



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?

Full-day kindergarten is available to all of Ontario's four- and five-year olds in publicly funded schools.

Full-day kindergarten offers:

- A two-year program designed to create a strong foundation for learning that promotes all areas of a child's development.
- An environment that supports learning through relationships, play, exploration and inquiry.
- 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. School boards will offer programs before and after school hours based on parent demand.

How will my child benefit?

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. It is part of Ontario's plan to support early learning and child development, build a stronger publicly funded school system and contribute to Ontario's long-term economic competitive advantage.

Full-day kindergarten is optional for four- and five-year-olds. However, research shows that children who participate in full-day early learning programs – like full-day kindergarten – get a stronger start in school and life.



ontario.ca/kindergarten



In full-day kindergarten, your child will benefit from:

A stronger start in school

All children enter school capable, competent and ready to learn. 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.

Children's early experiences at school are very important. These experiences have the potential to improve children's overall health and well-being for a lifetime. When children feel a sense of belonging and engagement, they are motivated to learn and are eager to be part of the school experience.

More time building relationships with classmates

During the regular school day, your child will benefit from being able to socialize with other children and educators. This helps your child develop the social and emotional skills that are necessary for future success in school and beyond. Participating in before-and after-school programs will give your child even more experiences with others in a familiar setting.

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 play-based program that is challenging and geared to each child's level of development. They will respond to your child's ideas and interests to challenge and extend the learning that happens during the day.

The teacher and early childhood educators may work in different learning environments with different groups of children throughout the day. However, by working together as a team they will support your child's learning and development. Your child will benefit from the complementary skills and experiences that all early childhood educators and teachers bring to the program.

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

Your child will be involved in many different learning opportunities designed to help young learners explore, discover and grow.

Research shows that there is a strong link between play-based and inquiry learning for young children, especially in the areas of problem solving, language and literacy, mathematics, and social, physical and emotional skills. This 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 the 2016 Kindergarten Program document. It is designed to help your child develop the social, emotional, creative, cognitive 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 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 the tallest child among them. 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 their structure and use words and numbers to show their thinking. Later in the day they share their work together at a class meeting with the other children and educators and discuss where they want to go next.

Observing and learning:

After making bird feeders from recycled materials, the children fill them with seeds and place them in the tree outside their classroom window. They watch the activity that takes place at each of the feeders and record what they see. With support from the teacher and early childhood educators, and based on their own observations, some of the children make changes to their feeders and place them back outside to see if it made it easier for the birds to land or if they ate more seeds.

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

During the school year, some schools will offer the 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 a range of indoor and outdoor experiences, that keep in mind the interests of the children.

Where there is enough demand from parents and the school 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 school board for more details. Subsidies may 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's learning at home; for example, by reading to your child, playing with your child and enjoying indoor and outdoor experiences together.
- 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 during the day. For example:
 - ✦ What did you explore today in kindergarten? What was the best place to do this? Did you make any discoveries or run in to any challenges/problems?
 - ✦ Were you inside or outside? What things did you use to play with to help you explore?
 - ✦ Do you have any plans that you will continue to work on tomorrow? Is there anything we can do at home to help you?
 - ✦ Where did you explore/play today (for example: blocks, sand and water areas, library or dramatic, creative play, outside)? What did you do there?
 - ✦ You had special visitors in your class today. Who were they? What did they talk about with your class? What did they bring with them?
 - ✦ I saw the picture you did posted on the bulletin board in your classroom. Tell me about how you made it. How did you decide what to draw? What materials did you use?
- Visit your child's school. Attend information meetings and other events organized for parents and families.
- Talk to your child's teacher or early childhood educator about your child's learning experiences at home and at school.

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.

Find this brochure and more parent information in many languages at **ontario.ca/EDUparents**

