

Stepping stOnes... to SchOOl



**Aboriginal Head Start to Kindergarten
Transition Toolkit**

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Stepping Stones to School: Aboriginal Head Start to Kindergarten Transition Toolkit

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This toolkit is a 'work in progress' and will continue to develop over time. Please forward your suggestions or adaptations so they can be shared and used in future revisions of this document. Feedback can be sent to the AHSABC by emailing: executivedirector@ahsabc.com

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Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) is an early intervention preschool program designed for urban and northern (off-reserve) Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) children in Canada. For more information, please visit www.phac-aspc.gc.ca or www.ahsabc.com

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All quotes in this document are taken from the 2011 Narrative Report by AHSABC entitled *Valuing Aboriginal Head Start in BC: Celebrating 15 Years (1995-2010)* except for those on page 14, which were taken from the *Stepping Stones to School Needs Assessment Report* (2011).

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Foreword

The start of kindergarten can be both an exciting and worrisome time for children and families as they step into new worlds, new beginnings. For Aboriginal children and families, the transition to kindergarten can be experienced much differently from their non-Aboriginal counterparts. This is in large part due to the lengthy history of oppression and marginalization that Aboriginal people have experienced in their relationship to formal schooling systems. Yet, early learning programs that respond to the social and historical realities of Aboriginal families offer the potential and promise to connect them with schools in positive ways.

The Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia, representing 12 Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) sites in urban and northern communities in BC, is committed to supporting the early childhood development of Aboriginal children. The preschool program instills pride in their Aboriginal heritage and focuses on children 3 to 5 years of age, with the intent of bringing them to the school readiness stage in order to ensure an easy transition into kindergarten. Family involvement is a major factor contributing to the success of the program. Aboriginal Head Start represents one of the important 'stepping stones' that will lead families on their continuing journey with learning.

Children from linguistically and culturally diverse families, as well as those from low socio-economic situations, face increased challenges as they transition into kindergarten. Children and families who have opportunities to participate in transition activities can become familiar with the kindergarten expectations. Moreover, the AHS programs can help Aboriginal families feel more at ease and adjust more readily as they transition to the mainstream school system.

This 'Stepping Stones to School' toolkit is intended to engage all those involved in the transition process, including children, families, AHS staff and early childhood educators, teachers and school staff, in recommended practices that contribute to a smooth transition for Aboriginal children and parents.

Jan Hare, PhD
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Vancouver BC

Introduction to the Stepping Stones to School Project: Creating a Successful Transition From AHS to Kindergarten

The Stepping Stones to School Project (SSSP) was developed in response to Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) interest and need to focus on supporting the Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) families' transition from AHS to the school system, as well as increasing collaboration with the schools in their communities.

In response, the Public Health Agency of Canada completed a community needs assessment in order to better understand the key components to a successful school transition from AHSUNC to Primary School, and to identify opportunities for improving the school transition experience for Aboriginal Head Start children and families. The main barriers identified were a lack of information about the expectations; historical mistrust of the school system; lack of transportation; limited accessibility to school staff; and difficulty dealing with bureaucracy, especially with regards to accessing support for children with higher needs.

The goal of this 'Transition-to-school Toolkit' is to offer solutions to reduce these barriers by increasing communications, planning and collaboration with individual schools and school districts during the transition process. It is hoped that building partnerships will provide Aboriginal families with more opportunities to connect and build relationships with schools and school staff, with the assistance of their trusted AHS programs.

Description of the AHS Transition-to-School Toolkit

The toolkit includes best practices and activities to enhance partnerships and involve parents in the transition process; templates of letters and sample workshops; information sheets for parents; evaluation and feedback forms; and a calendar showing a suggested timeline for transition activities. Also included are take-home resources for parents to encourage them to be advocates in their children's transition to school.

The purpose of the toolkit is to guide and support AHS Coordinators and staff in developing, implementing, and evaluating their own context-specific transition strategy. These tools can also be used by any Early Childhood program that includes Aboriginal children.

The toolkit activities are designed for use by AHS staff, parents and families, and School District personnel in order to:

- inform parents about the transition to kindergarten, support them to advocate for their children in the school system, and give them tools to assist in their child's preparation for kindergarten at home
- help AHS teachers and staff effectively network with school staff and parents to develop an organized team approach to creating a successful transition from AHS program to kindergarten, as well as providing ongoing support to students and families after graduation
- increase awareness in school leaders, teachers and support staff about the special challenges and circumstances of Aboriginal students, and improve communications between AHS programs, parents, and School District representatives

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How to Use the Toolkit

In this guide, there are seven stepping stones to creating a successful transition for AHS students and families who are leaving the Aboriginal Head Start program and entering the school system. The stepping stones are organized as a series of building blocks from creating partnerships to engaging parents in working as a team, in order that the children and their parents are informed and confident about becoming active participants in school.

Many of these activities are already in place in AHS programs. At the beginning of the school year, consider including the *Stepping Stones to School* in your program planning. Using the sample calendar as a guide, you may find it helpful to create a calendar of transition events on the template found on page 58. *You are encouraged to adapt the tools and timeline to fit your own needs.*

This toolkit is a collection of best practices in AHS programs that are recommended for creating ideal transitions from Aboriginal Head Start to kindergarten. They can be used in any Early Childhood program that includes Aboriginal children and families. Each preschool may find some or all of these tools helpful in preparing children and families to successfully enter school.

Creating a Successful Transition for Aboriginal Families

Communication and collaboration between all parties is an important factor in creating a successful experience for Aboriginal children in school. Generations of Aboriginal families have been negatively affected by Residential Schools, which has resulted in a lack of understanding and trust between these families and the educational establishment. Through the Aboriginal Head Start program, children, families, Elders and teachers are creating a new and positive experience of learning together. From this safe place of community, AHS staff are helping parents to connect with the school representatives in sharing information and awareness of each other's needs and expectations.

"The children coming into school having participated in the Head Start program really have a respect and understanding of what school is. They understand who the teacher is, how to sit, and they know there's a schedule and expectations, and generally they're looking forward to school because they've had a good experience at preschool... I also think it's been a good experience for parents. They come in ready to interact with the teacher more and ready to interact with the children more... I really credit the Head Start people for developing those good relationships with families, and saying that your involvement with the school is really important and that you're just as important a teacher as the teacher."

– Amber Knezacek: Kindergarten teacher, Terrace

Stepping Stone to School # 1

Stepping Stone 1: Establish Partnerships

Communication and collaboration are crucial factors in successful transitions to school. The first steps toward establishing partnerships for supporting Aboriginal families in their transitions to kindergarten are finding members of the school and greater community who are willing to take part in the process.

Identify other programs and groups in your community that are involved and interested in the children, such as: Child Care Programs, Aboriginal Supported Child Development, Public Health, libraries, band members, education programs, elementary schools, Home Visiting Programs, Parent Programs, and so on. Invite them to participate.

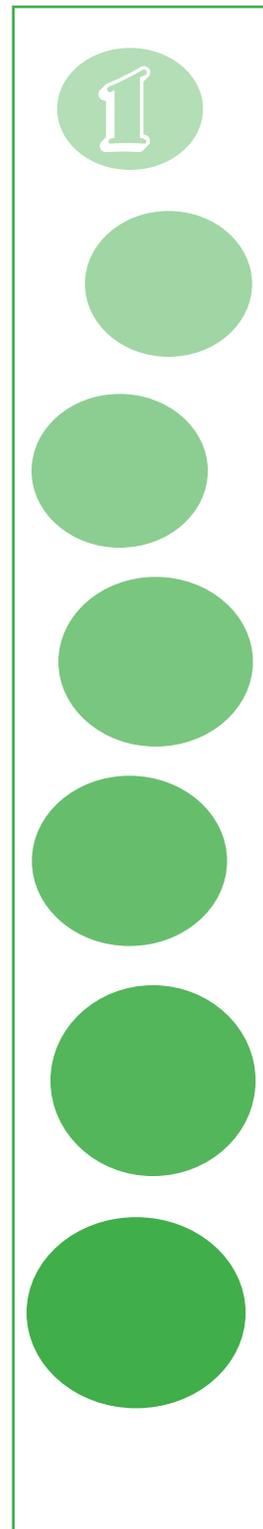
AHS program staff can take the first step in making connections with these potential partners by contacting and visiting their programs or arranging meetings with groups of people. Letters introducing the AHS program, describing the Transitions to Kindergarten strategy, and inviting people to visit the site will encourage involvement by these partners.

Some School District and community members may benefit from increased understanding of Aboriginal history and cultural issues through information sessions, invitations to AHS gatherings, or taking part in workshops such as *Residential School Awareness* and *Building Bridges through Understanding the Village*. Information and interviews with survivors can be also viewed at www.wherearethechildren.ca

Educational policy makers may benefit from knowing what the research tells us about transitions for Aboriginal children and families. The summary on page 63 may be used as a handout in information packages provided to School District representatives, teachers and principals.

The following activities may help you establish transition partners in your community:

- **Partnership Planning**
- **Sample AHS letter to Transition Partners**
- **Cultural Awareness Activity**
- **Residential School Awareness Workshop (see page 61 in Appendix)**
- **Building Bridges through Understanding the Village (page 62)**
- **What Research Tells Us About Transitions to Kindergarten (page 63)**



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Partnership Planning (for AHS staff)

1. Identify key partners who might support the transition to kindergarten:

-
-
-
-
-

2. What programs in your community are children and parents involved?

-
-
-
-
-

3. Communication strategies: how does AHS reach out to these groups?

-
-
-
-
-

Sample Letter from AHS to Transition Partners

[Note: These sample letters need to be adapted to your specific needs using your site's identifying letterhead and logo.]

To: [Key Partners in transition to school]

From: [AHS project coordinator] at _____AHS

Date:

Dear _____,

I would like to introduce you to our Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) program. We are [name of site]_____, located at _____. Our preschool program is based on the 6 components of AHS: culture and language, education and school readiness, health promotion, nutrition, parent and family involvement, and social support. For more information about AHS, please visit www.phac-aspc.gc.ca or www.ahsabc.com.

We are committed to working in partnership with our parents, community members and the staff at your school to create a successful transition into kindergarten for our students.

In order to develop a working relationship, we would like to request your participation as one of our 'Transition Partners' on an advisory team that would meet on behalf of our 4 year olds who will be graduating into kindergarten.

Please let us know if you would be willing to meet two or three times at planned events. We would ask you to bring information for our parents and guardians about kindergarten transition activities designed to prepare them for school readiness.

We appreciate your expertise and willingness to partner with us in this important transition endeavour. You are welcome to visit us at our AHS Preschool anytime to check out our program. Please call us at the number below to let us know when you would like to come.

Sincerely,

[AHS project coordinator]

[AHS site address and phone number]

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Cultural Awareness Activity

(for School District and Partners from Community)

A workshop on Cultural and Residential School Awareness may help enhance partnerships between AHS families and schools by bringing awareness of Aboriginal history and culture to School District personnel and community members.

Objective

Bring awareness of the differences in culture and the ongoing impact of negative Residential School experiences on Aboriginal families today, including a mistrust of the school system and anxiety about the bureaucratic processes involved in being an active participant at school.

"Parents' own experiences within the school system can be the barrier to a successful school transition for the child."

"People just don't trust the system, and you can feel it everywhere, on reserve and off."

"Today's generation of grandparents went to residential schools, and because many kids are now being raised by their grandparents, residential schools are still having a very real affect on some children."

– *Stepping Stones to School Project participants*

Implementation

Find a skilled presenter to offer a workshop similar to the samples found in the Appendix on pages 61-62). These workshops can not only illuminate the historical effects of Residential School, but also familiarize non-Aboriginals with some cultural experiences to increase their comfort and acceptance of Aboriginal families and children.

In March, an AHS representative can contact the School District and/or Aboriginal Education Provincial Specialists Associations to find out the schedules for Professional Development Committee applications (usually sometime in the early spring). Prepare and submit applications for presenting AHS-supported Professional Development workshops for the following school year.

Expected benefits

School District staff and community partners will gain an understanding of some of the challenges that face Aboriginal families and students in their transition to kindergarten and what they need in order to more successfully participate in the school system.

Potential challenges

Because of the sensitive emotional nature of the material, it is advised to find an expert presenter rather than to attempt to create a workshop about Residential School issues. However, the AHS community can invite school and greater community members to participate in cultural activities at many of their celebrations and gatherings throughout the year.

Stepping Stone to School # 2

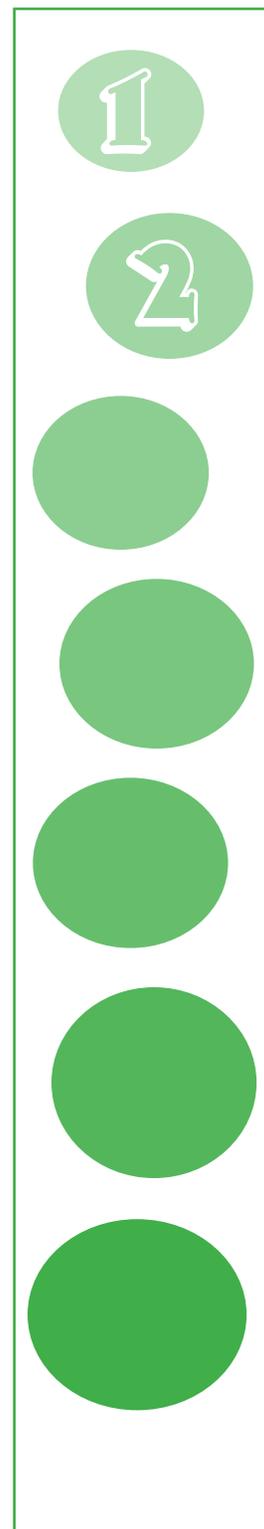
Stepping Stone 2: Build an Advisory/ Support Team

The next Stepping Stone to School is to build a support team or advisory group by connecting the identified partners with the parents and families of the students.

- a) Identify who you would need to consider including in your advisory group. Work with members of the community who have identified an interest to partner, such as:
 - Principal
 - Teachers
 - Aboriginal Support Worker/Counsellor
 - Parent/Guardian
 - ECE Director/Staff
 - Band member/Counsellor/Staff
 - Elders
 - Other program staff
 - Local parent-teacher association members
 - Parents who have children in the schools
 - Previous AHS parents
- b) Send letters and make phone calls inviting organizations to play a role on the team
- c) Design an agreement that shows the partners' commitment to the transition process.
- d) Provide a comprehensive list of partners for staff and parents
- e) Request feedback from school representatives and offer follow-up support for AHS grads in future. This can offer opportunities for improving relationships between AHS, parents and the school district.

The following activities may be helpful in building a support team to create a more successful transition to kindergarten:

- **Creating a Partnership Model**
- **Partnerships Contact List**
- **Sample Letter Requesting Feedback from School Representatives**
- **Sample Letter to School Offering Ongoing Support to AHS Students**



Creating a Partnership Model for the Successful Transitions of Aboriginal Children and Families: AHS to Kindergarten

Consider using an informal agreement such as this when your AHS program would like to establish partnerships among elementary schools, support service providers, and families.

Partnership Agreement with [AHS SITE and NAME OF SCHOOL]

The goal of this partnership is to support Aboriginal children and their families as they make the transition from [NAME OF ABORIGINAL HEAD START] to the primary school [NAME OF SCHOOL].

This partnership agreement will help form a partnership model that identifies goals and objectives to enhance the continuity in parent/family involvement from [NAME OF ABORIGINAL HEAD START] into [NAME OF SCHOOL] through coordinated transition activities at both education settings. This partnership model suggests models and specific objectives to achieve these goals, followed by suggested partner responsibilities to ensure transition activities are initiated.

Goal 1: Engage in dialogue between Aboriginal Head Start, Elementary School and parents to establish support mechanisms that aid in transition.

Objectives:

- Invite members of partnership groups to attend an information meeting to discuss possible transition activities.
- Identify three or more specific strategies to implement in the transition.
- Identify two or more communication strategies to ensure families are supported in their knowledge and participation of transition activities.

Partners who will support this goal:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Goal 2: Encourage elementary schools to create Aboriginal parent-friendly environments that support their children's transition.

Objectives:

- Designate a staff person, advisory team member or volunteer to outreach with Aboriginal parents prior to transition. This might include one-on-one contact with families established through home visits or school appointments.
- Ask parents to be involved at early childhood program or at new school to meet and support new Aboriginal families and share transition experiences.
- Schools send resource materials to Aboriginal families in the form of accessible hand outs.
- Make a special effort to engage fathers and father figures to reinforce the message that positive male role models make a significant influence on children's growth and development.

Partners who will support this goal:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Goal 3: Develop strategies that support and increase parent and family involvement by reducing and eliminating barriers.

Objectives:

- [DESCRIBE ACTIVITIES THAT WILL IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS PARENT AND FAMILY BARRIERS. EXAMPLES MIGHT INCLUDE: CONDUCT A WORKSHOP, SEND A SURVEY TO GATHER INFORMATION, DEVELOP INTERVENTION STRATEGIES]

Partners who will support this goal:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Goal 4: Create strong local partnerships among [NAME OF ABORIGINAL HEAD START] and [NAME OF SCHOOL].

Objectives:

- Increase information-sharing opportunities among local organizations that can contribute to transition activities.
- Engage Aboriginal support workers and Aboriginal PAC members in transition activities.
- Invite new teachers, school staff to learn about [NAME OF ABORIGINAL HEAD START]
- Partner with universities and other research-based centers to create and strengthen evaluation tools to measure the progress in meeting transition program goals and objectives.

Partners who will support this goal:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

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We agree to become partners in order to support Aboriginal children and families during the transition from [NAME OF ABORIGINAL HEAD START] into [NAME OF SCHOOL].

Signature of Partners

For the Aboriginal Head Start

For [ELEMENTARY SCHOOL]

For [ADDITIONAL PARTNERS]

For [ADDITIONAL PARTNERS]

Partnerships Contact List

These are the people involved in supporting the transition from AHS to Kindergarten:

Local School:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Teachers/Principal:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Local Aboriginal School/Education Counsellor:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

School's Aboriginal Support Worker:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Health Programs/Health Staff:

Contact(s):

Phone:

Email:

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Recreation Programs:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Cultural Programs:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Other ECE Programming:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Parent Programs:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Daycare:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Home Visiting Programs:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

School District Personnel:

Contact(s):

Phone:

Email:

Previous Parents of AHS:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Sample Letter Requesting Feedback from School Representatives

[Note: These sample letters need to be adapted to your specific needs using your site's identifying letterhead and logo.]

To: Kindergarten Teachers/ Aboriginal Education Assistants/ Principals

From: [AHS project coordinator; Name of program]

Date:

Dear _____,

The Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) program is a preschool program based on the 6 components of AHS: culture and language, education and school readiness, health promotion, nutrition, parent and family involvement, and social support. For more information about AHS, please visit www.phac-aspc.gc.ca or www.ahsabc.com.

The [Name of Program] Aboriginal Head Start is dedicated to supporting children and parents so that they can have a successful experience in school. We strive to improve communications and collaboration with our partners in the transition from preschool to kindergarten.

As a valued partner in this process, we would appreciate your feedback and comments on how well our program has prepared our Aboriginal students for transition to kindergarten. Any suggestions for improvement are welcome.

Sincerely,

[AHS coordinator] _____

[AHS site and contact info] _____

Sample Letter from AHS to School District Offering Ongoing Support

[Note: These sample letters need to be adapted to your specific needs using your site's identifying letterhead and logo.]

To: [School District Representatives/ Kindergarten Teacher/ Principal/ Aboriginal Liaison]

From: [AHS coordinator] at _____AHS

Date:

Dear _____,

The Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) program is a preschool program based on the 6 components of AHS: culture and language, education and school readiness, health promotion, nutrition, parent and family involvement, and social support. For more information about AHS, please visit www.phac-aspc.gc.ca or www.ahsabc.com.

The [name of site] Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) program is located at _____. We are committed to working in partnership with our parents and your staff to create a smooth transition into kindergarten and also continued success in school for our students and their parents. The relationship we have built with these families over the past two years gives us knowledge that might be of assistance to you and your education team.

With the consent of the parents/caregivers, we are available to serve as an information resource on their children to kindergarten teachers and the principal at your school.

We would like to offer our ongoing support for our AHS grads and their families. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about any AHS student(s) in your class. We would be happy to help in whatever ways we can.

Later in the fall, we hope to arrange a visit with our recent grads who are attending your kindergarten class. We will contact the teacher to set up a good time.

Sincerely,

[AHS coordinator] _____

[AHS site and contact info] _____

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"There's still much work to do, but it's made such a significant difference. We are concerned about those children who don't attend Head Start because their language skills are not as good. In general, that ability to speak, that ability to communicate is so important."

– Rose Monsees: Kindergarten teacher, Terrace

"The kindergarten teachers call us and they can tell which children have been in Head Start because of what they've learned and how they interact with other children."

– Darlene Gervais:
Administrative Assistant & Bus
Driver, Power of Friendship AHS

Stepping stone to school # 3

Stepping Stone 3: Conduct a Transition Assessment

The third Stepping Stone to School requires the AHS staff and the Advisory Team to conduct a Transition Assessment.

This exercise will help determine:

- the current transition activities that are available in the AHS program and what's missing
- the main barriers to successful transitions within your community, such as the lack of parental involvement, poor co-ordination between AHS program and schools; the difficulties for children to adapt to school settings; and so on
- the initiatives that local school boards/districts use to facilitate the transition for Aboriginal children and parents

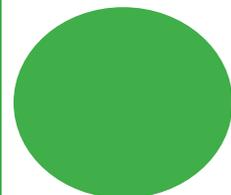
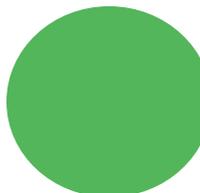
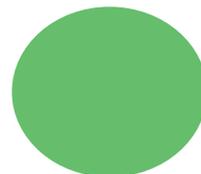
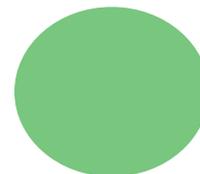
A comprehensive list of Transition to Kindergarten Events is compiled and offered to parents and guardians of AHS graduating students.

The following activities may be helpful in assessing the transition events that benefit the AHS students and identifying which ones are in place or missing.

- **Conduct a Transition Assessment**
- **Kindergarten Transition Events info sheet**

"I didn't know he was going to receive such preparation for school. He was learning habits like sitting still at a table, a big challenge for a 3 or 4 year old, yet here he was, and wanting to draw and colour and get more involved. He'd want to show me what they did at school. Now Luke's an A student and I think that has a lot to do with Aboriginal Head Start, because of that early training that he had and to discipline himself in a classroom."

– Roxanne Gray: Parent, Eagle's Nest AHS



Conduct a Transition Assessment

(for AHS staff)

1. What are current transition activities that take place in your AHS program?
 -
 -
 -

2. What are current transition activities that take place in your School District?
 -
 -
 -

3. What are potential barriers to supporting transitions in your program, school or district?
 -
 -
 -

4. What are strategic elements of a plan for your families and AHS program?
 -
 -
 -

Kindergarten Transition Events Info Sheet for Parents

There are several opportunities for parents to take part in events that will help prepare you and your children for kindergarten. Some of these are offered at the Head Start site and others are offered by the School District.

Aboriginal Head Start Transition Events

A Kindergarten Information event at _____ AHS

will be held on _____ [date]

At this gathering, we will offer information about:

- the different options for kindergarten in the community, such as Montessori, French Immersion, private schools, Aboriginal Kindergartens
- 'Gradual Entry' to full-day kindergarten in the local schools
- how to assist your 'Children with Higher Needs' who require extra support at school. (These children can experience a smoother transition when their needs are addressed early in the process so that services can be in place at the beginning of kindergarten.)
- what is involved in assessment of your child and related confidentiality issues

Transportation and childcare will be offered.

If you can't attend this AHS event, there are other opportunities to discuss kindergarten transition with us, such as:

1. Parent-teacher meetings
2. PAC meetings and Parent Mentors
3. Celebrations and events
4. Kindergarten Readiness workshops

Kindergarten Transition Events Info Sheet for Parents (continued)

School District Transition Events

Schools in each District offer transition-to-school activities for children and their parents/caregivers. Check with your own school to find out times and places for these events.

1. *Kindergarten Registration*: starts early in the new year in most School Districts. You can register your child as early as November at some schools, but it is recommended to register your child for Kindergarten by March to ensure a place in September and to be able to take part in the following Transition Activities offered by the School District.
2. The *Welcome to Kindergarten Program*: is offered by the school where your child will attend kindergarten. Both parents and students are invited to come and meet the teacher and resource people at the school. School staff will show you around the school and give each child a free bag of school supplies, as well as ideas for using them at home.
3. The *Ready, Set, Learn Program*: is open to all parents with children who are 3 and 4 years old. Every elementary school in BC offers learning resources to help prepare children for school. Each family that participates will receive a kit of materials and a guidebook to use them at home.
4. *Gradual Entry into Kindergarten*: In most schools, a 'gradual entry' into kindergarten programs allows children to gradually build up to full time over the first two weeks of the school year. For example, one school schedules each child a 30 minute one-on-one session with their kindergarten teacher on the first day of school, the next day the children will spend time with the kindergarten teacher in groups of 4, then groups of 8, etc., until the children are in a full class of children for a full day.
5. *Special Needs Transition Meetings*: A 'transition meeting' is organized in the spring before kindergarten for children who have been identified as having 'higher needs' during preschool, and is typically attended by the child's preschool support worker (s), the school's support workers, the parents/caregivers, and the school principal. It is during this 'transition meeting' that the child's needs are discussed as well as the school's processes for assessment and support.

Stepping Stone to School # 4

Stepping Stone 4: Involve Parents in the Planning Process

One of the most important Stepping Stones is getting parents actively involved in planning and becoming advocates for their children in the school system.

Parents are expected to be involved in all 6 components of the AHS program. There are varying levels of participation in each project and in each new year. Several AHS preschools have offered suggestions and tips that have worked to strengthen parents' participation and commitment to their children's transition to kindergarten.

Providing parents with registration reminders and tips for preparing to register a child for kindergarten will help them plan for the transition into school. Most families are very busy so having a checklist of necessary details can make the process much easier.

You can reach parents in many ways, such as:

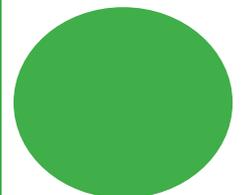
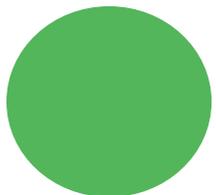
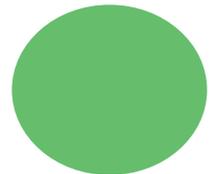
- Distribute information through newsletters
- Send a letter home inviting their participation
- Schedule a home visit
- Ask for outreach strategies and feedback on how the transition process is working for them
- Offer a Kindergarten Readiness workshop

Parents appreciate having a list of discussion topics so that they can prepare for their meeting with kindergarten teachers. Knowing ahead of time what is important for them to discuss allows them to be more confident on their visit.

Feedback from parents regarding the effectiveness of the AHS transition activities will enable us to help support them better and plan more effectively around these needs in following years.

The following activities may help to increase involvement of parents and guardians in planning for the transition to kindergarten.

- **Suggestions for Parent Involvement**
- **Sample AHS letters to parents**
- **Kindergarten Registration Reminders**
- **Questions for Parents to Ask About Kindergarten Transition**
- **Evaluation Form for Parent Feedback**



Suggestions from AHS staff for Increasing Parent Involvement

Here are some suggestions from Aboriginal Head Start programs that have helped increase involvement by parents and families in the transition to kindergarten:

1. *Monthly lunches at the Head Start:* Parents and family members are invited to join the children for a meal, such as 'Brunch Day' or a Barbeque.
2. *Field trips:* Invite parents to actively participate in field trips, especially on the Kindergarten Visit. If this field trip involves a different school, then parents are encouraged to take their child to visit the school that he/she will be attending.
3. *Arrange a partnership with the local School District:* The Head Start class visits the school each month to play in the gym; and the school sends a class to visit the AHS site so that the students read to our youngsters.
4. *Provide information at PAC meetings:* Nearing the end of the school year, informally discuss what 'kindergarten readiness' really, truly means – self help skills; being able to verbalize ones needs; classroom hygiene (cover sneezes and coughs, wash your hands, go to the bathroom independently); sit for short periods of time to listen to instruction or listen to a book; sight recognition of their name; using scissors; promote literacy through reading; etc. Encourage parents to assist their children with these skills at home, since they are the child's main teacher.
5. *Provide resources for parents:* Set up a book lending library, as well as a Book Club to encourage early literacy with the families. When families read 20 stories to their child, record and return the 'Book Club' paper to Head Start, we give the family a book to keep. Also provide scissors and tracers, etc. that the families can borrow.
6. *Transportation:* During Kindergarten Registration and important transition events, provide families with transportation to their school, as well as our support to help them register their child.
7. *Meeting with School District:* In the Spring, schedule a PAC meeting with a principal and kindergarten teacher where families of children entering kindergarten can ask questions and get information about how they can support their little ones with transitioning.
8. *Routines:* Make the parents aware that Head Start is assisting families to participate in their child's transition as we help create routines for the families and their children before they enter kindergarten. Children are more successful when these routines are repeated at home as well.
9. *Kindergarten Readiness Workshop:* AHS staff facilitated a workshop for parents and caregivers at the AHS site. Presenters adapted sections of a parent information package developed by their local School District, to discuss with parents a range of issues involved in transitioning to kindergarten. Topics included school expectations of parents/guardian; school readiness skills expected of children entering kindergarten; How to get support for higher needs; etc.

Kindergarten Registration Reminders

Name of school _____

Address of school _____

Phone number of school _____

Kindergarten registration begins on _____ [date]

Registration events and kindergarten transition programs are held at all schools. Contact your local school for dates and times.

Many schools have *'gradual entry'* which means that the children attend the kindergarten classroom for slowly increasing times at the beginning of September. For example, the children may be required to come to school for only an hour per day during the first week, and then an extra half hour is added each day until they are spending the whole morning by Friday of the second week. This gradual entry process varies, so check with your school for details.

To register your child for kindergarten, you will need to bring:

- Child's birth certificate
- Child's BC Health card
- Child's status card
- Child's immunization records
- Emergency contact numbers
- Doctor's name and number
- Proof of residence (hydro bill, rental agreement, etc.)
- Legal guardianship papers or court orders

Questions for Parents to Ask about the Transition to Kindergarten

Here are some suggested questions that parents may ask school staff when they visit their child's kindergarten classroom.

- Where will my child attend school? In what neighbourhood? At a different school in the School District? In a different School District?
- Does my child need an assistant?
- Will my child go full day or half day to school?
- Will my child be in a typical kindergarten classroom with other children? Or in a small classroom with all special needs children? Is there a resource room?
- How many adults and children will be in the classroom?
- Will my child need any special equipment?
- Are there school fees I am expected to pay during the school year?
- Will my child need any teaching or testing modifications?
- What is the length of the kindergarten program? (Each day and for the school year)?
- Will there be any changes in the kindergarten schedule over the course of the year?
- Will my child ride the bus? Will there be an adult or aide?
- What will a regular day of school look like for my child?
- What transition activities does the school have planned for my child? (e.g. Gradual entry, program visits)
- What cultural supports are available to my child and my family?
- How can I be involved in classroom activities/learning?
- What are the expectations for my participation in the kindergarten program?

Feedback Form for AHS Parents and Caregivers

To: Parents/ Guardians/ Caregivers and Families of AHS students

From: [AHS project coordinator/ program]

Re: Kindergarten Transition Activities at AHS

Date:

We would appreciate your feedback and comments on how well our program prepared this AHS student for transition to kindergarten. Any suggestions for improvement are welcome.

Did we...

- Assess your family needs/strengths/expectations?
- Meet with you and share information about transitions to kindergarten?
- Create a relationship between your child and the kindergarten?
- Offer resources to help you practice kindergarten routines at home?
- Help you get necessary information ready for kindergarten registration?
- Co-ordinate sharing of information about your child/family with kindergarten teacher and parents?
- Identify kindergarten and school expectations?
- Provide personal support through PAC activities?

Which transition activities at the AHS program best helped prepare you and your child for kindergarten?

-
-
-

What are the biggest barriers for your family in making a successful transition to school?

-
-
-

stepping stones to school ...



"We had a parent who was really afraid to leave her home. We got her into the AHS program... she joined the Parent Advisory Committee and we dragged her out to a couple meetings in Vancouver. Today, it's just amazing. She's going back to school, she's involved in the community, she volunteers, and she's just a totally different person."

– Janice Silver: Program Coordinator, Future 4 Nations AHS

"I learned through AHS that the school cared about my child's best interest, and then soon realized that the school wasn't such a scary place. Then I was able to go to the public schools and speak on my oldest son's behalf; he was later diagnosed with dyslexia. If it had not been for AHS, I don't know if I ever would have been comfortable with staff in the public school."

– Glenna Johnson: Family Involvement Worker and Former Parent, Kermode AHS

Stepping Stone to School # 5

Stepping Stone 5: Meet with Parents

The next Stepping Stone to School is engaging the parents and caregivers in the process. Using the suggestions from the previous Stepping Stone 4 about ways to involve parents, plan one or two events to talk about what is involved in the transition process. At other gatherings where families attend (e.g., celebrations and meals), set up a table to provide information about Kindergarten Registration events and timelines.

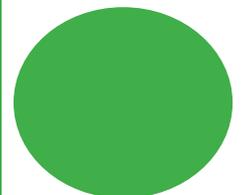
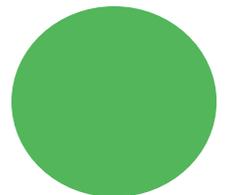
In groups and at parent/teacher meetings, discuss with parents ways for involvement in the transition process, their family's needs, their child's need for teacher support, any training needs, parental support for becoming involved at school, and so on. (The checklist provided may help to outline all the topics to be discussed.)

Parents are empowered by having knowledge about the school system, such as information sheets outlining their child's school contacts and Kindergarten Registration events, and being prepared for the school's expectations by seeing sample registration forms to show what kind of details they will need to provide. Take-home learning resources will help parents take an active role in preparing their children for kindergarten. (See Appendix for resources.)

Through PAC meetings, parents can receive mentorship from other parents who already have children in the school system. As a group, parents can also explore their own feelings and childhood involvement with school, becoming more aware of how their attitudes affect their children's experience. PAC meetings also offer opportunities for inviting kindergarten teachers and Aboriginal support team members to discuss the transition process with parents.

The following activities may help to increase involvement of parents and guardians in the transition to kindergarten, and to empower them as ongoing advocates in their children's education.

- **Building Effective Transitions Checklist**
- **Student Kindergarten info Sheet**
- **PAC Transition Tools:**
 - **PAC Parent Handout/ Discussion Outline**
 - **Sample PAC Invitation Letter to School Reps**
 - **Sample PAC Invitation Letter to Parents**



Building Effective Transitions Checklist

The following are kinds of topics that caregivers might discuss with Aboriginal parents to help them prepare for kindergarten.

- Health and Mental Services:** Work with families to make sure health screenings and immunizations are up to date.
- Support Services:** Assist with co-coordinating services children and families want and need, and work to ensure continuity of any existing services. (e.g., speech and language, assessment, social worker, family support worker). Provide information about high and low incidence children to school district.
- Culture/Language Barriers:** Find out how the school promotes language and culture of Aboriginal students. If language will be a barrier, what are services or is there a translator? How are Aboriginal children selected for support programming?
- Resources for Aboriginal Students and Families:** Some schools will have Aboriginal support workers and counselors to assist parents. They may have Aboriginal programming and clubs specific to Aboriginal children and families.
- Education and Training:** Find out what parents might need to know about school policies, what services are available for parents. Are there specific supports for Aboriginal children? How are children selected to receive these supports?
- Communication:** Discuss with parents effective communication strategies between parents and educators, such as telephone, email, notes, setting meetings with teacher and other support staff. Parents will also receive reports on their child's learning.
- Opportunities for Parental Involvement:** There are different levels of involvement parents can have in the schools. Discuss ways they might be involved (e.g., School PAC; classroom volunteering). Offer information regarding Criminal Record Checks (e.g., looking for related offences only; obtaining a pardon).
- Parent Rights and Responsibilities:** Inform parents of basic rights and responsibilities with regard to the education of their child (e.g. Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements; Access to information about their child; reporting procedures).
- Access to Resources:** Let parents know that there are resources available to them, such as after-school programs or child care, extra-curricular activities such as clubs.

- Curriculum and Program Goal:** Schools and school boards will have learning expectations and established curriculum for kindergarten. Help parents find out where they can find this information (e.g Ministry of Education website; school website; school board website).
- Family Strengths and Interests:** Identify unique family strengths that will support children and contribute to the school (e.g. cultural contributions/knowledge that can be shared).
- Ways to Support Children in School:** Develop best practices to build on skills that prepare children for kindergarten, teacher requests and expectations.

(Adapted from: Continuity for Success. Transition Planning Guide. National PTA and National Head Start Association, 1999)

Student Kindergarten Info Sheet (for Parents and Caregivers)

Name of AHS Student _____

Will be attending kindergarten at _____ School

Address of school _____

Phone number of school _____

Name of Kindergarten Teacher _____

Name of Principal _____

Name(s) of support workers _____

Your School District Transition Events:

Kindergarten registration begins on _____

Welcome to Kindergarten begins on _____

(details from school during early registration in March)

Ready, Set, Learn offers several sessions in _____

(usually May or June – get info from your school)

PAC Parent Discussion Outline/ Handout

The AHS Parent Advisory Council aims to help parents become strong advocates in their children's ongoing education. **These are some factors that affect our children's success in kindergarten:**

- Parents' Attitude Towards School
- Leadership by Empowered Parents
- Learning at Home
- Social Support
- Transition Mentors for Parents

Parents' Attitude Towards School

Children learn confidence and a positive outlook from us.

- How did you feel on your first day of kindergarten? Were you excited to go to school? Were you afraid of school as a child? Did you hear stories from your families that scared you?

- Do you think YOUR feelings affect your child's attitude about starting kindergarten? In which ways? How do you feel about getting to know the people at your child's new school?

- What do you value about education for your child and yourself?

Leadership by Empowered Parents

Parents can be effective advocates in their child's education.

- Would you benefit from exercises that identify your personal strengths as a leader, and to build communication skills to help you feel more confident and able to speak up for your child?

- What are your interests, strengths and cultural gifts that you'd like to share with children and families at Head Start and at the school where your child is starting kindergarten?

- Do you understand your roles and responsibilities in being involved with the school system at your child's new school? Do you need more information than is provided by the AHS program?

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Learning at Home

Parents are the child's first and most powerful teachers.

- What workshops and resources would help you support your child's learning in the 6 components?
- Would you like to have take-home tools to help your child with language skills (speaking and reading)? What would be most helpful to you?

Social Support

Both children and parents benefit from ongoing support.

- Does your child need additional support for higher needs within the school system?
- Do you need support in becoming involved in the school PAC or as a volunteer in the kindergarten classroom?

Transition Mentors

Some present and past AHS parents are willing to share their wisdom and experience with new parents. Ask your PAC leader or see the list of Transition Mentors online at www.ahsabc.com

- Would you like to have support from experienced parents in transitioning your child(ren) to kindergarten?

Sample PAC Invitation Letter to School Representatives

[Note: The sample letters need to be adapted to your specific needs using your site's identifying letterhead and logo.]

To: [School District Representatives/ Kindergarten Teacher/ Principal/ Aboriginal Liaison]

From: Parent Advisory Council at _____AHS

Date:

Dear _____,

The Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) program is a preschool program based on the 6 components of AHS: culture and language, education and school readiness, health promotion, nutrition, parent and family involvement, and social support. For more information about AHS, please visit www.phac-aspc.gc.ca or www.ahsabc.com.

The [name of site] Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) program is located at _____. Our Parent Advisory Council is committed to working in partnership with our teachers, families and school staff to create a smooth transition into kindergarten and also continued success in school for our students and their parents.

In order to offer support to our parents who are new to the school system, we are planning an evening information gathering. We would like to invite you to attend this special event. We are asking Kindergarten Teachers, Principals and Aboriginal Liaison Support Workers from the local schools in our area to visit with us at our next PAC meeting.

You are asked to bring information regarding the kindergarten program at your school, the School District's expectations for both children and parents, and how parents can become involved as advocates for our children in school activities or on committees and PAC groups.

Refreshments will be provided. We are looking forward to getting to know the future partners in our children's education.

Please let us know if you are able to attend on the following date.

PAC Transition to School meeting will be on _____.

RSVP to _____ [AHS or PAC chair phone number]

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Sample PAC Invitation Letter to Parents

[Note: These sample letters need to be adapted to your specific needs using your site's identifying letterhead and logo.]

To: AHS Parents/ Caregivers/ Guardians

From: Parent Advisory Council at _____AHS

Date:

Dear Parents,

You are invited to attend a special event. The PAC 'Transition to School' Committee has invited Kindergarten Teachers, Principals and Aboriginal Liaison Support Workers from the local schools to visit with us at our next PAC meeting.

They will bring information about the kindergarten program at their school and will answer our questions. This is a great opportunity to learn about the School District's expectations for both children and parents, and how to become involved as an advocate for your child in school activities or on committees and PAC groups.

We encourage you to take this opportunity to get to know your child's next teacher and others who will be supporting your child at school next year.

Kindergarten Registration packages will be available. Parents may want to fill out the forms with the help and support of other parents/ caregivers in our group.

Refreshments and childcare will be provided.

The Kindergarten Transition Meet-The-Teacher Event will be held on: _____[date]

Call _____ to arrange a ride to this event.

Stepping Stone to School # 6

Stepping Stone 6: Develop an Action Plan

The sixth Stepping Stone to School is the planning stage for AHS staff and Advisory Team. Together they design an Action Plan for generating transition activities by outlining what needs to be done, who will be responsible, and when and how it will happen.

A sample calendar is provided that offers a suggested timeline for transition events and activities. You might find it helpful to use the template in the Appendix (page 58) for creating a calendar that meets the needs of your preschool program.

The following activities may assist you in developing and carrying out an Action Plan with the Transition Advisory Group members who are supporting the children's transition into kindergarten.

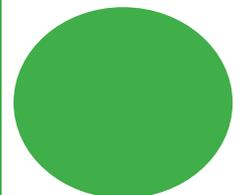
- **Developing an Action Plan Checklist and Worksheet**
- **Sample Calendar/ Checklist of Transition Activities**

"I think that helped, them learning so much before they got to school. My nephew that went to Head Start... he picked up everything up so fast and he wanted to learn, because they were teaching him to learn... he's been a Principal's List student ever since he left preschool."

– Lorraine Westrand: Former Parent, Power of Friendship AHS

"My daughter, who has been in (Head Start), is a straight A student, she's on the Honour Role, the Principal's list, she's in 'Peer Helpers,' she's in the 'Iron Man,' she's athletic, she's smart, and its because of Head Start."

– Charlet Whitehawk: Former Parent, Prince George AHS



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Developing an Action Plan

(for AHS staff)

Generate 'Transition Activities' (things you need to do to support parents and children in their transition to kindergarten). Place these 10 activities on the Transition Worksheet.

Check to make sure that you've considered these important steps:

- Assess family needs/strengths/expectations
- Meet with parents about transitions to kindergarten
- Share information about transitions
- Establish connection with AHS and school/teacher
- Create relationship between child and kindergarten
- Practice kindergarten routines
- Invite teacher/school staff to visit AHS program
- Help parents get necessary information ready
- Co-ordinate sharing of information about child/family with kindergarten teacher and parents
- Identify kindergarten and school expectations to parents

Transition Worksheet

| Transition Activity | When? | Who's Involved? | How will it be done? | Resources | Notes |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1) | | | | | |
| 2) | | | | | |
| 3) | | | | | |
| 4) | | | | | |
| 5) | | | | | |
| 6) | | | | | |
| 7) | | | | | |
| 8) | | | | | |
| 9) | | | | | |
| 10) | | | | | |

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Sample Calendar and Checklist of Transition Activities

NOTE: Activities for **Parents** are in red; **AHS staff** in blue; **School District** in gold.

| Month | Stepping Stones Activity | Who is Responsible? | Done √ |
|------------------|--|---------------------|-----------|
| September | ● Brunch for Families/ PAC to connect with (past and present) parent mentors | | |
| | ● Develop an Action Plan for Transition Activities Create first Skills Progress Books | | |
| | ● Letter to SD and partners introducing AHS program and inviting them to visit site Find out type of screening required by SD | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| October | ● Suggestions for Increasing Parent Involvement | | |
| | ● Building Effective Transitions Checklist | | |
| | ● Visit last year's grads at KG ● Build a Transition Advisory Support Team | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| November | ● PAC activities on transition to school for Aboriginal families | | |
| | ● Skills Progress Books go home; begin new ones | | |
| | ● Feedback form to SD reps Letter to offer ongoing student support | | |
| | | | |

AHS to Kindergarten transition toolkit

| Month | Stepping Stones Activity | Who is Responsible? | Done √ |
|-----------------|---|---------------------|-----------|
| December | ● Offer KG info to parents at Christmas celebrations | | |
| | ● Read-aloud books on KG transition for parents and classroom | | |
| | ● Invite SD to celebrations | | |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|--|
| January | ● PAC invites KG teacher/ SD support staff to meeting | | |
| | ● Info letter to parents re KG transition activities | | |
| | ● Identify schools that students will be attending | | |
| | | | |
| February | ● Questions for parents to ask about KG transitions | | |
| | ● KG Registration reminders for parents | | |
| | ● Send low-incidence reports to SD | | |
| | | | |
| March | ● Partnerships Contact list | | |
| | ● Skills Progress Books go home; begin new ones | | |
| | ● Contact SD and Ab. Ed. PSA re schedules for PD Committee applications | | |
| | | | |
| April | ● List of resources for at-home learning (book/web) | | |
| | ● KG checklist/ screening tools | | |
| | ● Prepare/ submit applications for PD workshops in SD | | |
| | | | |

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| Month | Stepping Stones Activity | Who is Responsible? | Done √ |
|---------------|--|---------------------|-----------|
| May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invite parents to KG field trip (questions for school staff) | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High-incidence reports to SD Field trip to KG classroom Create picture book about visit; Set up Dramatic Play as KG classroom Skills Progress Books go home | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thank you letters to KG class | | |
| | | | |
| June | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parent-teacher interviews at AHS Arrange meeting between parents & child's teacher/support workers | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student letters of introduction with photos | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invite SD staff to graduation Provide information table with Research on school transition for Ab. families | | |
| | | | |
| July | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Summer field trips | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skills Progress Books KG read-aloud books (including grad class Picture Book about visit to KG) | | |
| August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural activities/ KG workshops for parents | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dramatic play as KG class | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● | | |

Stepping Stone to School # 7

Stepping Stone 7: Transition Activities

The final Stepping Stone to School involves a series of networking activities that connect Aboriginal Head Start children, parents and school representatives. Along with the Transition Activities offered by the School Districts, the AHS programs provide many opportunities for their staff, parents and families and children to prepare for kindergarten. A few ideas are presented in this book that you may want to adapt to your own needs.

In consultation with the Kindergarten Teacher, AHS staff can make a checklist of desired skills that each child will need at the start of kindergarten. At intervals throughout the year, teachers use this checklist to assess the child's progress.

Workbooks showing progress in these skills are completed and sent home with parents at each parent-teacher meeting. This brings awareness to parents of what their children are working on at preschool and encourages them to support these skills at home. Parents can become more active advocates in their children's education when they have information and tools.

A discussion between AHS teachers and parents about low/high incidence assessment criteria will help prepare the children and families for seeking extra personal, educational and behavioural support in the school system.

The field trip for children and parents to a local kindergarten classroom is a very important transition event. Creating a picture book about this class trip is a useful tool for continued discussion and preparation for kindergarten in the AHS classroom and at home.

A child's letter of introduction helps the Kindergarten Teacher recognize the student and understand his/her family situation.

The following activities may be useful in your AHS Transition to Kindergarten process.

- **Skills Checklist**
- **Skills Progress Books**
- **Low/High Incidence Reporting**
- **Field Trip to Kindergarten Invitation**
- **Picture Book about visit to Kindergarten Classroom**
- **Sample Student Introduction Letter**

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

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Sample Skills Checklist

Name of child _____

| Skills and Abilities (4 year olds) | November NY-IP-√ | February NY-IP-√ | May NY-IP-√ |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Gross Motor | | | |
| Hops on each foot | | | |
| Catches a ball | | | |
| Rides a tricycle | | | |
| Balances on one foot | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Fine Motor | | | |
| Established L/R hand dominance | | | |
| Cuts on a line | | | |
| Uses a pincer grasp | | | |
| Draws a person | | | |
| Does a 9-piece puzzle | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Visual Perception | | | |
| Selects identical pictures | | | |
| Identifies all body parts | | | |
| Shows smallest of 3 objects | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Language | | | |
| Speaks in complete sentences | | | |
| Follows 4 prepositional tasks | | | |
| Follows 3-step directions | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Math | | | |
| Identifies shapes (circle, square, triangle) | | | |
| Draws shapes (circle, square, triangle) | | | |
| Counts to 20 | | | |
| | | | |

| Skills and Abilities (4 year olds) | November NY-IP-√ | February NY-IP-√ | May NY-IP-√ |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Intellectual Development | | | |
| Recognizes own written name | | | |
| Prints own name | | | |
| Tells full name | | | |
| Names her/his teachers | | | |
| Says alphabet by rote | | | |
| Identifies colours | | | |
| Beginning to identify letters | | | |
| Beginning to print letters | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Social/Emotional/Self-help | | | |
| Shares toys | | | |
| Tidies up at cleanup time | | | |
| Seeks help when needed | | | |
| Takes turns | | | |
| Sits and listens at circle | | | |
| Zips own coat | | | |
| Dresses self | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

NY = Not Yet

IP = In Progress

stepping stones to school ...

Skills Progress Books

Three sets of Skills Progress Books are made for each 4-year old child to use during the fall, winter and spring terms at the preschool. The activities included in the books encourage the desired abilities that each child should demonstrate when starting kindergarten. These books are shared with parents and families to involve them in helping the child make a successful transition into school.

Objective

To document over time the child's learning and show parents their child's progress towards Kindergarten readiness.

Implementation

Create a book by putting together about 20 sheets with a coil binder. Some ECEs like to include activity sheets and others prefer blank sheets to foster creativity. The exercises are based on the skills checklist developed with the Kindergarten Teacher for readiness screening.

In the 'fall' book, basic activities are included such as: drawing a person; cut out shapes (circle, triangle, square) and paste on the same shape; colouring pictures of items (red apple, yellow banana, etc.); trace numbers (1,2,3) or letters (A to H); recognize your name; draw your own face.

In the 'winter' book, the child might be asked to: draw a circle or square; trace or identify more numbers (4,5,6) or letters (I to O); copy your name; cut out shapes (rectangles, diamonds, hearts); match shapes in puzzle; colour quantities.

In the 'spring' book, there are more challenging activities such as: cutting out difficult shapes (leaves, animals), draw themselves and their family; print their own names; print or trace numbers from 1 to 10; print or trace all letters; counting quantities; etc.

Each day, have the child do an exercise to document learning in one of the screening categories. These books are sent home with parents at parent/teacher interviews in November, February and May.

Expected benefits

Involving parents in observing their child's progress encourages their participation in the transition to kindergarten. Parents can clearly see the improvement in their children's learning at preschool and identify their strengths and weaknesses. They will also become aware of the level of Kindergarten readiness that their child is demonstrating before he/she begins school.

The benefits can extend to the rest of the family. With these skills books as models, parents and siblings may continue to encourage their child's learning at home. Also, by using online resources and take-home activities they can help their child in problem areas.

Potential challenges

It takes time to set up these books the first time, but the outline can be copied and adapted with additional ideas over the years.

Low Incidence and High Incidence Reporting

In order to seek extra support for transitioning students, AHS staff needs signed permission from parents to provide information about their child to the School District. It is recommended that AHS staff find out when and how the local School District requires this type of information about the children to be submitted.

Important Note Regarding Privacy and Confidentiality

Consent forms must be signed by parents/guardians before any personal information about the child can be shared with the School District. Consent form procedures should be determined between the AHS program and the school.

Parents need to know that the extra supports that their children have been receiving in preschool do not continue once they enter the school system. A new assessment is required to obtain special needs support in kindergarten. The earlier the parents apply for this assessment, the sooner the child will receive help at school. However, parents need to be informed about all the implications of having their children assessed by the School District staff.

Low-incidence reports

These reports are usually sent to the School District in February.

Low-incidence children with medical diagnoses, handicaps and profound disabilities require documentation to describe their challenges and needs, as well as the professionals already involved in their care. These children are not be able to participate in school without personal support.

Low-incidence disabilities include:

- blindness/ low vision
- deafness, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blindness
- significant developmental delay
- complex health issues/ serious physical impairment
- multiple disability
- autism

High-incidence reports

These reports are usually sent to the School District in May.

High-incidence children with behavioural problems, learning difficulties and minor disabilities may require additional support in the classroom, such as speech therapy, Learning Assistance and/ or Behavioural Aides.

High-incidence disabilities include:

- communication disorders (speech and language impairments)
- specific learning disabilities (including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD])
- mild/moderate cognitive and developmental disabilities
- emotional or behavioral disorders

stepping stones to school ...

Field Trip to Kindergarten: Invitation to Parents

Dear Parents/ Guardians/ Caregivers,

There will be an upcoming field trip to visit a kindergarten classroom. You are invited to attend with your child and share this experience. This is an important opportunity for parents and caregivers to become more familiar with the school and to support your children in their transition to kindergarten.

The Field Trip to Kindergarten will be held on _____[date]

From _____ until _____.

We will be attending _____ School at

_____ [address]

Transportation is provided to and from the kindergarten.

Please call us at the Head Start for more details or if you have questions or concerns.

Hope to see you there,

Your AHS teachers

Phone number _____

Picture Book about 'Our Visit to a Kindergarten Classroom'

Objective

To create a teaching tool to help children and their families make a successful transition into kindergarten by providing a visual experience of the school and classroom.

Implementation

Create a picture book as follows:

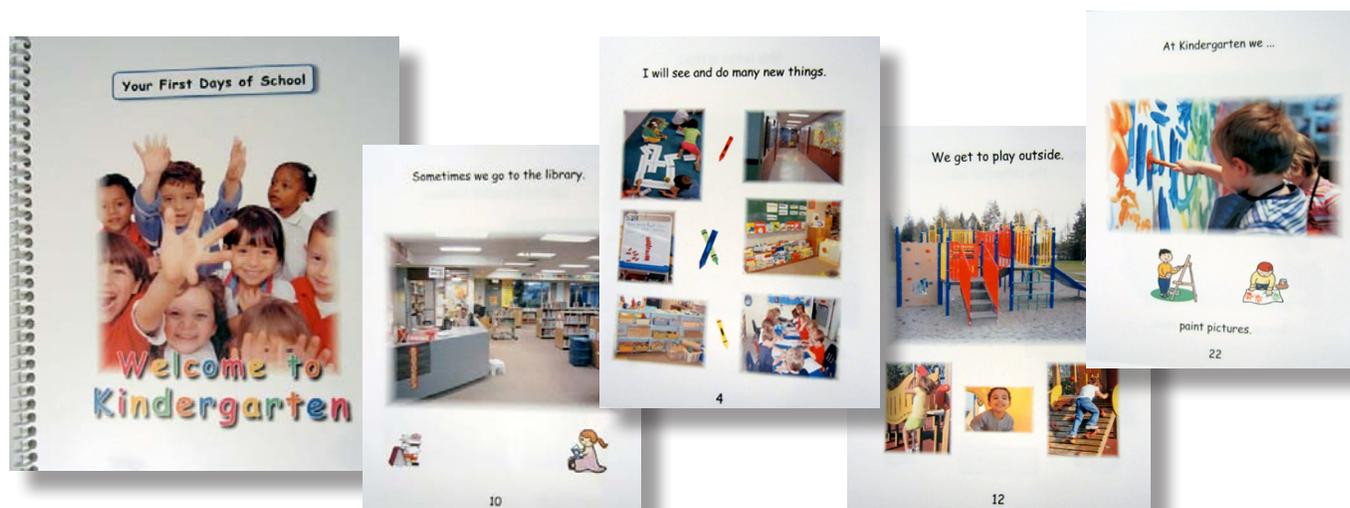
1. Take digital photos during the AHS children's and parents' field trip to a kindergarten classroom.
2. Make a storybook by fixing printed photos into a scrapbook and have children write text or tell teachers what to write under the pictures about the experience.
3. Another option is to create a word doc with digital images with text typed in captions arranged around the photos. Save as a pdf and print on sturdy paper.
4. Laminate and bind book so it is sturdy enough for children to handle.
5. Place picture book on shelf for reading times and discussions about the students' transition to kindergarten.
6. Make copies and use with summer program and/or send with children for reading at home.

Expected benefits

Through the fieldtrip experiences and documentation, children are provided more opportunity to wonder and to prepare for the transition to kindergarten. Parents and families can also become more familiar with the kindergarten classroom and transition experience along with their child.

Potential challenges

There are many different schools in the catchment area so children may attend classrooms that look different from the one they visited on the field trip.



Sample book created by SD 71 Early Learning Committee and ECEBC Comox Valley Branch

stepping stones to school ...

AHS Student Letter of Introduction (for Kindergarten Teacher)

To: [Kindergarten Teacher/Principal]

From: _____ [name of child] at _____ AHS

Date:

My name is _____ [printed by student]

Meet my family: [names and photo]

I like to: [labeled drawing]

My biggest challenge is: [labeled drawing]

I need extra help with: [labeled drawing]

If you have any questions, please call my Head Start teacher [AHS coordinator] at [AHS site and contact info]

If you want to know more about me, please call my [parent/caregiver] at _____

Transition Resources

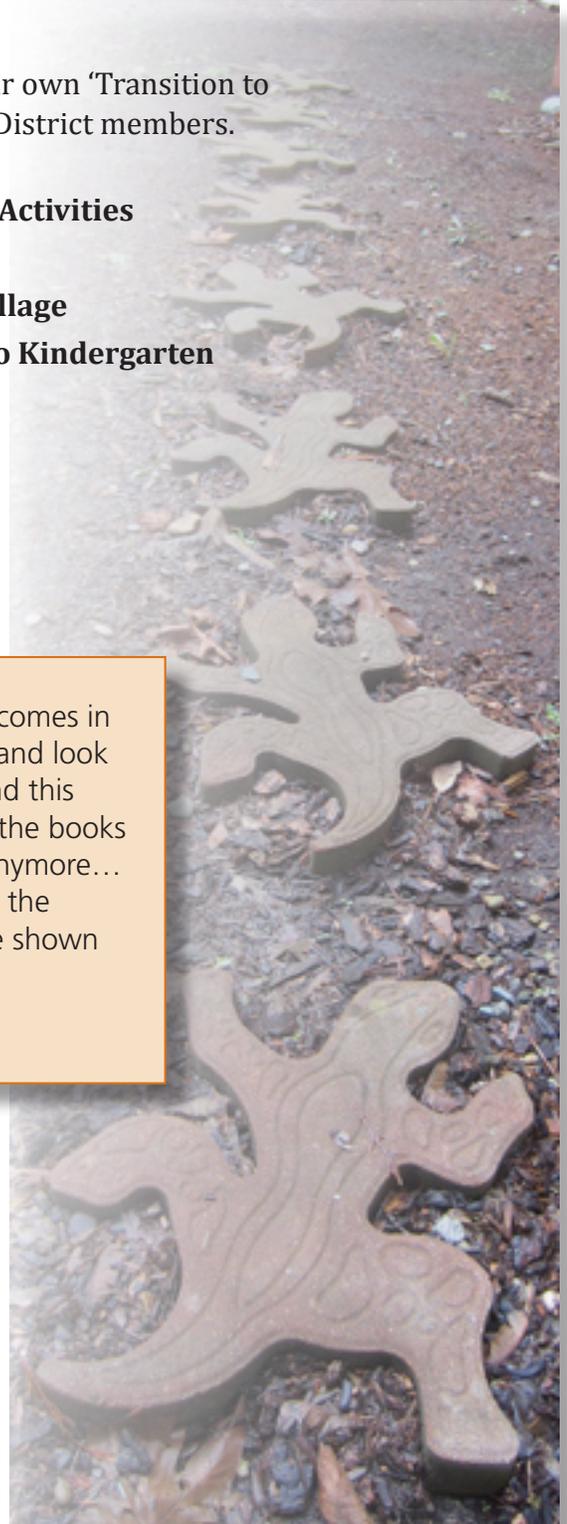
Appendix

Here are some resources to use as guides in designing your own 'Transition to Kindergarten' activities for AHS staff, families and School District members.

- **Template for Calendar/ Checklist of Transition Activities**
- **Residential School Awareness Workshop**
- **Building Bridges through Understanding the Village**
- **What the Research Tells Us About Transitions to Kindergarten**
- **Sample School Registration Form**
- **Take-home Learning Resources for Families**
- **Read-Aloud Books for Kindergarten Transition**

"The biggest change is their language. Every child who comes in from Head Start loves books; every child is willing to sit and look at their own book. In the past, children didn't understand this was going to be a positive experience; they would hold the books upside down and backwards, and that never happens anymore... and their comprehension is significantly much better. So the language and literacy activities you've worked with have shown benefit to the children."

– Amber Knezacek: Kindergarten teacher, Terrace



stepping stones to school ...

Template Calendar and Checklist of Transition Activities

NOTE: Activities for **Parents** are in red; **AHS staff** in blue; **School District** in gold.

| Month | Stepping Stones Activity | Who is Responsible? | Done √ |
|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| September | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| October | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| November | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | | | |

AHS to Kindergarten transition toolkit

| Month | Stepping Stones Activity | Who is Responsible? | Done √ |
|----------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| December | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|----------|---|--|--|
| January | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | | | |
| February | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | | | |
| March | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | | | |
| April | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | | | |

stepping stones to school ...

| Month | Stepping Stones Activity | Who is Responsible? | Done √ |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| May | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | | | |
| June | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | | | |
| July | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| August | ● | | |
| | ● | | |
| | ● | | |

Residential School Awareness Workshop

Aboriginal Children and Families in BC

Workshop Series by 'Naa-mehl

The sessions are designed to provide participants with foundational information and understanding about Aboriginal children and families in BC. Building on each session, the series of three (3) workshops will provide:

Why is History Important? Understanding Aboriginal History in BC provides overview of the distinct nation groups within a historical and contemporary context. Using a timeline approach, participants will gain knowledge about key events in history such as colonization and assimilation and how those events are linked to contemporary society today and the broad range of issues for Aboriginal children, families and communities.

Resistance and Resilience – Colonization and its impact on Aboriginal children and families in BC. This session will cover the Indian Act, the Indian Residential Schools, the Indian Day Schools, and the Sixties Scoop along with other events such as the Federal Government apology to First Nations People. Participants will gain knowledge and understanding about the generational impacts on Aboriginal families and communities.

Aboriginal Understandings of Children's Development – Critical Issues in Policy and Legislation. This session will provide an overview of Aboriginal perspectives of early childhood development followed by information about policy issues in program and service delivery for Aboriginal children and families in BC as well as discussions regarding the impact of legislation and regulations.

These workshops are designed for participants who are

- a) new to Canada or BC and/or
- b) new to working with Aboriginal children and families in BC and/or
- c) Work with Aboriginal children and families in BC but haven't had opportunity to learn about the history and how it relates to families in the present day context.
- d) anyone who is interested in learning more about the history of Aboriginal people in BC

Who Should Attend?

- Ministry staff
- Government workers
- Social Workers
- Police, Law Enforcement
- Early Childhood Educators
- * School Teachers
- * Child Care Providers
- * Health Workers
- * Administrators of Service Agencies

For More Information Contact Marcia Dawson at 250.590.9190 or by e-mail at marciadawson@shaw.ca

"Marcia Dawson is a powerful presenter"

"Very knowledgeable and inspiring"

'Naa-mehl is from the Gitksan nation. Her English name is Marcia Dawson. Marcia is Lax Gibuu which means she belongs to the wolf clan, and she is from Wilp Haijimsxw which means she is from house of Chief Haijimsxw. Her parents were the late Magnus and Angie Turner. Her father, Chief 'Wiigyet, Giskaast, was a hereditary chief and her mother, a matriarch. Marcia is the youngest of eight siblings, and grew up in Gitsegukla, near Hazelton, BC. Marcia's Dawson family is from the Dzawada'enuxw First Nation. She and her husband Al have four sons, Dallas, Morrie, Cody and Jesse.

Marcia has worked with First Nations communities and Aboriginal organizations for fifteen years as a band manager, program administrator, policy analyst, consultant and coordinator at the community, provincial and national levels in the areas of health, child welfare, social development, education, and early childhood development. She has facilitated workshops and training at provincial and international conferences. Marcia specializes in the development of culturally responsive programs and services for children and families.

Marcia obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and minor in Indigenous Studies, from the University of Victoria. She also has a diploma in Public Sector Management and a certificate in Administration of Aboriginal Governments – both from the University of Victoria.

Building Bridges Through Understanding the Village

This experiential workshop which has been inspired by Jann Derrick's teachings of 'The Circle and The Box,' and by many Elder's teachings, will help us to understand traditional Aboriginal ways and values. We will explore our personal role in supporting the revival of those values that worked so beautifully for thousands of years.

We will also explore, in-depth, the affects of Residential Schools and Canada's Policy of Assimilation. This workshop is geared to solutions rather than recrimination and is a great forum in which to ask questions.

Participants who choose to come to these often emotion-provoking workshop experiences, comment that they understood a bit about the issue on a cognitive level, but after participation in **Building Bridges Through Understanding the Village**, they understand on a deep emotional level as well. The workshop is done from a non-blame and non-shame perspective and invites all participants to become a part of the healing that IS already happening.

Learning outcomes:

- A cognitive and emotional understanding of traditional First Nations values
- A deep and emotional insight into the depth of and the intergenerational effects of Colonization
- Methods for creating supportive relationships in a positive way

Room requirements:

Chairs in a circle (nothing inside the circle)
Flip chart and paper

Note to workshop host:

Prior to the workshop, participants need to understand that we will be addressing Residential School and its affects in an in-depth way. Participation may trigger unresolved grief and loss issues for some. It is imperative that participants know that *in advance* and have an understanding that coming to the workshop is not mandatory; it is their choice. It is also recommended that options to access support after the workshop are provided.

Contact Kathi Camilleri at 250 923-9890 or 250 287-0150
Or by email to Kathi.Camilleri@gov.bc.ca or cckc@telus.net



Kathi Camilleri is an Aboriginal woman who has worked coordinating healing programs in the Aboriginal Community for 16 years. She has recently completed her Master's Degree through Royal Roads University.

Kathi works with Aboriginal mental health and has her own consulting business. She facilitates experiential workshops regarding Canada's Policy of Assimilation and Colonization with social workers, foster parents, health care workers, church groups, students and educators, frontline workers, and other communities across Canada. The healing power and personal impact of her workshop presentations have brought rave reviews.

"It is easy to learn from Kathi because of her gentle ways and her respect for all people."

~ Workshop Participant

What the Research Tells Us About Transitions to Kindergarten

By Dr. Jan Hare

Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as children from lower socio-economic families, experience additional challenges in their transition to kindergarten (Janus, Lefort, Cameron, & Kipechanski, 2007). For Aboriginal children and families, their transition to early learning settings can be much different from their non-Aboriginal counterparts given their social and historical realities (Hare & Anderson, 2010). The intergenerational trauma imposed on Aboriginal people through the legacy of residential schools often makes it difficult for Aboriginal parents today to connect with schools, struggling to trust a system that once devastated their families. Aboriginal parents face racism and cultural dislocation in their own experiences with schooling, creating a difficult relationship between home and schools (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Research suggests there are benefits for children from culturally diverse and economically and educationally disadvantaged families who take part in kindergarten transition practices and programs (Schulting et al., 2005). Children were thought by their kindergarten teachers to have good social competencies and fewer behavioral problems when they attended pre-kindergarten classrooms where transition activities were implemented (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008)

Barriers to kindergarten transitions faced by families include limited time to participate in initiatives, lack of transportation and unfamiliarity or discomfort with schools (La Paro, et al, 2003; Yang, 2010). But schools do not always provide consistent supports for families prior to or at entry to kindergarten (Nelson, 2004; Rosenkoetter, et al, 2009). Despite the education of teachers, many lack specific training on facilitating supportive transitions (Early, Pianta, & Cox, 1999). Promising transition practices aimed at supporting families that are documented in the literature include: 1) organized transfer of child's records; 2) shared information about the next learning environment children will attend; 3) parent training in advocacy for their children; 4) invitations to visit kindergarten settings; 5) parent participation on transition planning teams; 6) linking with other families; and 7) following up with families after child has entered kindergarten (Rosenkoetter, et al., 2009). Targeted interventions aimed at families, such as home visiting, were found to be effective in enhancing parental skills and knowledge about the transition process (Stormshak, Kaminski, & Kaminski, 2002). Furthermore, it was noted that educational professionals in early childhood and elementary school should partner with families to promote a more seamless transition for children and families (Wildenger, et al., 2008). The key is to build positive relationships among all those involved with the transition process.

It is critical that early learning programs, schools and parents pay attention to this critical time. In a review of early childcare policies by the OECD (2004), special attention was paid to Aboriginal children. Their report recommended strong focus be placed on transitions and actual outcomes for Aboriginal children entering formal schooling. For Aboriginal children, the transition to early learning settings begins well before families arrive at the first day of kindergarten. Early childhood programs and schools must attend to the tensions that schooling may invoke for Aboriginal families, requiring a holistic approach that engages children and families and accommodating and adapting promising practices identified in the literature to meet their transition needs.

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Sample School Registration Form from Vancouver School Board



Vancouver School Board Student Registration Information

Complete the attached Student Application Form and bring it to your neighbourhood school, along with the required original documents as listed below.

Go to www.vsb.bc.ca/schools to search for your neighbourhood school by postal code or by map.

Who should register at neighbourhood schools?

* Kindergarten to Grade 12 students born in Canada, who speak English at home as the home language.

Checklist of original documents required for registration

Note: Parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) of a child **must** come with the student to register.

Bring the following **original** documents:

- 1. **Proof of address in Vancouver.**
 - Home owners:**
 - Recent property tax statement
 - or**
 - Purchase agreement if you just bought a new home
 - Renters:**
 - Formal rental or lease agreement and hydro or cable statement
- 2. **Child's original birth certificate**
 - Shows parents' names with certified translation in English if needed
- 3. **Canadian immigration or citizenship documents**
 - For parents and children
 - Please bring passports if available
- 4. **Original school report cards** with certified translation in English if needed
 - a. Elementary school: Report cards from two most recent school years
 - b. Secondary school: All report cards from Grade 7 to current year
- 5. **Child's immunization records since birth** and, if necessary, any other important health documents
- 6. Any other relevant documentation involving guardianship, court orders, etc.



STUDENT APPLICATION FORM

VANCOUVER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Catchment School: _____
 Date Application Received: _____
 BCeSIS Pupil #: _____
OFFICE USE ONLY
 PEN: _____
 Grade: _____ Home Room: _____
 Program: _____
Last school attended: _____

STUDENT INFORMATION

Gender: (Check one) Male Female **Address:** _____
Legal Last Name: _____ **City:** _____
Legal First Name: _____ **Province:** _____ **Postal Code:** _____
Usual Last Name: _____ **Home Phone #:** _____ **Check if unlisted:**
Preferred First Name: _____ **Mobile Phone#:** _____ **Check if unlisted:**
Legal Middle Name: _____ **Proof of Address (Check one and attach when submitting)**
Birth Date: _____ **Municipal Tax Bill** **Rental Agreement**

Proof of Age (Check one and attach)
 Birth Certificate Certificate of Citizenship Court Order Passport Other

STUDENT CITIZENSHIP INFORMATION

Country / Prov of Birth: _____ **First Language:** _____
Citizen of: _____ **Language at home:** _____
If not a Canadian Citizen,
Date of entry into Canada: _____ **Language most used:** _____
Interpreter Required? Yes No

Citizenship Status: OFFICE USE ONLY

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| International Funding Eligibility | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| International Funding Not Eligible | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Out of Province Canadian Not Eligible | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Permanent Resident/Landed Immigrant | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Refugee | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

Study Permit #: _____
Permit Expiry Date: _____

Student attended a Strong Start Centre?
 Yes No
 If yes, name of school: _____

Citizenship Information(Check one and attach)

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Canada Immigration Record | <input type="checkbox"/> | Immigration Canada Permit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Immigration Canada VISA | <input type="checkbox"/> | Passport | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Permanent Resident Card | <input type="checkbox"/> | Permanent Resident Form | <input type="checkbox"/> |

French Immersion / Montessori Applicants
 Would the student consider an alternate school? Yes No
If yes, school name: _____
 Sibling in the French / Montessori program? Yes No
 Name of sibling: _____
 School: _____
Mandarin Bilingual Program Applicants Yes No

Aboriginal Ancestry
 Do you have Aboriginal Ancestry?
 Yes No
 Would you like to receive Enhanced Educational Services? Yes No

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Living with student | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Emergency Contact | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Speaks English | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Willing to Volunteer? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

Who has legal custody? _____
Legal Last Name: _____
Legal First Name: _____
Home Telephone #: _____
E-mail Address: _____
VISA/Work/Study Permit Number: _____

Relation to student: (Check one)

| | | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Mother | <input type="checkbox"/> | Father | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grandparent | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Guardian | <input type="checkbox"/> | Aunt | <input type="checkbox"/> | Uncle | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homestay | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | Family Services | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Same as Student's Address Yes No
If not living with student provide address: _____
Mobile Phone #: _____
Business Phone # if available at work: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| Living with student | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | Relation to student: (Check one) |
| Emergency Contact | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Speaks English | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | Guardian <input type="checkbox"/> Aunt <input type="checkbox"/> Uncle <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Willing to Volunteer? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | Homestay <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Family Services <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Who has legal custody? | _____ | | |
| Legal Last Name: | _____ | | |
| Legal First Name: | _____ | | |
| Home Telephone #: | _____ | | |
| E-mail Address: | _____ | | |
| VISA/Work/Study Permit Number: | _____ | | |
| | Same as Student's Address | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | If not living with student provide address: _____ | | |
| | Mobile Phone #: _____ | | |
| | Business Phone # if available at work: _____ | | |

SIBLING INFORMATION (School age siblings 5-18 yrs) (Check one)

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Name: _____ | Male <input type="checkbox"/> | Female <input type="checkbox"/> | Birth Date: <u>DD-MMMM-YYYY</u> |
| 2. Name: _____ | Male <input type="checkbox"/> | Female <input type="checkbox"/> | Birth Date: <u>DD-MMMM-YYYY</u> |
| 3. Name: _____ | Male <input type="checkbox"/> | Female <input type="checkbox"/> | Birth Date: <u>DD-MMMM-YYYY</u> |

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION: OTHER THAN PARENT

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Legal Last Name: _____ | Legal First Name: _____ |
| Relationship: _____ | Address: _____ |
| Does this person speak English? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | Home Phone #: _____ |
| Mobile Phone #: _____ | Work Phone #: _____ |

EMERGENCY CONTACT: OUT OF PROVINCE / COUNTRY (Call in the event of a Natural Disaster)

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Legal Last Name: _____ | Legal First Name: _____ |
| Does this person speak English? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | Work Phone #: _____ |
| Legal relationship to student: _____ | Mobile Phone #: _____ |
| Home Phone #: _____ | |

STUDENT MEDICAL HEALTH INFORMATION

| | |
|--|---|
| Doctor Name: _____ | Phone #: _____ |
| Dentist Name: _____ | Phone #: _____ |
| Care Card #: _____ | Allergies and Health Conditions (Check one) |
| Hospital: _____ | Allergies/Conditions Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is an Immunization Record attached? | If yes, What? _____ |
| Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | Life Threatening? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | What? _____ |

The information on this form is collected under the authority of the *School Act*, Sections 13 and 79. The information provided will be used for educational programs and administrative purposes, and when required may be provided to health services, social services or support services as outlined in Section 79(2) of the *School Act*. The information collected on this form will be protected consistent with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. If you have any questions about the information recorded on this form, please contact the School Administrator.

(Please sign in front of school staff listed below)

I certify that the above information is correct and valid as of this date. I understand that the provision of false information may lead to my child no longer being able to attend the assigned school.

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____ Verified by: _____

Administrator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

stepping stones to school ...

Take-home Learning Resource List

Here are some websites for free educational resources that help support parents to prepare their children for Kindergarten:

Parenting Resources from the Aussie Childcare Network

This website provides a list of parenting resources for a range of ages and stages in a child's development. Of interest to parents preparing their child for kindergarten is the box: Parenting Pre-Schooler 4 to 5 Years. This box will have links to Preparing Your Child, Ready for School, Prewriting skills, Television for Children and Learning to Read.

http://www.aussiechildcarenetwork.com/parenting_children.php

Kindergarten Worksheets

This website provides numerous worksheets that focus on skills and knowledge that will form the kindergarten program. The worksheets can be printed by parents and assist your child with their completion. These worksheets focus on math and numbers; letters and words; the alphabet; visual discrimination, phonemic awareness, fine motor skills and other kindergarten themes. Your computer will need Adobe Acrobat to view and print these worksheets.

<http://www.schoolsparks.com/kindergarten-worksheets>

Free Printable Worksheets for Preschool and Kindergarten

Here are printable worksheets intended to enhance concepts and develop skills in a fun manner. These are for personal home use with your child and build on skills they will focus on in preschool and kindergarten.

<http://www.tlsbooks.com/preschoolworksheets.htm>

<http://www.tlsbooks.com/kindergartenworksheets.htm>

Math Skills for Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten for Provincial Curriculum Across Canada

This website provides a list of skills students learn in junior kindergarten and kindergarten. The skills are organized in to categories, and you can move your mouse over any skill name to see a sample question. To practice, just click on any link and a question will pop up for you.

<http://ca.ixl.com/math/jr-kindergarten>

<http://ca.ixl.com/math/kindergarten>

Aboriginal Education Initiatives

Below is a list of school district websites that describe the range of Aboriginal education initiatives taking place in school boards across the province. While not all school boards offer the same programs and services, these websites are intended to give parents and idea of what might be available and what they might want to ask about.

Kamloops/Thompson SD No. 73:

<http://www3.sd73.bc.ca/education/content/aboriginal-education-initiatives>

Vancouver School Board SD No. 39: <http://www.vsb.bc.ca/aboriginal-education>

Prince George SD No. 57: <http://www.sd57.bc.ca/index.php?id=5010>

Surrey SD No. 36: <http://www.sd36.bc.ca/aborignaleducation/>

Mission Public Schools (Siwal Si'wes): <http://aboriginal.mpsd.ca/about/>

Prince Rupert: <http://sd52.bc.ca/abed/>

Comox Valley School District No. 71: <http://web.sd71.bc.ca/abed/>

First Nations Parents Club: A Handbook for Parents

This handbook is intended to provide some general information about the structure of the school system, how to approach the school and build positive relationships to help ensure that children's needs are met, and how to create healthy learning environments at home.

http://www.fnesc.ca/publications/Copyrighted_Publications/Parent_Hdbk_RevJan09_Cpyrt.pdf

Read-Aloud Books to Help Children and Families Prepare for Kindergarten

Annabelle Swift, Kindergarten.

Author and Illustrator: Amy Schwartz

New York: Orchard Books, c1988.

Theme: Emotions/Anxiety of starting kindergarten

Although some of the things her older sister taught her at home seem a little unusual at school, other lessons help make Annabelle's first day in kindergarten a success. Lucy prepares her younger sister for the rigors of kindergarten.

Mama, Don't Go!

Author: Rosemary Wells Illustrator: Jody Wheeler

New York : Hyperion Books for Children, 2001

Themes: Friendship and Fitting In

Yoko won't let Mama leave the classroom until her classmate gives her courage. In the second, an unhappy Yoko is assigned the role of the cavity in the class play about dental hygiene, but an inspired idea creates sweet success. Her new friend helps her realize that "mothers always come back.

The Night Before Kindergarten

Author: Natasha Wing Illustrator: Julie Durrell

New York: Grosset & Dunlap, c 2001

Themes: Overcoming challenges and school is fun.

It's the first day of school! Join the kids as they prepare for kindergarten, packing school supplies, posing for pictures, and the hardest part of all-saying goodbye to Mom and Dad. But maybe it won't be so hard once they discover just how much fun kindergarten really is! A fun rhyming story.

Tiptoe Into Kindergarten

Author and Illustrator: Jacqueline Rogers

New York: Scholastic, c 1999

Themes: School life and curiosity about school

Using oil pastels, watercolors, and inks in a loose and friendly painting style, Jacqueline Rogers lovingly depicts a curious preschooler who tiptoes into a kindergarten classroom. There, the little girl discovers a wonderful world of paints and puzzles, blocks and books. The rhythmic text and warm, happy environment of *Tiptoe into Kindergarten* welcomes children who are fearful of kindergarten, as well as those who are eager to begin.

Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten

Author: Joseph Slate Illustrator: Ashley Wolfe

New York: Puffin Books, c 1996

Themes: School life and the Alphabet

On the first day of kindergarten, Miss Bindergarten must prepare her classroom for her beloved students. This noble, whimsical teacher greets her dark, summertime-empty classroom with an explosion of color--a bouquet of fall leaves, a goldfish, rolled-up posters, and shoeboxes full of no-doubt-delightful surprises. Meanwhile, her young students get ready, too: "Adam Krupp wakes up. Brenda Heath brushes her teeth. Christopher Beaker finds his sneaker." Author Joseph Slate matches each animal character with a letter of the alphabet, and readers can flip to the back to discover that Adam is an alligator, Brenda is a beaver, and so on, through the more obscure animals such as the quokka and the Uakari monkey.

Benjamin Bigfoot

Author: Mary Serfozo Illustrator: Jos A. Smith

New York Maxwell Macmillan International, c1993.

Themes: Making friends and emotions/anxiety about starting kindergarten

Like many a preschooler, Benjamin has a favorite thing: Dad's old shoes, which he wears constantly, through dust or mud, dry leaves or snow. The news that the huge shoes may not be appropriate in kindergarten is a shock: maybe, he announces, he won't go. Fortunately, his mother comes up with the perfect face-saver: she takes Benjamin to meet his teacher before school opens; Miss Castle (perhaps primed by phone) doesn't comment on the shoes, but asks Benjamin to climb a step stool to help her hang a paper chain and shows him the playground equipment. The activities are tempting, but the shoes are too clumsy; sensibly, Benjamin decides to leave them at home so that he can run and play with the new friends he'll be making. Serfozo's gracefully honed text, perfectly in tune with a small child's concerns, is nicely served by Smith's realistic, humorous illustrations--which slyly reveal that Benjamin.

The Kissing Hand

Author: Audrey Penn Illustrators: Ruth Harper and Nancy Leak

Washington, DC: Child and Family Press, c1993

Themes: Emotions/Anxiety about starting kindergarten

School is starting in the forest, but Chester Raccoon does not want to go. To help ease Chester's fears, Mrs. Raccoon shares a family secret called The Kissing Hand to give him the reassurance of her love any time his world feels a little scary. Since its first publication in 1993, this heartwarming book has become a children's classic that touches the lives of millions of children and their parents, especially at times of separation, whether starting school, entering daycare, going to camp. It is widely used by kindergarten teachers on the first day of school. Stickers at the back will help children and their parents keep their Kissing Hand alive.

stepping stones to school ...

Sea Monster's First Day

Author: Kate Messner Illustrator: Andy Rash

Chronicle Books, c 2011

Themes: School life and routines

Sea monster Ernest is starting his first day of school. But starting school is a big job! Fitting in when you're a sea monster is tough enough, but there's so much to learn and do – reading, singing, playing hide-and-seek with the fishermen, lunchtime in the algae patch. This funny, charming twist on the worries and joys of starting school will reassure and delight the smallest children and the largest sea monsters.

Kindergarten Rocks!

Author and Illustrator: Katie Davis

San Diego: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, c 2008

Themes: Emotions/anxiety about starting kindergarten and school is fun

Dexter already knows *everything* there is to know about kindergarten. His big sister, Jessie, told him all about it. So Dexter is not scared. Not even a little bit. But his stuffed dog, Rufus, is scared. Actually, he's terrified. But Dexter – er, Rufus – has nothing to fear. As he'll soon find out, kindergarten *rocks!*

Chrysanthemum

Author and Illustrator: Kevin Henkes

Harper Collins Publisher, c 1996

Themes: Emotions/Anxiety about starting kindergarten and bullying

Chrysanthemum loves her name, and can even spell it, but when she goes to school, she is mercilessly teased by a group of nasty little mouselets who use her name as an excuse to pick on her. Chrysanthemum goes home each night to her caring and concerned parents, who reassure her that she is the center of their universe. But her parents' concern doesn't solve the problem. Finally, at school, Chrysanthemum meets a fabulous new music teacher whom all of the mouse children adore. Ms. Twinkle is a ray of sunshine, and when she produces a musical play, Chrysanthemum is chosen to be a daisy. When Chrysanthemum confides in her teacher about the way the other children are teasing her, Mrs. Twinkle restores Chrysanthemum's confidence, and makes her the envy of all her peers.

For more books on 'How to Stop Teasing' go to: <http://clj2210.hubpages.com/hub/How-to-Stop-Teasing>

Boomer Goes To School

Author: Constance W. McGeorge Illustrator: Mary White

San Francisco: Chronicle Books, c 1996

Themes: Emotions/Anxiety about starting kindergarten, and school is fun

In Boomer's Big Day, Boomer and his family moved to a new town. Now Boomer is going to school! Like many new students, Boomer finds that going to school can be a bit confusing at first. But in the end, he discovers that school is a great place for friends, learning, and fun.

Countdown to Kindergarten

Author: Alison McGhee Illustrator: Harry Bliss

San Diego: Harcourt Inc., c 2002

Themes: Emotions/Anxiety about starting kindergarten

It's just ten days before kindergarten, and this little girl has heard all there is to know—from a *first grader*—about what it's going to be like. You can't bring your cat, you can't bring a stuffed animal, and the number one rule? You can't ask anyone for help. Ever. So what do you do when your shoes come untied, if you're the only one in the class who doesn't know how to tie them up again? After hearing about all the horrors of school from a first grader, a little girl decides that school is not for her and has to find a way out as the first day of school draws ever closer.

Elizabeti's School

Author: Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen Illustrator: Christie Hale

Lee and Low Books, c 2002

Themes: The joy of learning, feeling home sick, and overcoming challenges.

It is the first day of school and Elizabeti can hardly wait. She puts on her new uniform and feels her shiny shoes. School must surely be a very special place! Shortly after arriving at school, however, Elizabeti begins to miss her family. What if Mama needs help cleaning the rice? What if her baby sister wants to play? What if her little brother wants to go for a walk? But soon Elizabeti is making friends and learning her lessons. Best of all, she shares her experiences with her family that evening — and can apply what she has learned right away. In this contemporary Tanzanian story, author Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen and artist Christy Hale once again bring the sweet innocence of Elizabeti to life. Readers are sure to recognize this young child's emotions as she copes with her first day of school and discovers the wonder and joy of learning.

Froggy Goes To School

Author: Jonathan London Illustrator: Frank Remkiewicz

New York: Penguin Group, c 1996

Themes: Emotions/Anxiety about starting kindergarten, and school is fun

It's Froggy's first day of school and he is so worried about missing the school bus that he doesn't realize he is only wearing underwear until he is on the bus. Of course he is mortified and tries to hide until his teacher spies him and shouts out his name. Suddenly, his teacher becomes his dad! It all turns out to be a nightmare and it is the voice of his dad calling his name that awakens him from this crazy dream. Froggy starts his day again. This time it really is the first day of school and he climbs aboard the school bus, fully clothed. He does all sorts of fun things at school, including teaching the principal to swim! When he returns home from school without his lunch box or his baseball cap, his mom wonders if he'll ever learn!

stepping stones to school ...

If You Take a Mouse to School

Author: Laura Numeroff Illustrator: Felicia Bond

Place?: Balzer and Bracy, c 2002

Themes: The joy of learning, school life and routines, school is fun

Mouse accompanies his human friend to school, and his enthusiasm for learning fascinates the class. Mouse joyfully discovers new activities, which include performing a science experiment, building a “mouse house” with blocks, writing a book, and more. With his minuscule backpack and expansive joie de vivre, the little charmer exudes excitement about everything he undertakes, and the day turns into a lively experience for mouse and boy.

Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come

Author and Illustrator: Nancy L. Carlson

New York: Penguin Group, c2001

Themes: Emotions/excitement about starting kindergarten, friendship, school is fun

It is Henry’s first day of kindergarten, the day he’s been waiting for all year, and he is so excited he almost forgets to get dressed, brush his teeth, and eat breakfast. All the way to school, he asks what it will be like, imagining all the fun he will have. But when he arrives, it is bigger than he pictured and a little overwhelming. He wants to go home. After getting a chance to find some familiar objects and meet a new friend, he decides that kindergarten really will be fun and to give it a try.

Franklin Goes To School

Author: Paulette Bourgeois Illustrator: Brenda Clark

New York: Kids Can Press Ltd., c 1995

Themes: School life and routines

In “Franklin Goes to School”, Franklin is excited about the first day of school. However, he is also scared as to the expectations. He then learns what school is all about and even drew a picture of his family to take home.

Mouse’s First Day of School

Author: Lauren Thompson Illustrator: Buket Erdogan

New York: Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing, c 2003

Themes: Friendship, school life and routines, school if fun

After slipping into a child’s backpack, Mouse emerges in a kid-friendly classroom, and explores lots of oversized familiar objects: blocks, paints, crayons, plants, a toy car, and so forth. Many of the objects make amusing noises that children will delight in repeating: “Vrim, vrum, vroom a car!” After exploring the classroom, he finally discovers “Wiggly, giggly best of all friends!” With bright, textured acrylic illustrations that fill each page, and large, sparse, alliterative and occasionally rhyming text, this book ought to appeal to any toddler or preschooler about to embark on a similar adventure.

Little Cliff's First Day of School

Author: Clifton L. Taulbert Illustrator: E.B Lewis

New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, c 2001

Themes: Emotions/Anxiety about starting kindergarten, building confidence, school is fun

It's time for Cliff to go to school. He will be starting the 1st grade. All he's been told about school is to be quiet and work... so he's dreading the moment he has to finally go. His great-grandmother, Mama Pearl and great-grandfather, Papa Joe are so excited for him to start school. Cliff really doesn't want to go because he has to leave behind his toys, home, family, and all the things he's familiar with and loves so dearly. When the day comes mam Pearl walks him to school and he reluctantly goes along. He's bashful until he hears laughing and sees kids playing. He thought school was all about being quiet and working hard. He didn't know many of his friends would be there and that they all could play at school. Once he knew that he was much better, more confident and relaxed.

My First Day of School

Author and Illustrator: Patrick K. Hallinan

Ideals Publications, c 2001

Themes: Emotions/anxiety about starting kindergarten, overcoming fear

The story follows five-year-old Daniel as he leaves behind pre-school and enters kindergarten full of questions and fears. Children will relate to Daniel as he wonders: Where will I sit on the school bus? Will my teacher be nice? Will I make friends? With the encouragement of his Mum and other people in his community, Daniel begins his first day of school, and all of his fears disappear as he discovers that kindergarten is fun. Cartoon characters and witty verse are sure to bring happy smiles to the faces of children anticipating the first day of school and those who remember their first day of school.

Sam and Gram and the First Day of School

Authors: Dianne L. Blomberg PhD, & George Ulrich Illustrator: George Ulrich

Washington: Magination Press, c 2002

Themes: Preparing children what to expect in kindergarten, school life and routines

Fast-paced and fun, with vivid, cheery illustrations, this book takes the child reader hour-by-hour through a typical first day at school—so a child will know just what to expect on their very own big day—and also look forward to all the fun things that happen at school. Written by a national expert in communications and human relations, it also has two special sections: “Things to Do,” a list of practical, simple things you can do to help a child prepare for school, and “Things to Talk About,” a list of questions to get the child thinking and talking about his or her feelings.

stepping stones to school . . .

Sam Starts School

Author: Barbara Taylor Cork Illustrator: Nicola Smee
Brighter Child, c 2002

Themes: Emotions/anxiety about starting kindergarten, overcoming challenges, building confidence

Each book in the First Experiences series addresses common childhood situations that cause anxiety and uncertainty in children. The gentle stories are designed to help parents, teachers, and librarians reassure children by showing realistic resolutions to situations. By taking the mystery out of first-time experiences, these books will help young children face new situations in their own lives. Supplements school curriculum in character education.

Tom Goes to Kindergarten

Author: Margaret Wild Illustrator: David Legge
Illinois: Albert Whitman and Company, c 2000

Themes: Emotions/anxiety about starting kindergarten, school life and routines, family

Tom can't wait to join the cubs building spaceships and making monsters in kindergarten. When the big day arrives, however, the young panda suddenly finds he doesn't want his parents and Baby to leave him, and his understanding teacher, Mrs. Polar Bear, invites the whole family to spend the day. Tom's parents have such fun playing dress-up, painting pictures, singing "I'm a Little Teapot," and listening to stories that they arrive early the next morning and plan to stay. Mrs. Polar Bear pointedly asks, "Don't you have to go to work?" Sadly they do, but they manage to find ways to carry a little kindergarten excitement into their daily routines. Large, bright, whimsical watercolors make this a perfect book both for group storytelling and for one-on-one sharing.

Twelve Days of Kindergarten

Author: Deborah Lee Rose Illustrator: Carey Armstrong-Ellis
New York: Harry Abrams Inc, c 2003

Themes: School life and routines, school is fun

Readers of all ages will want to enroll! "On the first day of kindergarten, my teacher gave to me... the whole alphabet from A to Z!" Drawing on the rhythm and rich repetition of the familiar carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas," *The Twelve Days of Kindergarten* is a welcoming introduction to school. Upbeat text celebrates the new adventure of school, and hilariously detailed illustrations showcase kindergarteners that every child, teacher, and parent will recognize with glee. Youngsters will enjoy singing along as the teacher's gifts accumulate, building to the twelfth day—the day the new students settle in and discover they love school! As an added bonus, *The Twelve Days of Kindergarten* teaches both cardinal (one, two, three) and ordinal (first, second, third) numbers.

Welcome to Kindergarten

Author and Illustrator: Anne F. Rockwell

New York: Walker and Company, c 2004

Themes: School life and routines, friendship, sharing

A veteran author of books for the very young, Rockwell has produced a quiet, reassuring look at kindergarten routines. A little boy and his mother attend an open house, and he discovers all of the fascinating classroom centers and the activities that he will be doing in each one when September arrives. After finding a new friend and sharing cookies, he goes home contentedly with his mother, thinking that the school building doesn't look too big at all anymore, but seems "-just the right size for me!" The story is enhanced by simple, bright, and uncluttered illustrations that look like a young child's artwork-a perfect fit for the text.

When You Go to Kindergarten

Author: James Howe Illustrator: Betsy Imershein

New York: Harper Collins, c 1995

Themes: School life and routines, friendship, overcoming challenges

This non-fiction book, which is illustrated with photographs, describes kindergarten activities, and anticipates questions that many children may have about kindergarten (for example, What if I get lost? Where is the bathroom?). The emphasis is on day-to-day activities, such as listening to stories and painting, but there are also reassuring statements about children's feelings; for example, that it may be hard when you don't know anyone, but soon you'll make friends. The distinction between kindergarten and preschool or day care is made explicitly. This book is fairly regionally specific: photographs are of schools in the New York City area, the term "nursery school" is used rather than preschool, etc. An introduction for parents is included. This book gives children lots of information about what happens in kindergarten in a matter-of-fact, positive way.

Will I Have a Friend?

Author: Miriam Cohen Illustrator: Lillian Hoban

New York: Aladdin, c 1989

Themes: Friendship, Emotions/anxiety about starting kindergarten

On the first day of school, Jim asks his father, "Will I have a friend?" Dad's reassurance seems not to be borne out in the first half of this gentle "slice of life" story, and this contrast provides both tension and forward momentum. As Jim settles into his classroom, it seems likely that Dad was wrong and there is no friend waiting in the wings. Naptime marks a point of despair, as well as a turning point in this story. That is delivered more in the painting of a small, shared truck than it is in the understated words. With its simple, straightforward text and its new, expressive watercolor-and-pencil art, this book captures the anxiety of that first school day.