your program will ensure children have a strong neurological framework to handle the challenges of entering full day kindergarten.

The 5 R's

Relationships

Secure attachments give children the ability to explore their environment and learn. This is true for all environments, even new ones like FDK. Experiences gained through these interactions and explorations stimulate the developing brain.

Responsive Interactions

Consistently responding to children in a warm and caring manner while meeting their needs on a daily basis encourages ongoing interactions with a variety of people. Be sensitive, flexible and reciprocal. The safety and security developed from consistent responses promotes healthy brain development.

Respect

Treat children as valuable individuals honouring their unique temperament and characteristics. This builds self-esteem and confidence, and allows the child to present themselves with pride in new environments.

Routines

Predictable events happening daily build brain connections supporting memory and organization. Trust, stability, cohesion and a sense of consecutiveness is developed where children seek out and follow routines in new environments. There is a demonstrated correlation between routines and academic and social competence.

Repetition

Do not be afraid to read the same stories, sing the same songs, and go on the same walks. The brain grows with every experience. The more you make that experience available the stronger the connections in the brain react and increase. The stronger the brain connections become, the better able they are to incorporate new information and understand as experiences change.

Source: Seibel, N.L., Britt D., Gillespie L.G., & Parlakian, R. (2009). *Preventing child abuse and neglect: Parent provider relationships in child care*. Washington, D.C.: ZERO to THREE.

Denise Palermo, Special Needs Resource Consultant ~ The Etobicoke Children's Centre



“The universe is a big place, but it’s okay, you will grow into it.”

~ Carl Munson ~

UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR FRAMES OF LEARNING

Preparing children in child care for full day kindergarten is an important role of the Registered Early Childhood Educator. The changes within the school systems over the past few years can be confusing and overwhelming making it difficult to ensure preschool children have all the necessary skills to do the very best they can once they enter the school system.

The Ministry of Education has made available a document entitled, *The Kindergarten Program* (2016). It outlines the revised curriculum framework and how it will be embedded into the children's daily routines and learning experiences. Registered Early Childhood Educators can use this information to guide programming and teaching strategies.



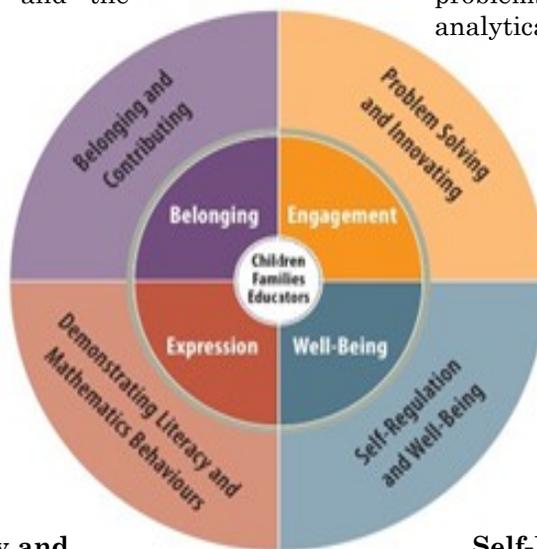
Belonging and Contributing

This frame involves children gaining a sense of connectedness to others. It involves them developing an understanding of their relationships to others (peers and adults), groups (the classroom), their community and the natural world.



Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematic Behaviours

This frame focuses on children learning to use language as a tool, think critically and begin the initial stages of readiness skills. It also focuses on concepts of numbers and the ability to access, manage and evaluate information.



Problem Solving and Innovating

This frame involves children exploring their world by engaging their mind, senses and body. Children will attempt to make meaning of the world by asking questions, testing theories, solving problems to develop creative and analytical thinking skills.



Self-Regulation and Well-Being

This frame involves children developing the ability to regulate their emotions, adapt to distractions, assess consequences of their behaviours and establish an overall sense of strong physical and mental health and wellness.

Source: Ministry of Education. (2016). *The Kindergarten Program*. Toronto, ON: Queens Printer for Ontario.

Denise Palermo, Special Needs Resource Consultant ~ The Etobicoke Children's Centre

SEPARATION ANXIETY

The start of school is a milestone that is often awaited with anticipation and joy, but also with crying, uncertainty and resistance, from both children and parents. For some children, the main source of anxiety related to entering school is that they have absolutely no idea what to expect. For parents, some causes of separation anxiety include; worrying if their child will feel abandoned, concerns if their child will be safe and ultimately will they be properly taken care of.

As highlighted in *Separation Anxiety in Children*; "It's natural for your young child to feel anxious when you say goodbye. Although it can be difficult, separation anxiety is a normal stage of development. With understanding and these coping strategies, separation anxiety can be relieved - and should fade as your child gets older. However, if anxieties intensify or are persistent enough to get in the way of school or other activities, your child may have separation anxiety disorder. While this condition may require professional treatment, there is a lot that you as a parent can do to help ease your child's fears and make him or her feel safer." (Robinson, Segal & Smith, 2016)

What you can do:

- Prepare your child for your absence before leaving them
- Listen to and respect your child's feelings
- Be reassuring but set limits and stick to them
- Offer choices
- Stay calm
- Praise your child's smallest effort to separate



Crying, tantrums, or clinginess are healthy reactions to separation. Separation anxiety can begin before a child's first birthday, and may pop up again or last until a child is four years old, but both the intensity level and timing of separation anxiety vary tremendously from child to child. A little worry over leaving mom or dad is normal, even when your child is older. You can ease your child's separation anxiety by staying patient and consistent, and by gently but firmly setting limits.

Additional Tips

- **Practice separation** - Leave your child with a caregiver for brief periods and build on the duration of time being spent apart.
- **Develop a "goodbye" ritual** - Rituals are reassuring and can be as simple as a special wave through the window or a goodbye hug or kiss.
- **Keep familiar surroundings when possible and make new surroundings familiar** - Have your child bring a familiar object from home.
- **Leave without fanfare** - Tell your child you are leaving and that you will return, then go; don't stall.
- **Try not to give in** - Reassure your child that he or she will be just fine - setting limits will help the adjustment to separation.

Source: Robinson, L., Segal, J. & Smith, M. (2016). *Separation Anxiety in Children*. Retrieved January 16, 2017 from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/separation-anxiety-in-children.htm>.

PLANNING, PREPARING, AND PRACTICING MEALTIME STRATEGIES FOR TRANSITIONING TO FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN

Lunch and snack time at full day kindergarten (FDK) is a new experience for children. At child care, children are provided with warm nutritious snacks and lunches. They build independence with self-help skills, by being offered opportunities to scoop food and pour drinks for themselves. Lunch and snack routines promote social engagement which leads to building skills through peer modeling.

As children move to FDK, snack and lunch routines are different for children. The expectation for parents/caregivers is to provide children with a lunch bag which includes healthy drinks, snacks and lunch daily.

Listed below are some recommendations Early Childhood Educators, parents and caregivers can implement to assist their children in preparing for the FDK lunch and snack time routines.

- ✓ Encourage parents/caregivers to purchase an easy backpack and a lunch bag for the child, a few months before school begins. This can be a fun trip that will help with the new transition. Add zipper tags, if needed.
- ✓ Label the backpack, lunch bag and containers with the child's name using permanent marker.
- ✓ When preparing lunch/snack, include simple, easy to open food containers and a drinking thermos or drinking box for the child. Practice opening containers, exploring which containers work best.



- ✓ Involve children in the planning and preparation of snacks/lunches by taking a trip to the grocery store together. Provide a variety of foods from the Canada's Food Guide daily. (The four food groups are: Vegetables & Fruits, Grain Products, Milk & Alternatives and Meat & Alternatives).
- ✓ Remember when choosing snacks/lunches, ensure all foods are **nut free (including spreads) due to life threatening allergies**.
- ✓ Organize picnic weekends, family outings or visits to the local playground as opportunities for children to practice the routines of packing lunch as well as unpacking and serving lunch to themselves.

- ✓ Label containers to distinguish the difference between "snack" and "lunch". Use visual pictures on top of the containers to help children understand the labels until they can read them.
- ✓ Be a role model. When your child is packing their lunch, pack your lunch too. You and your child can practice together!



Helpful websites and resources:

Canada's Food Guide & Food Guide for First Nations, Inuit and Métis; from Health Canada at <http://hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-engp.ph>

NutriStep (Nutrition Screening Tool for Every Preschooler); from Toronto Public Health at <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=db5e32eb04342410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

Eat Right Ontario - speak to a Registered Dietician; 1-877-510-5102

PRE-PRINTING STRATEGIES

General Principles

- Keep the session short, 5 to 10 minutes, and make sure the child leaves with a sense of success. Try to be consistent.
- Drawing is easiest when sitting at a table and chair but it can also be done standing with the paper taped to the wall, at a blackboard or lying on their stomach on the floor.
- Remember that children generally learn to draw by:
 - ◆ first watching and imitating what you do with your hand while you draw the shape
 - ◆ then they will copy it from the picture on the page
 - ◆ next they should be able to make it independently when asked
- There are lots of activities that work on the skills you need to draw (e.g. connect the dots, mazes, puzzles, I spy, Where's Waldo, peg boards, Lego, stencils, tracing, video games).



Multi-Sensory Pre-Printing Practice

Make the sessions fun and use lots of sensory input to help your child learn better!

- cornmeal or flour on a cookie tray
- sand or rice on a cookie tray
- pudding on a mirror on the wall or cookie sheet on a table
- finger paint
- use vibrating pens
- use smelly markers
- place sandpaper under the page
- practice on chalkboard
- practice on a slate using wet-dry-try approach, first you make the shape, then the student traces over it with a wet sponge (which leaves an outline), then use a dry sponge to trace over and then draw the shape with chalk
- draw the shapes on their back and have them point to it on a page with different shapes
- use wikki stix (available at Mastermind) to bend/manipulate to make shapes
- outline pictures with dry glue so they feel the bump and know where to stop colouring



Typical Progression for Pre- Printing

- vertical line, horizontal line, circle, cross, diagonal in both directions (/ and \), square, X, triangle
- after they can draw simple shapes they can start to be put together into figures (e.g. line with circle on top makes a flower)
- when the child can make all of these shapes they are ready to start printing

WEBSITES

The following websites have lots of interesting ideas and resources:

City Wide Training Calendar ~

www.citywidetraining.ca

Connectability ~

www.connectability.ca

College of ECE ~

www.college-ece.ca

Earlychildhood News ~

www.earlychildhoodnews.com

How Does Learning Happen? ~

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy.html>

Gerrard Resource Centre -

Ryerson University ~

www.ryerson.ca/ecs/grc/

Special Needs Resource Library ~

<http://www.esbgc.org/special-needs-services/>



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RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

Bennett, Holly & Teresa Pitman. (1998). *Steps & Stages From 1 to 3*. Key Porter Books.

Bennett, Holly & Teresa Pitman. (2001). *Steps & Stages From 3-5*. Sarasota Press.

Baker & Brightman. (1997). *Steps to Independence: Teaching Everyday skills to Children with Special Needs, 3rd edition*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Canadian Child Care Federation & Canadian Institute of Child Health. (2001). *Nourish, Nurture, Neurodevelopment*. CCCF/CICH.

Healy, Jane. (1987). *Your Child's Growing Mind: A Guide to Learning and Brain Development from Birth to Adolescence*. Doubleday.

Langlois, Christine (ed.) (1998). *Growing with Your Child: Pre-Birth to Age 5: The Complete Guide to Your Baby's Development*. Ballantine Books.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

<http://www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca/home.asp>

Health Canada - Canada's Food Guide & Food Guide for First Nations, Inuit and Métis

<http://hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-engp.ph>

Infant Mental Health Promotion

<http://www.imhpromotion.ca/>

Ontario Ministry of Education - Full-Day Kindergarten

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/>

The Psychology Foundation of Canada

<https://psychologyfoundation.org>

Toronto Catholic District School Board

<https://www.tcdsb.org>

Toronto District School Board

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/>

Toronto Public Health - NutriStep

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=db5e32eb04342410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

ZERO to THREE

<https://www.zerotothree.org/>



Check out the Special Needs Resource Library at the Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough; <http://www.esbgc.org/special-needs-services/>.

Want to visit the library? Make an appointment at
416-281-0262 x 203 / 204