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### **Preparing Your Child for Full Day Kindergarten**

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The first day of Kindergarten can be a monumental day in the life of a child. It is a day filled with new explorations, new friends, and many emotions. For a child who has not previously attended childcare, the first day of Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) is the beginning of a new chapter in their life that can be overwhelming and scary. Preparing your child for FDK means more than just registering them in school, and visiting with the teacher. It means fostering their independence at home, which will be transferred into FDK; establishing routines similar to that of the FDK schedule, and working together with your child to build positive relationships and communication skills that will enrich their FDK experience. Most importantly, ask questions about your child's day, share in their learning experiences, and be involved! Show them how much you are interested in their learning, this will be reflected in their confidence and self-worth.

### **Foster Independence**

Supporting your child in becoming an independent being means allowing them to take the lead role with dressing, eating, using the washroom, and small tasks around the house. Developing self-help skills in the home will reflect in their abilities in the Full Day Kindergarten classroom.

1. Children (must) be potty trained when starting FDK. Try to provide as little assistance as possible when your child is in the washroom, redirecting them to wiping and washing on their own, while reinforcing the importance of washing effectively to remove all germs.
2. Children should dress themselves, as you will not be at school to help them get ready for the outdoors. Encourage your child to take their time putting on their own boots, snow pants, and zipping up their jacket. When faced with the "I can't do it", prompt your child to look down at what they are doing, and slowly try again.

3. Children should be feeding themselves, and understand what is a main meal lunch item, and what is a snack. Have your child be involved in creating lunch ideas, and packing healthy snacks. Try and create 'litter less' lunches by using containers for lunches and snacks.

### Establish Routines

Establishing a routine at home, providing notice between activities, and supporting your child through transitions is an important step preparing them for FDK. Routines can be established in simple ways; having breakfast and lunch at the same time every day; painting and doing crafts in the afternoon; playing outside after they have eaten their lunch. Supporting your child and giving them notice of a transition, "five more minutes of playing then we are going to have lunch", will help them be familiar with transitional prompts and behaviours at school.

1. Start the school routine early. About a week or so before the start of school, begin putting your child to bed at a regular time for a school night. For a week before school starts, be sure your child then gets up, dressed, and fed like a regular school morning.
2. Walk or drive by the school so that your child can become familiar with it. If possible, let them walk around the yard or visit the playground.
3. Prepare your child emotionally and mentally by talking positively about school before the year starts. It could be a simple countdown ("In five more sleeps, you're going to be starting school!") or specifics about something they can look forward to ("You'll get to learn about all the different animals!"). Share what you liked about your own school experiences.
4. Try to be consistent with who drops off and picks up your child, and at what time. Children get confused easily; they will feel more secure if they know what to expect from day to day.
5. Let your child know what will happen through the day and who will be taking care of them. If your child is part of an extended day program, let them know if they will be travelling between kindergarten and another location.

Ask Questions, BE INVOLVED!

Building a positive relationship with your child, their teacher, and the school community that lasts from before they start FDK all the way through their years at the school, is important in conveying the message that they are supported in learning.

1. Get familiar with the school. Before the first day of school, visit the school with your child so that the route, the building, and school surroundings become familiar.
2. Practice sharing. Give your child all kinds of opportunities to be with other kids, to learn to share, wait, and take turns.
3. Learn at home. Include learning in your child's everyday life. Your child can practice reading package labels or weighing produce while shopping.
4. Encourage questions. Give your child the confidence to ask questions in all situations. Let your child know that it's okay to tell the teacher if something is hard to understand.
5. Ask questions about what your child's day. What center did you work at today? Did you have any special guests? Show interest in your child's learning, ask them questions to reflect on what they did each day, and show them how important their learning is to you!
6. Speak to your child's teacher on a daily basis, through written and verbal communications, attend information meetings and other events scheduled for parents of the school community.

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