

WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN

Dear Parents and Guardians,

“One of the primary goals of the Kindergarten program is to assist children in making a smooth transition from home, childcare, or preschool settings to a school setting”

(The Kindergarten Program, 2016).

To support this transition, the Thames Valley District School Board will continue to provide high quality play-based and inquiry programs for our youngest learners. We have enhanced health and safety measures to ensure all learning environments are safe.



What does In-person Learning in Kindergarten look like in Thames Valley?

As a board, we are committed to providing learning opportunities that build on the Ontario Ministry of Education Kindergarten Program. Inquiry and play-based learning focuses on development within four frames that align to how learning naturally happens:

1. Belonging and Contributing
2. Self-Regulation and Well-Being
3. Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours
4. Problem Solving and Innovating

What will my child be doing during In-person Learning in the Kindergarten classroom?

Children will:

- Participate in a variety of play-based and inquiry learning throughout the day that are planned by the educator team, with the interest, needs, and abilities of all learners at the forefront;
- Engage in large group, small group, and one-to-one learning to build meaningful relationships with children and educators in their class;
- Learn and participate in consistent routines around proper hand washing, physical distancing and safety protocols - these will become a natural extension to your child's day as they practice these routines; through modeling, visual supports, poems, and the use of social scripts (stories about positive behaviours at school);
- Be prompted to follow health and safety protocol throughout the day (e.g., distancing, hand washing);
- Experience classroom environments that are set-up to promote building relationships, using materials that can be cleaned and sanitized easily;
- Frequently be learning outdoors;
- Have support getting dressed, with the intention of increasing independence;
- Bring individual lunches, snacks and water bottles to school each day. There will be multiple opportunities throughout the day to eat, with sanitization taking place in between;
- Be assigned an individual coat hook/cubby where they may place their personal belongings each day.



How are educator teams preparing to welcome my child to Kindergarten?

Educator teams will:

- Be trained in COVID-19 related health and safety protocols;
- Develop a 'flow of the day' routine that allows for large blocks of time for children to play and learn indoors and outdoors, while ensuring opportunities to practice proper hand washing;
- Set up the classroom learning environment to foster a play-based and inquiry program with learning areas and materials that adhere to health and safety guidelines;
- Continue to plan and implement the Kindergarten program, with a focus on Belonging and Contributing and Self-Regulation and Well-Being;
- Be encouraged to increase learning in the outdoor spaces;
- Remove all non-approved materials from the classroom based on TVDSB health and safety protocol (e.g. costumes, soft toys etc.);
- Provide specific invitations to peak each child's interest and expand their learning, using health and safety approved materials.



What does Full Remote Learning in Kindergarten look like?

- Full Remote learning will be taught by qualified Thames Valley educators;
 - Children whose families select Full-Remote Learning will be placed in classes with other children from across Thames Valley - children may not necessarily be taught by an educator from their home school;
 - Students and families will be connected to and receive communications from their home school;
 - All Full Remote Learning educators will establish an online classroom using Brightspace;
 - A combination of synchronous (live, real-time) instructions and asynchronous (independent) learning will be offered to children and families - you will be provided with a schedule of real-time instruction for your child's online classroom;
 - Attendance will be monitored and participation and engagement are expected – creating a sense of belonging for children will be foundational to Remote learning, therefore attendance is key;
- The materials provided will be age/grade appropriate and reflect the Four Frames of the Kindergarten Program;
 - Learning activities will be play and inquiry based and interactive for children;
 - Families who have selected Full Remote learning are able to change learning models (i.e. In-person Learning) at specific points during the year, with advance notice. There are specific entry-point dates for transitioning between models.

What will the first weeks look like for my Kindergarten child?

- Kindergarten children will begin school the **week of September 14.**
- This change in start date is required to re-organize all of our schools based on the high number of families who have selected Full Remote Learning.
- Elementary students, who have selected to return to school in person, will begin with a staggered start the week of September 14.
- Your child's school will contact you by Friday, August 28 to inform you of which days your child will attend. All elementary students will attend on Friday, September 18.
- A smaller cohort of children will enter school on each of the days in order to help each child adjust to the environment and learn school day routines with support from their educator team.

What enhanced safety measures are being put in place to ensure the health and safety of my child and their educators?

TVDSB has developed practices in consultation with the Middlesex-London and Southwestern Public Health Units and is following the Ministry of Education Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools. These health and safety practices and enhancements can be found on our TVDSB website in our Return to Learn section – a resource document for our TVDSB Community. The most relevant information for our Kindergarten children includes:

- All students in Kindergarten to Grade 8 must wear masks/face coverings in school and on student transportation.
- If a student requires a mask, the school will provide one.
- All high touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, railings, washrooms, etc.) will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day;
- Children will learn and participate in consistent routines around proper handwashing, physical distancing and safety protocols;
- Children will proceed directly to their classes to perform hand hygiene;
- Items that cannot be easily disinfected (e.g., carpets, plush toys, costumes, soft surface materials etc.) have been removed from classrooms and only essential items will be permitted;
- Shared learning materials and tools will be limited;
- Any shared items will be cleaned/disinfected at the end of the day or before being used again;
- Parents can help by minimizing personal belongings sent to school, labelling any belongings and remind children they must not be shared;
- Nutritional breaks will take place in the classroom at the children's' assigned learning space or outdoors. No sharing of food or beverages;
- Children will stay together and move together in one cohort (group) throughout the day including nutrition breaks and recess;
- To maintain distance between children, staggered nutrition breaks, recesses, and transitions will be implemented;
- Until further notice, volunteers will not be permitted in classrooms.

Helping your child be prepared for Kindergarten:

Our parents and families play a vital role in promoting positive messages about attending school. When you are preparing your child for coming to school in the fall, reassure your child that school is a safe place to learn, play and grow. Practice hand washing, opening food containers, doing up zippers, putting on own shoes, opening lunch bag, and your morning routine.

