

Great Beginnings

Start at the  **DDSB**
Ignite Learning

Frequently Asked Questions:

The Kindergarten Program at the DDSB:

1. What is the curriculum for Kindergarten?

In Kindergarten, Educator teams use the Ontario Ministry Document, [The Kindergarten Program \(2016\)](#). This program was designed by the ministry of education and is the official Kindergarten document that supports Educator teams to guide and promote children's learning. All Kindergarten programs in Ontario are built around the expectations and pedagogical approaches detailed in the document. The Kindergarten Program is a child-centred, developmentally appropriate, integrated program of learning that has a sole purpose of establishing a strong foundation for learning in the early years, and to do this in a safe and caring, play-based environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of all children.

2. Is the Kindergarten Program available for families?

Additional information on The Kindergarten Program (2016), a copy of the actual document, and an overview of what your child will learn can be accessed online through the [Ministry of Ontario's website](#).

3. Is Kindergarten offered as a half-day option?

Kindergarten is a two-year program consisting of year 1 and year 2 students, previously known as Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten. Students who are enrolled in Kindergarten will attend a full day Monday to Friday program. This full day of learning will promote your child's reading, writing, and math skills, and provide a strong foundation for future learning.

For any required accommodations, the home school can work alongside your family to understand the current needs and develop a plan that will work best for your child and your family.

4. Is Kindergarten mandatory?

Kindergarten is not mandatory for the two years. In Ontario, children are only required to attend school once they turn six years old. However, research has shown that children who are enrolled in a full-day Kindergarten program establish a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Through an inquiry and play-based learning program, the educator team will ensure your child has a strong start in their school journey. During the school day, your child will also benefit from having the opportunity to socialize with other children, building the social skills that are necessary for future success.

5. What are the ratios for Kindergarten programs? Are two educators enough in the classroom?

The exact ratio of students to educators will vary in each class, as the number of students will vary slightly, depending on registration numbers for the school. For classes over 15 students, there will be a Teacher and an Early Childhood Educator in each classroom. Most Kindergarten programs have a maximum of 29 students within a classroom space.

Within the Kindergarten classroom, appropriate ratios of students to staff will be maintained to ensure your child's safety and well-being remain the primary concern.

Please speak with your child's school to discuss who will be apart of the educator team.

6. Are children monitored during outdoor time?

Students are supervised at all times of the school day. This is inclusive to indoor and outdoor times/routines throughout the day. The supervision may be provided by a Teacher, ECE, Administrative team member (i.e., Vice Principal), or lunchroom supervisor.

7. Who is in the 'Kindergarten Team'?

The Kindergarten Team consists of a Teacher and Early Childhood Educator. Together they form a unique partnership that is built to nurture your child's learning through co-creation and intentional planning of purposeful play activities. The Kindergarten team of a Teacher and ECE offer complementary skills that help to create a learning environment that will support the unique needs and reflect the diversity of each child. The DDSB is privileged to have wonderful teams of educators who will welcome your child into Kindergarten. If you have questions about the team of educators who will be supporting your child, please contact your school directly.

8. What is the difference between an ECE and a Teacher? Is there one I should talk to over the other?

The ECE and a Teacher are equal partners in the classroom. When you are wanting to communicate with your child's educators, it is always best to include both team members. We recommend that you attend your school's Great Beginnings welcome event where you may have the opportunity to meet the team who will be supporting your child in September.

9. How will the Kindergarten educator team share their classroom documentation?

There are a variety of ways that educators may choose to share evidence of your child's learning with families throughout the year. Some examples may include, but are not limited to, pictures, videos, work samples, learning stories, or voice recordings. This documentation helps families to see a child's growth and learning within the classroom setting. Documentation also supports a school-to-home connection and allows families to engage in specific conversations around the areas of learning their child may be engaged in.

The specific tool selected for the documentation process will be dependent on the unique Kindergarten team. For additional information on documentation, please contact your child's Kindergarten team directly.

10. How often is the Communication of Learning sent home for families?

Families will receive a progress report in November, as well as two Communication of Learning documents, which will be shared in January and June. Please contact your child's educator team if you have specific questions about their learning.

11. Do students in Kindergarten use technology in the classroom?

All Kindergarten programs have access to iPads and other technology in the classroom space. Technology may be used within your child's classroom in different ways at the discretion of the educator team and depending on student needs/interests. For additional information on technology in your child's classroom, please contact your home school directly.

12. Is my child only going to play through their day? When are they going to learn “skills”?

Through play, we know that children develop many critical skills that will support them in their learning. While engaged in play, a child develops:

- problem solving and creative thinking skills
- critical thinking about ideas and information in literacy and math
- the ability to learn independently and think for themselves
- an understanding of their feelings and the feelings of those around them
- the ability to build and develop relationships with educators and other children

Play is an optimal tool that allows children to work through their ideas and use what they already know to deepen their understanding and further their learning. The Durham District School Board recognizes that play is children’s work. Through play, we know that children will develop many critical skills that will support them in their lifelong learning.

Kindergarten Registration at the DDSB:

1. How do I register for Kindergarten?

To register your child for Kindergarten, the following requirements must be met:

Age Requirements for Registration:

- To register for Junior Kindergarten, your child must be 4 years old by December 31 in the current year
- To register for Senior Kindergarten, your child must be 5 years old by December 31 in the current year

All Kindergarten students must register at their designated home school for the Kindergarten program. Please use the [school locator tool](#) on our website to find your home school, if you have not already registered.

2. How do you apply for schools out of my area?

For families who are interested in applying for a school that is not designated as your child's home school, they will need to begin a conversation with the home school first. There is an out of area request process if you still want to explore this option, but we recommend that you discuss the process with your registered home school. Please know that it is often best for students to attend their home school, so they are building relationships within their own community.

To find your child's home school, please use the [school locator tool](#) to find the school designated as the home school in your area.

3. Is there an option to enroll my child for only 3 days a week?

It is recommended that families register with their child's home school, and if there are special accommodations that need to be supported, the home school can work alongside the family to understand the current needs, and develop a plan that will work best for your child and family.

4. Will additional information be provided after I register my child? Or will families receive everything on the first day of school in September?

After families register their child for Kindergarten at the DDSB, the home school will provide a Registration Package that will include helpful resources and additional information that will support children and families during their transition to Kindergarten. Please connect with your child's home school if you have additional questions about the Registration Package or questions about what to expect for your child on the first day in September.

5. How do families register their child for busing?

Bussing eligibility is determined by Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS). Please call the main office of your school to determine eligibility for bussing. All bus routing information will be provided to eligible families closer to September and will be communicated directly.

Families can also visit the [DSTS website](#) to learn more about the Young Rider's Program.

The Kindergarten Day:

1. What is the schedule for a full day of school? What is the start/end time?

School schedules, including bell times, vary by school – each school has their own bell times that are related to bus routes and other considerations. When you register your child at your home school, they will be able to share this timing with you. It is recommended that families attend their school’s Great Beginnings Introduction to Kindergarten event where additional information on the school schedule and general routines will be shared. Please contact your school for additional details on the timing of this event.

The 2022-2023 school year calendars are available on the [DDSB website](#).

2. What should be included in a child’s backpack for September?

All learning materials required for learning within the classroom will be provided by the school. Families will not be required to send students with notebooks, crayons, or other learning materials. Instead, families may want to prepare a backpack that will include a lunch bag with containers the child can open/close independently, indoor shoes, and extra clothes. A typical school day includes a morning and afternoon break, plus a longer lunch break every day. It is also encouraged that all families send extra clothes for days where their first set may become wet or soiled inadvertently. Indoor shoes are also required to keep the indoor spaces clean and safe. The Kindergarten educator team will share additional information to help prepare your child for September.

3. Can families remain in the classroom with their child on the first day(s) of school?

While we understand that the transition to school for the first time can be an emotional experience for both the family and the child, parents and caregivers can trust that the Kindergarten educator team will support their child during this transition period with a wide range of strategies and experience. The educator team may also work alongside the family in planning for the best strategies that will ensure your child is excited to come to school. The transition to Kindergarten helps to build independence and a trusting bond for your child, which will support overall development and future lifelong learning.

4. Is there snack time for children throughout the day?

Students will be provided with snack times throughout the day. However, the schedule is dependent on each individual school. We recommend that you redirect this question to your school team at the Great Beginnings Start at the DDSB Introduction to Kindergarten event that all new registered families will be invited to attend. During this session, the school team will be able to provide you with specific answers that will best support this question.

5. Will someone help my child eat their lunch?

During lunch time routines, students will be accompanied by a lunchroom supervisor. In some cases, the Early Childhood Educator may also be with the students, as well as older student helpers. Parents/caregivers are encouraged to send snacks and lunches in bite sized, pre-portioned amounts in containers their child can open/close independently. While supervision is provided during lunch time routines, independence is the goal for all children.

We encourage families to review the [At-Home Learning Package](#) for activities to help strengthen your child's self-help skills prior to coming to school.

6. Are parents able to join their children in the school at lunch?

We recommend that you redirect this question to your school team at the Great Beginnings Start at the DDSB Introduction to Kindergarten event that all new registered families will be invited to attend. During this session, the school team will be able to provide you with specific answers that will best support this question.

7. Is there a recycling program for lunch routines? Is there an expectation for lunches to be garbage-free?

All schools will have their own approach to lunch and snack routines. We recommend that you redirect this question to your school team at the Great Beginnings Start at the DDSB Introduction to Kindergarten event that all new registered families will be invited to attend. During this session, the school team will be able to provide you with specific answers that will best support this question.

8. Are there any restrictions for lunch or snacks that can be sent?

All schools in the DDSB are nut-free. Some schools/classrooms may have additional restrictions, depending on whether there are medical conditions of anaphylaxis in your child's class or school. Information on additional restrictions will be provided by the school prior to your child's first day of school.

9. Will the Kindergarten educators help my child complete daily tasks (i.e., applying sunscreen)?

The DDSB recognizes that our youngest learners will enter Kindergarten at different levels of independence. The classroom team will work with students to develop independence in their daily activities. This may include promoting independence with various self-help skills.

10. Are families able to volunteer at the school?

Many schools do provide parents/caregivers opportunities to volunteer within the school setting. In order to volunteer, parents/caregivers must provide a valid vulnerable sector criminal reference check. For more information on whether your school will be accepting new volunteers for the 2022-2023 school year, please contact your home school directly.

11. Will my child be required to wear a mask in the classroom?

DDSB continues to follow the advice and recommendations of Durham Region Public Health to create a safe learning environment for all children. The DDSB supports families around their decision to send their child with or without a mask, and educators will support your child through this process.

12. Is it a requirement for a child to be toilet-trained prior to starting Kindergarten?

It is not a requirement for your child to be toilet-trained prior to entering Kindergarten. If your child needs assistance with toileting while at school, a team of educators will help to coach your child through that process. Your child's integrity during toileting routines is our number one priority.

For additional support and information with toilet-training at home, please refer to the [My Toilet Learning](#) document.

13. Will families be called each time there is a toileting accident at the school?

The Kindergarten educator team will assist your child to the best of their ability, upholding the integrity of the child. Families may not be called every time their child has a toileting accident at school.

14. What will happen if families are late when picking up their child from school?

Student safety is a priority at the DDSB. Students will not be released to anyone other than a designated parent/guardian/caregiver. If families are a few minutes late, the student will be brought to the main office to be supervised.

Additional Supports for Students in Kindergarten:

1. What supports are there for children going to French Immersion?

French immersion at the DDSB does not begin until Grade 1. All families of Year 2 (SK) students will be provided with the opportunity to indicate a desire to enroll in French Immersion for their child's Grade 1 year. The program begins with immersion through to oral language. As your child learns and grows, the school team will provide a variety of supports and resources for your child to be successful in the program.

Additional information about the program is available on the main DDSB website: www.ddsb.ca

2. Are supports available for speech and language development?

It is recommended that families speak directly to their school's main office team who will connect the family with the school's SERT (Special Education Resource Teacher). The SERT will have a detailed conversation with the family about their child, and the potential supports available.

The DDSB has a team of Speech-Language Pathologists, who will support Kindergarten educator teams with oral language development. In addition, Grandview Kids is the school-based rehabilitation services provider for the DDSB that will support speech therapy concerns.

3. What supports are available for children whose first-language is not English?

The DDSB is proud to be part of a highly diverse and culturally rich community. Many of the families within DDSB have a home language that is not English, and we encourage children to continue to learn and speak in their first language while at home. The DDSB has a number of strategies and supports for a student who may be learning English as a second language. Please speak with your home school and educator team to learn more about the supports that may be available for your child.

4. Are there any additional resources that can help me prepare my child for Kindergarten?

Please find additional resources for families, as well as ways to support your child's transition, on the [Ministry of Ontario's website](#).

In addition, please refer to the [At Home Learning Package](#) that was provided in your registration folder for additional tips and tricks to support you and your child.

Families can also visit any of our DDSB EarlyON child and family Hubs. These free programs provide opportunities for children 0-6 years of age and their caregivers to engage in fun learning activities together. Please see additional information about some of these programs later in this document.

DDSB@Home – Virtual Learning for Kindergarten:

1. Can I register my child for virtual learning through the 2022-2023 school year?

Families are welcome to register their child for virtual learning through DDSB@Home. Families will follow the same registration process but will indicate 'virtual' as the learning preference.

DDSB@Home is considered a full campus school and will be preparing welcoming materials that are more specific to the DDSB@Home experience. Much of the information shared within the Great Beginnings Webinar Series is general to the Early Years experience, whether your child is attending in-person or virtually. If you are looking for more specific information, please reach out to our DDSB@Home Early Years campus.

2. Is there any information available for families who have registered their child for DDSB@Home for September 2022?

DDSB@Home is considered a full campus school and will be preparing welcoming materials that are more specific to the DDSB@Home experience. Much of the information shared within the Great Beginnings Webinar Series is general to the Early Years experience, whether your child is attending in-person or virtually. If you are looking for more specific information, please reach out to our DDSB@Home Early Years campus.

Child Care at the DDSB:

1. Does every school offer before and after child care?

The DDSB offers licensed child care in almost every school.

If child care is not an option at the home school, the Early Years Department, alongside our child care partners and the school administrative team, will implement a community survey to determine the level of interest from the community to ensure that a viable program is able to be put in place. Prior to implementing a full program, we would first have to gauge interest from the community to ensure our child care partner would be able to successfully put a program in place.

2. What happens if my home school does not offer child care?

The Early Years Department, alongside our child care partners and the school, will implement a community survey to determine the level of interest from the community to ensure that a viable program is able to be put in place. Prior to implementing a full program, we would first have to gauge interest from the community to ensure our child care partner would be able to successfully put a program in place.

3. Can I go to another school for child care, or do I have to stay within my home school?

The DDSB offers licensed child care in almost every school.

If child care is offered at the home school, the child needs to attend the home school.

If child care is not an option at the home school, we have made accommodations to accept 'out of area' students, with the understanding that it will only be approved on a case-by-case basis. As enrollment numbers cannot be guaranteed on an annual basis, families that live within the immediate area must be accommodated first before approving 'out of area' students.

4. What supports are provided to families if child care is not offered within the home school?

The DDSB offers licensed child care in almost every school.

To discuss alternative options that may meet your family's needs during instances where a school does not offer a program, we encourage families to reach out to the Region of Durham Children's Services Department. A representative with the department may be able to assist you with finding an alternative program option for your family.

Children's Services:

906-666-6239

1-888-721-0622

<https://www.durham.ca/en/living-here/child-care-and-early-learning.aspx>

5. How do I register my child for before and after child care?

Please see our [Early Years Website](#) for more information on available early years programs by school.

Registration, fees, and availability of programs is managed by DDSB child care partners. Please click on the child care partner logos on our website for contact information and further details about a specific program.

6. What are the costs for before/after care?

The registration, availability, fee rates, and programming details are all managed by the DDSB child care partners. Please contact a partner directly to discuss this information. Please see our [Early Years Website](#) to find a program that may meet your family's needs.

7. Is fee subsidy available for before and after care programs?

The Regional Municipality of Durham's Child Care Fee Subsidy Program helps families who live in the Durham Region pay for licensed child care. Please see the [Region of Durham website](#) for more information on eligibility criteria, and a copy of the application form.

8. Are meals provided within child care programs?

Before and after school programs provide nutritious morning and afternoon snacks that are reflective of Canada's Food Guide and often approved by a licensed dietitian. Please speak directly to the before and after care provider at your school to discuss their specific programming and timing of the programming, which includes any nutrition offerings.

9. Are there accommodations provided for diverse meal preferences?

DDSB child care partners will accommodate food allergies and restrictions for children enrolled within their programs and will work with the family to ensure that all accommodations have been provided. Please contact the child care partner for specific details on nutrition offerings.

10. Are there supports in before and after care programs for children with special needs?

Licensed child care operators work in partnership with Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) services which work directly with educators to support equity and inclusion of all children. Please see the [Region of Durham website](#) for more information on supports for children with special needs who are attending a licensed child care program.

11. Are families required to register their child for before/after care each school year?

Once a family has been enrolled with a child care program, they will not be required to re-register each year. Families will typically be asked near the end of the school year if they will once again require a space the following year. Families who are already registered with the program will be prioritized for enrollment. For additional information on the registration process, please contact the child care partner assigned to your home school.

12. How do I learn more about before and after school programs?

To discuss registration, program fees, and nutrition offerings, please contact the child care partner that is located within your home school, or visit their website and they will be able to answer your questions directly.

Early Years and Community Partners at the DDSB:

1. How do I register my child for EarlyON's 'K is for Kindergarten'?

'K is for Kindergarten' will be available for children and families in-person beginning in the summer months and offered virtually via Zoom beginning in May. For all the available program offerings, and to register your child for 'K is for Kindergarten', please see the Calendar information available on the Region of Durham's website: www.durham.ca/earlyon

2. What ages does EarlyON support?

EarlyON Child and Family Centres provide opportunities for children from birth to six years of age to participate in play and inquiry-based programs, and support parents and caregivers in their roles. These centres offer safe and welcoming environments open to all families across the Durham Region, with qualified professionals and quality programs. Families and caregivers will be able to find support, make personal connections and access a network of resources.

3. Are families allowed to bring older and/or younger children to EarlyON programs?

EarlyON programs are designed to be developmentally appropriate for a specific age group. Only children that fall into that age category may attend. However, EarlyON does offer Family Programs. Please refer to the [program calendar](#) for more details.

4. What programs are available at EarlyON?

For all available programs, please see the [current listings](#).

5. Who do families contact for more information on EarlyON programs?

For programs in Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Oshawa, Clarington, and Scugog please contact:

earlyon.durham@ymcagta.org

For programs in Uxbridge and Brock townships please contact:

ece@durhamfamilyresources.org

For additional information, please refer to the Durham Region website:

www.durham.ca/earlyon