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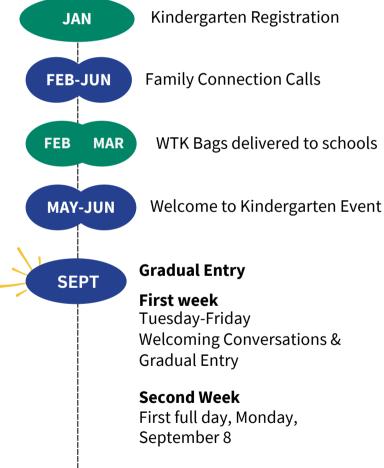


INTRODUCTION & TIMELINE

This guide is intended to support educators and staff with the transition of all children into Kindergarten. No matter when a new family joins our community, we are ready and welcoming, with systems in place for a warm first impression and a positive entry into the school system.

Each September, and throughout the school year, the Greater Victoria School District (GVSD) welcomes close to 1,500 children and their families to Kindergarten.

Timeline





REFRAMING READINESS

Key Message

Children are ready for Kindergarten because of their birthday, not because of a list of things they can do. As we get to know each child, we can plan and prepare opportunities for each child to thrive and realize their potential. As a disitrct, we continue to work toward unlearning the colonial mindset that children need be **ready** for school. In the Greater Victoria School Disitrct, all children are welcome, just as they are, and schools need to be **ready** for children.

Welcoming Process

Our district welcoming process is committed to engaging students, families, and staff in positive moments of connection and conversation that ultimately strive to enhance and support student equity, learning, identities, and well-being.

The welcoming process and strength-based messaging is an integral part of our collective endeavor to create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments for ALL. We continually reflect on and strengthen our transition process and welcoming practices. As educators, we ask ourselves:

• Are we approaching the transition into school holistically? (welcoming the whole child)

 What are we intentionally doing to ensure our children and families feel included, valued, seen, and heard?



ACHORING PRINCIPLES

EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

- Children are strong, capable in their uniqueness, and full of potential.
- Families have the most important role in contribting to children's well-being and learning.
- Educators are researchers and collaborators.
- Early years spaces are inclusive.
- People build connection and reconnection to land, culture, community, and place.
- Environments are integral to well-being and learning.
- Play is integral to well-being and learning.
- Relationships are the context for well-being and learning.

FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
- Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.
- Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Learning involves patience and time.

FFBRUARY - JUNF

FAMILY CONNECTION CALLS

Why?

Every personalized connection between incoming families and the school is an invaluable investment. Learning more about the varied experiences of children and families can help us anticipate ways to prepare for and/or adapt the September start-up.

What?

The goal is for all incoming Kindergarten parents/caregivers to receive a welcoming phone call from their new school. The purpose of the call is to foster a person-to-person connection, welcome the child and family to the district and school, and to consider supportive transition plans as needed. This is a proactive approach to building connections and learning about incoming children to inform planning and programming.

Who?

The phone calls can be made by admin and/or Kindergarten teachers and School Based Team members. Release time is available.



以 RESOURCES

SAMPLE CALL

"I see that you are registered to start kindergarten in September. We look forward to meeting you! We wanted to call you to welcome you to <*Insert School Name*> and

simply connect. Do you have any questions about Kindergarten?"

"To make the start of Kindergarten as positive as possible, it is helpful for us to know if you have any concerns about your child coming to school."

"Will Kindergarten be their first experience away from you, or did they attend a preschool, a StrongStart Centre, or a child care?"

WELCOME TO K EVENT

The spring Welcome to Kindergarten (WTK) Event gives new families the opportunity to connect with school staff members including teachers, Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), principals, vice-principals, admin assistants, teacher librarians, learning support teachers, counsellors etc. Please also consider including the child care provider from your school site. Families who require before and after care will appreciate the access point as well.

At this event, WTK bags are distributed to incoming families. Consider keeping track of participants by putting the students' names on the bags, and for those unable to attend, find ways to ensure that **every** child receives their bag before the summer break.



RESOURCES

SLIDESHOW

Feel welcome to use this editable template for your information evenings, or as a slideshow in an email.

- 1. Slideshow link
- 2. Click the blue "Use Template" button in the top right to save a copy to your computer.

SOCIAL STORY

Feel welcome to create and customize a social story that uses images and words to help explain situations such as starting school.

- 1. English Story link
- 2. French Story link

VIDEOS

Feel welcome to watch and share these videos to offer families a snapshot of what life in Kindergarten is like.

- 1. Video link to Welcome to Kindergarten
- 2. Video link to A Day in the Life of Kindergarten

SEPTEMBER 2-3

WELCOMING CONVERSATIONS

The gradual entry process includes scheduling a 15 minute welcoming conversation with each family, teacher, and ECE (when applicable). These conversations are intended to take the place of forms, and check lists, and help foster an equitable and inclusive start to school.

The guiding questions (see template on next page) were collaboratively developed by kindergarten teachers, Early Childhood Educators and District staff in partnership with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, and The Inter-Cultural Association (ICA). The questions are designed to connect with families through a curious and compassionate lens. They provide opportunities for educators to plan for the uniqueness of each child and prepare an inclusive classroom culture.

The Early Learning Framework reminds us that families are their children's first teachers. Families are respected as teachers of culture, heritage, language, and values, and are invaluable as we nurture partnerships between the home and school.

Please consider how to address common barriers to engagement between families and school such as language, cultural context, and scheduling etc.



RESOURCES

GUIDE

Feel welcome to use this editable template to help guide your welcoming conversations, and fill out the template alongside families to inform planning.

- 1. Template guide link
- 2. Click the download button ____ in the top right to edit.

VIDEO

Feel welcome to use this sample virtual welcoming conversation video or share it with teachers who are new to welcoming conversations (thank you Karen Higginbotham at Craigflower Elementary!).

1. Video link to sample Welcoming Conversation

Getting to know



Please help us get to know your child so that we can best support their well-being and learning. Every child has a story that is bigger than their life at school.

What helps your child feel calm? What brings them comfort? Who are the important people in your child's life? How does your child interact with peers and adults?	What are your hopes for your child this year? What are your child's strengths? What makes your child unique? What brings your child joy?
Emotion	Spirit

Mind

What activities or topics excite and engage your child the most? What helps your child when it is time to change from one activity to another? How does your child communicate? What is your child's home language?

Body

What physical activities does your child enjoy?Is there any information you want to share about: Meals/snacks? Sleep? Toileting? Medications? Mobility? Vision? Hearing?

SEPTEMBER 2-5

GRADUAL ENTRY

Gradual Entry Schedule- Consistent across ALL SCHOOLS Sept 2nd to 5th

WEEK ONE

Tuesday, (AM), Wednesday (All Day): Welcoming conversations (see page 6)ee

DISTRICT WIDE WELCOMING CONVERSATION QUESTIONS (TEMPLATE PROVIDED)

15-20 minutes / **family** (child & parent/caregiver) with teacher Teacher prep time is scheduled into the gradual entry schedule.

Thursday: Half day for each group A: 9:00-11:00 & group B: 1:00-2:30

Friday: Half day for each group B: 9:00-11:00 & group A: 1:00-2:30

WEEK TWO

Monday: September 8: First full day for all Kindergarten children district wide

Supporting the early days & considerations for combined K-1 classes:

We encourage school teams to focus support on kindergarten classrooms, specifically K-1 combined classes during the first weeks of school. All members of the School Based Team, the teacher librarian, and available EAs are encouraged to support the early days of kindergarten building relationships with new

students and families and supporting grade one students in combined K-1 classrooms. We take an 'all hands-on deck' approach when supporting the transition into kindergarten and establishing daily routines, fostering community and through relationship, planning for each child.



SAMPLE WELCOME LETTER

Dear Kindergarten parents, guardians, and caregivers,

Welcome to **Insert School Name**>! The purpose of this letter is to provide you with important information about your child's upcoming Kindergarten Gradual Entry Schedule and Welcoming Conversation.

The transition to kindergarten is important for your child, your family, and for the school. For this reason, the Ministry of Education & Child Care and the Greater Victoria School District have established a gradual entry process for all children starting Kindergarten.

The gradual entry process ensures that we get to know your child and begin to foster a sense of belonging as they transition to the larger learning environment of a school. They begin by attending for two half days with a smaller group of students before joining together as a whole class.

Attached to this letter is your child's gradual entry schedule for the first week of school. An important part of the gradual entry process is the **Welcoming Conversation.** Welcoming conversations are part of gradual entry and take place in the first week. During the Welcoming Conversation, you will have the opportunity to share information about your child with the kindergarten teacher. You are encouraged to review and think about the attached questions that will be asked during the Welcoming Conversation.

Each child entering Kindergarten is viewed as a unique individual which is why gradual entry along with the Welcoming Conversation are essential for creating the foundation of support among the family, school, and child. The information you share with the teacher will be helpful in supporting your child throughout the year.

We look forward to welcoming you and your child into our school community.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>

Remember to attach the gradual entry schedule page 10 and the sample welcoming conversation questions on page 11!

SAMPLE WELCOME LETTER SCHEDULE ATTACHMENT



Your Kindergarten Gradual Entry Schedule:

Welcoming Conversation	(please bring ar	adult with you to	meet your teacher)
	Welcoming Conversation	Welcoming Conversation (please bring an	Welcoming Conversation (please bring an adult with you to

Date:

Time:

Room:

• First Half Day visit (please bring a snack with you). You will be at school for half a day with a smaller group so we can get to know you.

Date: Thursday, Sept 4

Time:

• Second Half Day visit (please bring a snack with you). You will be at school for half a day with a smaller group so we can get to know you.

Date: Friday, Sept. 5

Time:

• First Full day of school. All Kindergarten students will attend Monday, September 8, from 8:45 to 2:37.

Getting to know



Please help us get to know your child so that we can best support their well-being and learning. Every child has a story that is bigger than their life at school.

What helps your child feel calm? What brings them comfort? Who are the important people in your child's life? How does your child interact with peers and adults?	What are your hopes for your child this year? What are your child's strengths? What makes your child unique? What brings your child joy?
Emotion	Spirit

Mind

What activities or topics excite and engage your child the most? What helps your child when it is time to change from one activity to another? How does your child communicate? What is your child's home language?

Body

What physical activities does your child enjoy?Is there any information you want to share about: Meals/snacks? Sleep? Toileting? Medications? Mobility? Vision? Hearing?

GUIDING THE TRANSITION OF SUPPORTS FROM

COMMUNITY TO SCHOOL

Process for Spring

- Schools will receive information in late February/early March about incoming students from the following community agencies: Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health (QA), Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA), BC Family Hearing Resource Society, and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC).
- These child profiles are created many months before students start Kindergarten and are likely to change as children learn and grow.
- In some cases, community partners have been working with these children and families for years. Please involve them as much as you can in the transition process.
- Specialized equipment or building modification requirements need to be identified as soon as possible. Please connect with the Inclusive Learning District Principal (Sean McCartney at semccartney@sd61.bc.ca) ASAP to discuss these needs.
- School teams will take the lead in getting to know all new Kindergarten students and their families this spring. All children and families should be invited to participate in the activities you design (eg. WTK events).

Individualized Student Planning

- Reach out to the family to welcome them to the school community and set-up a time for an initial welcome meeting.
- Offer a school tour.
- Use the <u>Summary of Supports Guide</u> to help determine the level of support required by the child in various skill areas through observations (eg. preschool visits, welcoming activities) and read the reports from community agencies.
- Offer the child a **social story** about your school.
- Visit the <u>Learning Support website Transitions page</u> for more information.



SUPPORTING STUDENTS:

NEWCOMERS & MULTILINGUAL

Acknowledge all cultures in the classroom in a safe and respectful way:

- Language: Encourage and celebrate the continued development of children's heritage language. Learn how to say hello in different languages that are represented in the classroom. Include all students in what you're doing, even if they are not fully fluent in English. Give students an opportunity to show what they know in their own language. Consult with the school ELL teacher.
- **Literacy Resources:** Free digital multilingual books are available on Storybooks Canada and Unite for Literacy. Enlist the help of your school librarian to source multilingual or dual language books and encourage signing up at the public library.
- **Be Curious and Celebrate:** Build upon your students' cultural knowledge through your own research and curiosity. Take time to learn about who they are, their family, country, and culture. Be aware and acknowledge special holiday sand observances that are important to your students.
- **Involve Families:** Enlist the help of parents/caregivers as partners in education. Welcome parents/caregivers into the classroom to volunteer or share something. Invite and actively encourage involvement in the school community (ie. volunteering) and utilize community supports that encourage home/school communication. Foster relationships between families (ie. provide an optional family contact list so playdates can be arranged).
- Make Connections: Try to connect new learning to students' prior knowledge and experience. Help students set goals. Buddy up newcomer students with classmates to help them get oriented and involved in extracurricular activities. Look for opportunities and teachable moments to include your students' home languages, cultures

and interests.



MORE RESOURCES

FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS



When I Go to Kindergarten Ministry Resource

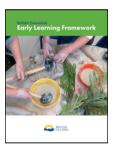


Let's Play (Four Sets) Ministry Resource

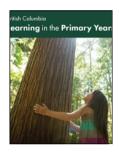


Play Today: A
Guide for Families
Ministry Resource

FOR EDUCATORS



BC Early Learning Framework Ministry Resource



Learning in the Primary Years
Ministry Resource



Early Intervention
Program
Island Health



Indigenous Education
Indigenous Education
Department at GVSD



Early Learning
Framework Course
My Training BC



Mental Health Resources Healthy Minds BC

NOTES



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