



Early Learning Kindergarten Guidelines for 2020/2021 School Year: Creating, supporting and collaborating together

It is important to adhere that teacher and DECE will be working collaboratively in supporting students their classroom chory and will be responsible for the following:

- Planning and delivering The Kindergarten Program, 2016 in the classroom and the outdoor classroom
- Prioritizing the pedagogies in The Kindergarten Program, 2016
- Communicating with families
- Supporting and maintaining an online platform (Google Classroom/ Brightspace)

THE FOUNDATION OF THE 4 FRAMES- Early years settings are shaped by *views about children, the role of educators and families, and relationships among them.*

The Child: What do we know about our student, What considerations are we giving to our students mental wellness What are their interest and their academic needs? Which concepts and skills need to be reviewed and what new learning needs to happen?

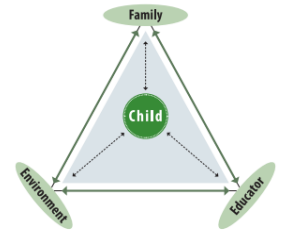
Role of the Educator: Where are we in our program delivery? Why this learning for this child in this way? What do we feel is most important? How are we being responsive to families and student? What formative assessment tools and support s will we be giving students?

Relationships: What do our families feel is most important? What consideration are we giving for families mental wellness?

Transition to a New Kindergarten

Important Return to school: “Go Slow to Go Fast”: *“Take the necessary time to get the foundations right, so that the rest of the house can be built safely without future problems”*

- Begin School with a joyful introduction Bringing positivity and excitement to new beginnings
- Check- in with yourself, your emotional well-being is most important
- When you feel well, you will be able to “lend your calm” and help students to co-regulate
- Create connection and community
- Get to know your students and families
- Build relationships with students, families, and each other
- A Strategy for Building Productive Relationships With Parents: https://www.edutopia.org/article/strategy-building-productive-relationships-parents?utm_content=linkpos3&utm_campaign=weekly-2020-07-22&utm_source=edu-legacy&utm_medium=email
- Focus on a sense of belonging and building community in the classroom and in the online learning environment
- Watch for students and families that might be struggling
- Establish classroom routines so children feel they are in a safe and predictable environment



Before the first day: Since many traditional first day back to school celebrations are changing consider the following model

Strengthen your communication channels with families and actively promote their engagement. This will ease anxiety and stress. Remind parents learning can happens at home and at school.

1. Produce a short video or social story about kindergarten that allows children to see the space and your smiling face.
2. Set-up an online playdate for Year 2 students to greet each other.
3. Set-up a parent welcoming session online to build community “Tea with Us”, This is an opportunity to show them your classroom online platform.

Staggered Entry: OPTIONS

Scenario A: beginning with a cohort of five, three Y2 and two Y1; adding to this group each day

Scenario B: five students a day beginning with Year 1 and then adding SK

Scenario C: two Year 2, two Year 1 and Year 1 or 2 with special needs

Consider students who have never been to school or daycare; consider needs of students (i.e. students on the spectrum)

Scenario D: Students attend a short half hour interview with one caregiver to meet educators this can be outdoors or indoors

1. **Scenario E:** Year 2 students 5 each day (building the group everyday for 2 weeks-(15 Students in total)
2. **Scenario F:** Year 1 students and identified attend 5 each day on the third week to build for 2 weeks (remaining 15 Students).
3. **Last week of Sept- all students attend are at school together as all groups would have been built**
4. **VERY Important: Keep daily if not weekly communication with parents about their child’s transitions to school. Caregivers will not be physically present in our schools. It's important to ensure they are connected and involved in their child’s education.**

Physically But not Emotionally Distant

There may be times when students feel upset and need our support. It is important to “lend them our calm” and help them to work through their big emotions through co-regulation strategies. “You want to encourage children to be physically distant but not emotionally distant. There may be times when students need assistance with their physical needs. It is our job to help them as best we can while always maintaining the dignity of the child. If we need to get physically close to provide them with support, then we will resume physically distancing once the child’s needs are met. We want them to know they are cared for and supported while at school.

Educators play an important role in promoting children’s well-being by creating, fostering, and sustaining a learning environment that is healthy, caring, safe, inclusive, and accepting. A learning environment of this kind supports not only children’s cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development but also their mental health, their resilience, and their overall state of well-being. All this helps children focus on learning and achieve their full potential in school and in life. (Kindergarten Program, 2016)



FIRST WEEKS BACK WHAT TO FOCUS ON

- Talk about COVID-19 with students
- Learning experiences that enable students to talk about and work through their feelings of what they have experienced and feel.
- Handwashing
- Sneezing in tissue or sleeve
- Snack and Lunch routines
- DPA routines
- Washroom Routines
- Outdoor play routines and expectations
- Classroom play routines and expectations
- Greetings: air hugs; air high fives; air fist bumps; wave; smile; bow, etc...

WHAT NOT TO FOCUS ON

- Gap Closing
- Jolly Phonics Routines and Instruction

Considerations for Classroom Environment

Students will be welcomed into a space that supports emotional guidance so that they feel safe to learn and addresses their mental health needs. For young children maintaining a strict two meter physical distance is at times unrealistic of students yearning to hug and hold hands. It would be very difficult to expect students to sit at a desk or have assigned seating, as developmentally young students learn using their whole bodies. Viewing the classroom as a cohort they can play and materials that are spread out through the class to encourage small groups of play or independent play. Educators removing personal belongings and excess furniture provides more space for students to learn through the space.

Everything in the classroom is purposeful and intentional for students learning. The materials in the classroom support child-focused play such as loose parts. It is important to recognize the CDC ratio <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/Clinton.pdf> Are you Correcting, Directing or Connecting? The key here is to connect students; Children learn best in an environment that acknowledges this interconnectivity and thus focuses on both emotional and cognitive development. It's important to create spaces in the classroom that support students play with materials that are individualized for their play. Learning to share is important for children in the first week of school, although activities that do not require sharing of objects and toys are advised for health safety.

We need to create an environment where we can say “Yes”

“Although our spaces are minimalized and somewhat “bare” the spaces are still set up with provocations for the children. We space them out for social distancing and set it up so that there is more of the same activity. The importance of observations for provocation is even more purposeful as there is not a lot in the environments, so the things in the spaces are very purposeful.”

- RECE, Thunder Bay

Remove all toys and materials that can not be cleaned and disinfected including:	Remove all toys and materials that do not support the learning as outlined in The Kindergarten Program, 2016.	What can be kept and is suitable to use:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Carpets <input type="checkbox"/> Plush Toys <input type="checkbox"/> Plush furniture <input type="checkbox"/> Remove materials that are challenging to clean and sanitize; plush toys, dress-up, clothes and soft dolls <input type="checkbox"/> Large group sensory bins (you can replace this with smaller individual sensory bins labelled with the child's name) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Less is more. <input type="checkbox"/> Less toys and materials will be more manageable. There will be less to keep clean and less to organize. <input type="checkbox"/> Less materials and toys will mean less visual clutter for students and educators. <input type="checkbox"/> Less materials and toys will result in more purposeful and meaningful learning experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Loose Parts (add a loose part list) <input type="checkbox"/> Sketch pad and pencils for each student <input type="checkbox"/> Small whiteboards and whiteboard markers support writing stages <input type="checkbox"/> Provide individual art materials and writing tools <input type="checkbox"/> Wood and plastic furniture, toys and materials <input type="checkbox"/> If sensory materials (e.g., playdough, water, sand, etc.) are offered, they should be provided for single use only and labelled with the child's name <input type="checkbox"/> rubber mats (anti-fatigue mats) are advisable as they are sprayable surfaces. <input type="checkbox"/> Programming focusing on handwashing <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitize or quarantine books (materials 72 hours at a time) rotating materials will be beneficial <input type="checkbox"/> Setting up materials in bins or mesh bags that can be washed and disinfected. <input type="checkbox"/> Use visual prompts to guide students <input type="checkbox"/> Support sensory play with individualized bins (of water with soap or modeling clay or playdough)

Flow of the day: Consider the space you have to use and how you can structure your day to fit the needs of the cohort of students you will be supporting. It is essential to use the outdoor space to the benefit of the children so that will be able to engage in outdoor play experiences. The meeting space and bringing children together can be done in short teacher guided times.

- Create hand washing routines for your students
- Use visual cues for handwashing.
- Students will wash their hands before and after eating.
- Use hand sanitizer
- Some Resources on Handwashing:
 - [The Global Handwashing Dance-Unicef](#)
 - [Hand-washing Heroes-Canada](#)
 - [Hand Washing for Kids \(and coughing in your sleeve\)](#)
- Post the classroom schedule
- Post activities that are familiar to students such as prayers they say in their classroom; songs they sing with their class outside; familiar meditation music and prompts; stories they know; structures they have built together; photos and videos from shared experiences; etc...
- Post Learning Goals
- Organize information by topic or by week to make it easy to navigate
- Post optional games and activities that families can do at home that connect to the learning in the classroom

TRANSITIONING TO THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Helpful strategies here could include:

- Labeling the child's emotions (e.g. "I know you're sad to leave Mommy")
- Using a song or fun way of walking into the centre
- Giving the child a role (e.g. helping to bring something important into the classroom, etc.)
- Wearing masks with funny designs (e.g., cat's whiskers) that could distract the child and stimulate a brief conversation (and even introduce new vocabulary, such as whiskers)
- Engaging a child in a brief guessing game to guess who or what is waiting for him in the classroom. A game like this supports language development by building decontextualized language (language that goes beyond the here and now)

Possible Flow of the Day; Teacher Inquiry Stance; What does inquiry in our indoor and outdoor classroom look like/sound like? (kindergarten Program pg. 24)

9:00 am: **Outdoor play** Students arrive and place school bag by the door/check in with families. Centres outside (individual activities where appropriate) games, gathering for a read aloud. Washroom (may need to set up a time for the use at the beginning of the day, around 10:15 am before snack and again when entry into school begins)

11:15 am/11:30 am staggered entry into school at 11:15 am; washroom routine and lunch

11:30 am Lunch

12:00 outdoor recess etc

12:45 wash hands/staggered entry

1:00 Gathering

1:15 indoor centres/individual activities/some-parallel play or co-operative play with friends keeping distancing in mind where possible

2:00 washroom routine staggered

2:15 snack begins (staggered)

2:35-3:00 outdoor play and dismissal

Strategies for Wearing Masks and Speaking to Children

(By Helen Livshits, Speech-Language Pathologist at The Hanen Centre & Janice Greenberg, Director of Early Childhood Education Services at The Hanen Centre)

- Speak loudly and clearly to circumvent the muffling effect of a facemask
- Lower yourself to the child's physical level even though you may be distanced
- Exaggerate your intonation in the absence of being able to use facial expression to augment and clarify your message
- Exaggerate your gestures which will help get a child's attention and provide visual cues in the absence of the child being able to fully see your facial expression
- Consider wearing a badge with a photo of yourself
- Use gestures to encourage a child to take another turn in an interaction or conversation, e.g., hold out your arm, lean your body toward the child
- Aim to convey your message with your eyes as much as possible such as using wide eyes when surprised, disapproving eyes when attempting to discourage a behavior, smiling eyes when happy, sad eyes when upset
- Make explicit comments to draw children's attention to your feelings, e.g., "Look how happy my eyes look"; "Look how surprised I am. My eyes are so wide!"
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- Encourage parents to play with masks with their children so that children become more comfortable with seeing masks at childcare. Play at taking them on and off so children understand that the person wearing them is the same friendly person they have always known even if part of their face is hidden. Mask play can turn into a game where parents reveal a smile, frown, surprised look, etc. Parents can make comments such as, "Even though you couldn't see my mouth, I was smiling and happy to see you!"

Strategies for Educators Physically Distancing

- ❑ **While maintaining physical distance, aim to still be low at the child's physical level**, so your non-verbal cues are more obvious to the child
- ❑ **Comment frequently** on what you observe children doing so that they know you are interested and paying attention
- ❑ **Have similar materials to what the children have** so you can:
 - ❑ ***imitate*** what they are doing
 - ❑ ***expand*** on what they are doing by doing something different using the same materials
 - ❑ ***extend*** the topic when appropriate by making a comment or asking a question that encourages children to think more deeply (e.g. while playing with toy insects and a magnifying glass, you could say, "*Spiders make me feel scared*" and/or "*When you see bugs inside your house, what do you do?*")
- ❑ **Incorporate "people play" activities that allow you to engage children, follow their lead and extend the interaction without materials or physical proximity, e.g., Simon Says, action songs, making up stories together, guessing games, I Spy, etc.**

SMALL GROUP LEARNING: strategy called **SSCAN** to help educator build language-rich interaction with children in groups. **SSCAN** stands for:

- **S - small groups are best** – groupings of three to five children are preferred for encouraging interaction. Physical distancing measures may now make it easier to support educators with organizing small group interactions.

- **S - select an appropriate activity** – this is now more important than ever. Not only do providers need to consider an appropriate activity for interaction, but all the guidelines for health and safety must also be respected. The important thing, though, is not to lose sight of the interaction focus. Activities should:
 - Interest all the children
 - Allow all the children to be involved with respect to appropriate developmental expectations (can the child attend to the activity, participate with the materials, interact as much as possible with the educator and his peers while maintaining distancing?)
 - Allow the provider to easily see all the children (even with physical distancing), with a particular emphasis on those children who are challenging to engage being positioned front and centre (i.e. directly across from the educator)
 - Not involve too many props/materials for the child to manipulate which may detract from the interaction/conversation

- **C - carefully observe** – interactions happen when children are both interested and actively involved in an activity. Watching for children’s interest and participation will be particularly important with physical distancing since the provider will need to keep moving her head around what will be much larger circle than would typically result from a small group of children.

- **A - adapt to each child’s focus** – aim to notice children’s initiations and responses and follow their lead. Doing this successfully means that the provider continues to observe around the group, uses her own materials to join in play, and makes responsive comments that match a child’s language level.

- **N - now keep it going** – continue to keep children engaged and interacting throughout the activity

ENGAGING IN SHARED READING STRATEGIES

Paper books can be rotated every 72 hours (quarantined books) educators can choose to create bins where books will be placed that will be quarantined for 72 hours after being used. Other ways of providing books that can be sanitized should be explored, such as bathtub and laminated books, which can include ones that are homemade. Other suggestions include:

- Group book sharing where the educator holds the book is an ideal way to engage a group who is distanced and does not require the children to touch anything or each other.
- Offer easy to clean props to children that encourage participation and interaction, such as a toy digger while reading *Where Do Diggers Sleep at Night?*
- Read with animation
- Make sure the book is large and clear enough for the children to see the illustration.
- Pause frequently to encourage interaction and conversation with the children. Pausing helps you create opportunities to act out the story, imitate actions, ask questions, make interesting comments and relate the book to the children's personal experiences.

The Outdoor Classroom environment

In the Kindergarten program, learning in the outdoors is included as part of the instructional day, and the educators play an active role, engaging with children in an inquiry stance as they play, explore, and learn together outside the classroom. Outdoor spaces offer valuable learning opportunities, and natural settings can inspire the kind of thinking, learning, leadership, and innovation.

Outdoor Learning Considerations:

- Consideration should be given to beginning and spending as much time outdoors as possible (weather permitting)
- Providing shade from the sun or from drizzle, consider canopies similar to one used for track etc to be placed in the schoolyard in strategic locations.
- Outdoor learning materials such as loose parts that can be washed, once used placed in a laundry basket.
- These items can be washed in the laundry basket using soap and a hose or placed in a bin of warm soapy water.

Intentional Outdoor Space Set-up

Using the outdoor space as frequent as possible will be easier for students to socially distance when learning outside. Intentionally planning your outdoor space to engage students in learning through the development of the four frames. Create a [toolbox of outdoor learning experiences](#)

Active Play (Self-regulation and Wellbeing): Build gross motor skills: Children have a natural curiosity and need for adventure

- Balancing, jumping, swinging. (bike tires, logs, home depot buckets, ropes, mini wheel barrels)
- Obstacle course
- Exercise movements
- Outdoor dance
- Coding in a large grid outdoors

Ecological/ Experimental Play (Problem Solving and Innovating): Discovering, exploration and hypothesizing- messy, flexible, messy and emergent

- Around the tree placing mulch for exploration
- Blackboard against the fence that would allow for chalk and paint with water.
- Plexiglass against the fence would allow for painting with watercolours
- Individual water play with a water play tub
- children can use hoops from the gym and hand lenses to explore a small area of ground and then record what they see

Gathering (Belonging and Contributing):This can be a large or small group. Fosters social interaction and provides a sense of comfort (The sandbox area when closed can work as a stage area for planned sharing or spontaneous events

(provide pylons, crates)

- Canopy- for shade
- Picnic tables
- Benches
- seating logs,
- wooden spool,
- wood cookies
- Singing is not permitted indoors so consider singing outside



Individual Play (Literacy and Math Behaviours + all Four Frames):This space is a place for quiet time (tarp, pop up tents) some children are sensitive to loud noise and need a quiet place in the playground.

- Chalk play
- [Reflective Sit Spots](#)
- Individualized materials for the outdoor to use

Loose Parts Materials for Outdoor Kindergarten:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pots | <input type="checkbox"/> Pans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Milk crates | <input type="checkbox"/> Spoons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lego | <input type="checkbox"/> Bins for water play |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing utensils | <input type="checkbox"/> Tarps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shovels | <input type="checkbox"/> Ladles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muffin tins | <input type="checkbox"/> margarine containers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yogurt | |

Kindergarten Entrance Protocol

Parents/guardians are not to enter the school.

Those who are dropping off and picking up Kindergarten students are encouraged to:

- Maintain physical distance from other adults and children.
- Wear face coverings.
- Remain outside the Kindergarten play area and leave immediately after dropping off or picking up their child.
- Kindergarten students in Before Care are escorted by staff directly into their designated classrooms.
- Late drop off or early pick up, parents will be asked to call the school from the front door but will not be permitted to enter the school.
- Office staff will sign the student in or out and notify the classroom teacher.
- A staff member will be requested to escort the Kindergarten student either from or to class.
- Staff or Kindergarten team members will receive and dismiss Kindergarten students from the Kindergarten play area.
- Staff are encouraged to release children to caregivers one at a time, maintaining distance from other cohorts.
- Staff are encouraged to conduct standard hand hygiene protocols before students enter the classroom and before they exit the classroom.

Recess? Who is supervising Recess? (CLASSROOM TEACHER)

- Students are expected to remain in their cohorts during recess.
- Students are to wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after recess.
- Outdoor times like recess can be used as opportunities to provide students with breaks from wearing masks within their cohorts.
- Until further notice, exterior school play structures are closed
- Maintain a physical distance while playing outside.
- Where possible, Principals may consider dividing schools into groups for the purpose of reducing the number of students on the yard for outdoor play.

Student Personal belongings

Personal belongings brought to school should be minimized and everything should be labelled

- Backpack (wear its managed needs to be separate)
- Change of clothing
- Indoor shoes
- Sun protection
- Water bottle
- Food-Lunch and Snacks
- Masks (Encouraged)
- Personal Hand Sanitizer (optional as this will be provided)
- Small comfort item (if needed). This may include a small item that can easily be stored in a pocket or backpack. This might also be a family photo that can be kept at school. Parents may also consider sending an electronic photo that can be posted in the classroom.

MAKING THE FOUR FRAMES Visible as we transition back to school

Belonging and Contributing

- Where do they play?
- Who do they play with?
- What type of play do they prefer?
- Are they a leader or a follower or an observer?
- Who do they talk to?
- What do they talk about?
- What have they indicated an interest in?
- What are they proud of?
- Describe what makes them special?
- How do they approach problems with peers?
- How do they demonstrate empathy?
- How do they participate in the large/small group discussions?
- How do they interact with their peers? With adults?

Self-regulation and Wellbeing

- How do they manage their snack and lunch?
- How do they manage being tired or overstimulated?
- How do they manage transitions?
- How are they aware of personal safety in their play?
- How do they manage turn taking and sharing?
- What activity do they settle into and focus on?
- How do they manage their ability to listen focus at group times?
- Describe their motor skills
- How do they manage their emotions?
- How do they respond to the emotions of others and to their own emotions?
- How do they manage toileting and hygiene?
- How do they manage conflict with peers and adults?

Problem Solving and Innovating

- What are they curious about?
- What do they investigate?
- What kind of questions do they ask?
- What kind of predictions do they make?
- How do they respond to questions about their interest?
- How do they make use of open-ended materials indoors and outdoors?
- How do they approach problems within projects and creations they are engaged in?
- How do they describe their projects and creations?
- How do they use the resources in the room, including people?
- How do they advocate for their needs?

Demonstrate literacy and Mathematical Behaviours

- What evidence of mathematical thinking and understanding have they demonstrated?
- How do they use numbers? What do they know about numbers?
- What mathematical vocabulary do they use?
- How do they demonstrate their understanding of measurement?
- How have they shown awareness of patterning?
- Where are they sorting? (i.e. tidy up time)
- Describe their speech patterns and vocabulary?
- What do they write? describe it?
- What are they interested in during read-alouds?
- What knowledge of letters and sounds have they demonstrated?
- What environmental print do they recognize?

Chorting?

DECE/classroom and itinerant teachers

Space considerations: gym, library, outdoors, other.

Diego and I think that it's best to use the classroom space and outdoor space for learning.

Question what will happen with the itinerant teachers? Will they be part of the classroom bubble as well? Will students have physical education and music?

Other considerations

- What are the protocols for the following: Nose bleeds, washroom accidents, students not toilet trained, excessive crying over a period of more than a week (this is real it's happened to me) According to another region's public health (tears carry the virus) and so they have been instructed to wear the gown and switch in between students that need help.
- Will PPE gowns be given to kindergarten teams? They will need several to switch in between addressing children.
- Are we considering various re-entry points for families that do not wish to send their children now to school?
One region is looking at having entry points for families to register their students after Thanksgiving, or November or in January
- One of the PD Days specifically to support Kindergarten teams with Outdoor Education and time for them to contact families and begin the process of building community.

Resources

1. Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy: A Resource for Kindergarten Teachers, 2015, www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/childhood/time_for_joy/full_doc.pdf.
2. **Childcare After COVID-19: Balancing Precautions While Building Interactions** *By Helen Livshits, Speech-Language Pathologist at The Hanen Centre & Janice Greenberg, Director of Early Childhood Education Services at The Hanen Centre*
3. <https://chooseactreflect.wordpress.com/2020/07/06/new-thoughts-on-best-practice-for-distance-learning/>
4. GO SLOW TO GO FAST https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/preview/lhae/UserFiles/File/Gentle_Reopening_of_Ontario_Schools-2020.pdf
5. Ontario Kindergarten Program, 2016