



FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

A QUESTION AND ANSWER GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Beginning full-day kindergarten is an exciting new step for your child and for you. This guide will provide you with some details about full-day kindergarten and answer some questions you may have about how it works and how it will help your child.

What is full-day kindergarten?

In September 2010, Ontario began phasing in full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds. By September 2014, it will be rolled out to all elementary schools across the province.

Full-day kindergarten offers:

- An engaging, educational program with learning through play during the regular school day
- Programs before and after school hours designed to complement the regular school day. These are optional and are offered to parents for a reasonable fee. Financial assistance will be available for families who qualify. Boards will offer programs before and after school hours based on parent demand.

How will my child benefit?

Like existing kindergarten programs, full-day kindergarten is optional for four- and five-year-olds. But research shows that children who participate in full-day early learning programs – like full-day kindergarten – get a stronger start in life. In full-day kindergarten, your child will benefit from:

- **A stronger start in school**

A full day of learning early in life can help improve your child's reading, writing and math skills and provide a strong foundation for future learning. It also makes the transition to Grade 1 easier for both you and your child. When starting school is an enjoyable experience, children are more inclined to learn and will be eager to be part of the school experience.





- **More time with classmates**

During the regular school day, your child will benefit from being able to socialize with other children and develop the academic and social skills necessary for future success. Programs before and after school hours will give your child even more time with other children in a familiar setting.

- **A seamless and integrated day**

Your child will remain in familiar surroundings with staff and friends, rather than moving between different programs and locations.

Who will support my child's learning?

Teachers and early childhood educators will work together to help your child learn during the school day. They will implement a carefully planned program that is challenging and geared to each child's level of development.

Your child will benefit from the complementary skills and experience that early childhood educators and teachers bring to the program. With two qualified professionals in the classroom for the full school day, your child will get more individual attention and opportunities to learn.

What will my child learn and do during the regular school day?

Your child will be involved in many different kinds of activities designed to help young learners explore, discover and grow.

Research shows that there is a strong link between play and learning for young children, especially in the areas of problem solving, language and number skills, and social, physical and emotional skills. Your child will take part in spontaneous play, and also in more structured learning through play, under the guidance of the teacher and early childhood educator. These activities will help your child to think creatively, explore and investigate, solve problems and share learning with others.

Teachers and early childhood educators in full-day kindergarten classes will be guided by a new curriculum document which is designed to help your child develop the social, emotional, academic and physical skills that provide a good foundation for success in school and throughout life.

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Exploration and investigation:

Several children design small boats and then bring them over to the water centre. Each child puts his or her boat in the water and then places one shell at a time in the boat. Another child helps keep track of the number of shells using a simple tally. The teacher or early childhood educator asks the children to find out which boat held the most shells before sinking and think about how it is different from the other boats.

Creative thinking:

A small group of children makes several attempts to build a tower as tall as they are. Through trial and error, they discover that if they make the bottom of the tower wider they can build it taller. They draw a picture of the finished product and label the pictures to show their solution.





Observing and learning:

After making bird feeders from recycled materials, the children place them in the tree outside their classroom window. They observe and record the activity that takes place at each of the feeders. With support from the teacher and early childhood educator, and based on their own observations, some of the children make modifications to their feeders and place them back outside to observe the effect of the changes on bird activity.

What will my child learn and do before and after school?

During the school year, some schools will offer the integrated before- and after-school program if enough parents are interested. This program will complement what happens during the regular school day. Under the care of an early childhood educator, students will participate in quiet reading time, activities in the gym or outside, computer lab visits and free play time in the classroom.

Where there is enough demand from parents and the board has the capacity, some school boards may extend the program to other times of the year, including summertime and March break. They may also make the program available to children from six to 12 years old.

The programs are optional and offered at a reasonable fee set by the school board. Check with your local principal or board for more details. Subsidies will be available to some families, based on financial need, through the municipality.

How can I be involved?

Your involvement in your child's learning is important at every stage of his or her education. Here are some simple ways you can help your child make the most of full-day kindergarten:

- Talk to the teacher and early childhood educator and ask how you can support your child at home every day; for example, by reading to your child, playing with your child and enjoying other learning activities.
- Show an interest in your child's learning by making school and learning an important part of family conversation. You can also ask your child what he or she learned or did during the day. For example:
 - What centres did you work at today (for example: blocks, sand, water, library or dramatic play)? What did you do there?
 - You had special visitors in your class today. Who were they? What did they talk about? What did they bring with them?
 - I saw the picture you did hanging on the bulletin board in your classroom. Tell me about how you made it. How did you decide what to draw?
- Attend information meetings and other events organized for parents and families.
- Speak to your child's teacher or early childhood educator if you have any questions or concerns about your child's school experience.



Why has Ontario introduced full-day kindergarten?

In today's complex world, education is more important than ever for our children. Full-day kindergarten is designed to give your child a stronger start in school and in life. Full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds is part of Ontario's plan to support early learning and child development, build a stronger school system and contribute to Ontario's long-term economic competitive advantage.

Do you have more questions?

Ask your school principal for more information about full-day kindergarten at your school.

To find more information about full-day kindergarten and see a list of schools, visit **ontario.ca/kindergarten**

Call **1-800-387-5514** toll-free in Ontario and **(416) 325-2929** from outside Ontario for information in English and French.

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