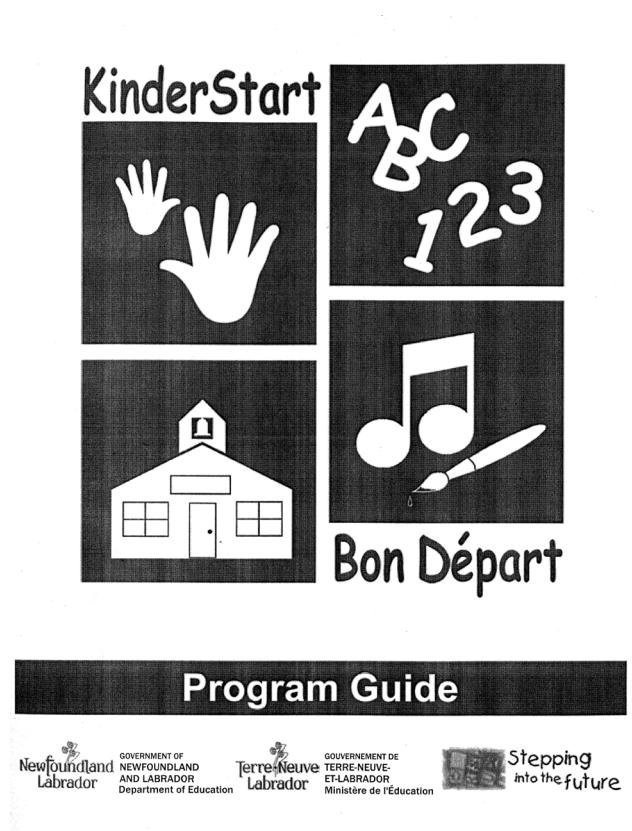


Connections

KinderStart

KinderStart is a school transition program offered in the year prior to Kindergarten entry. The program consists of five to ten one-hour orientation sessions organized and promoted at the school level for children and their parents/caregivers. The sessions support children's adjustment to the school environment and provide parents/caregivers with information on how to support their children's learning at home. Establishing a positive home/school partnership will likely influence a child's learning in this critical year.

A *KinderStart Program Guide* is provided to kindergarten teachers throughout the province. It is a resource which is used to facilitate both classroom and parent sessions throughout the school year while supporting the home-school connection.



Home-School Partnerships

Communication between home and school is very important in making a positive start to the home-school partnership. Many kindergarten parents/caregivers may be unfamiliar with the daily routines of a school day. Therefore, it is necessary for the kindergarten teacher to have good communication regarding the daily routines and expectations.

Parents are the first and most important teachers. When a healthy and positive relationship is established in the kindergarten year it can set the tone for the duration of the student's formal schooling. Consider the following suggestions when developing home-school partnerships:

- Communicate to parents regularly through newsletters, notes, e-mails and telephone calls.
- Invite parents to volunteer in your classroom or during field trips.
- Inform parents about arrival and departure procedures.
- Encourage parents to advise you of special circumstances or changes in their child's regular routines.
- Provide parents with a monthly calendar so they will have advance notice of scheduled events that are planned for the month. Busy parents appreciate this notice and may be able to make themselves available to volunteer. A calendar highlighting scheduled physical education helps to ensure appropriate dress.
- Use a class web page or e-mail contact as a useful communication tool but be cognizant of the fact that not all homes will have internet access. Encourage parents/caregivers to forward urgent messages to the school office as there is little time to check e-mails during class time.
- Ensure that parents provide emergency contact numbers and any medical information that you need.
- Be positive, professional and friendly in your interactions with parents.
- Demonstrate acceptance and respect for each family's composition, ethnicity, and culture.
- Adhere to and respect confidentiality when dealing with parents and children.
- Keep parents informed by documenting children's learning experiences in various formats such as photo albums, videos, web pages, display boards and bulletin board displays of children's work.
- Provide parents with the opportunity to share their talents, skills or hobbies with the class. This experience can support children's interest and build relations with parents. This may include such things as a Math Fair, Family Literacy Day, Cultural Day and other school-wide special events.

Homework in Kindergarten

Policies regarding homework vary amongst individual schools and districts. These policies will guide the amount and type of homework, if any, sent home by the kindergarten teacher. The following suggestions will help build a positive home and school connection when assigning tasks to be completed at home:

- Encourage parents and caregivers to read daily with their children. Send home a variety of books that can be read by the child (by memory, or familiar vocabulary) and books to support parents/caregivers reading to their child. Stress reading for enjoyment as opposed to reading as a “school” requirement. Establishing reading for pleasure on a daily basis is extremely important.
- Create a booklet/folder of nursery rhymes, chants, poems, or songs that you do everyday in the classroom to give to parents/caregivers. Encourage the students to teach them to a sibling, grand-parent or parent/caregiver.
- Encourage parents/caregivers to talk with their child about his/her day and inform them how to ask the right kind of questions. The questions should be open-ended and might include:
 - Can you tell me about the story that your teacher read today?
 - Can you tell me about the most exciting part of your day?
- Extend on the day-to-day activities of the classroom. For example, to reinforce a mathematical concept being explored, ask children to look for triangles in their neighborhood much like they did in the classroom.
- Send home in-class games on a weekly basis for the family to play together. It is important to ensure that the child knows how to play the game so he/she can be the “teacher”.
- Develop subject- based activity backpacks or baggies with interesting activities related to outcomes and concepts that reflect classroom learning and encourage enjoyable interactions between child and parent/caregiver.
- Recognize that each home environment is different and deadlines may be difficult for some families to adhere to when completing activities with their child. Be cognizant that some children may not have anyone at home who can spend time with them on play and learning activities.
- Make activities open-ended so that they are adaptable to the needs of all learners.