



# NWT Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten Orientation

## Handbook for Parents

### Preparing Your Child for School



2018-2019



The whole community participated in the education of the child. People understood that if they educated the child well, the child would grow to give back to the community, thus ensuring the future of generations to come. The elders, the grandparents, the extended family, people with special gifts or specialty training, all helped the parents in educating the child.

Dene Kede, p.xxvii



## Transition to Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten

Starting school in Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten can be exciting for children. However, it can also be a time of stress and worry about leaving familiar people and routines and facing the unknown. Children may respond differently – some may be happy, others scared. All emotions are normal for your child to feel.

It is important for the adults in children’s lives to work together to support and explain the changes and reduce children’s stress. Preparing your child for change, talking about their feelings, answering questions, and providing consistent support are important to helping your child and family before the first day of school.

### Working Together

The smooth transition of a child into the school setting is not the responsibility of the parent alone. While parents help their children get ready for school, schools also get ready for children. Making contact with your child’s school before your child starts is an important step in opening communication.

A successful transition to JK/K requires involves many people in a child’s life.

**Family:** The family is a child’s first and most influential teacher and are usually the one constant throughout the child’s life.

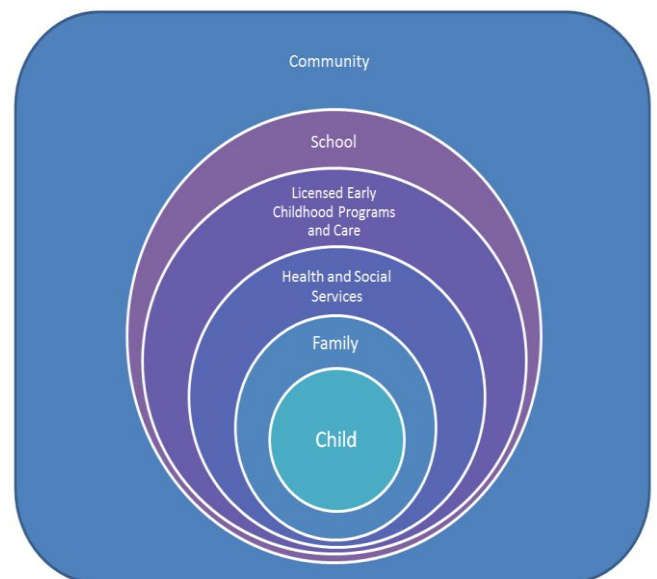
**Health and Social Services:** Medical professionals including pediatricians, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, physiotherapy.

**Licensed Early Childhood Programs and Care:** Day cares and day homes.

**Schools:** Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 and post-secondary education.

**Community:** Extended family, Elders, friends, programs, and services.

**Child:** All decisions must consider the child’s strengths, needs, and questions.





## Ideas for Parents:

Below is a recommended list of suggestions that can be used as a guide for families to help young children transition to Junior Kindergarten for 4-year old children or Kindergarten for 5-year old children.

### January – April

- Contact your local health provider to inquire about any screening services such as vision or hearing and to make sure your child’s immunizations are up to date.
- Locate your child’s birth certificate as it is needed for school registration. If it is not available or it’s lost, contact the Department of Health and Social Services about replacing it, at 1-800-661-0830.
- Contact the school to ask about any upcoming information sessions, events, JK/K registration, and to arrange a visit to the school with your child.
- Visit the Education Authority’s and/or school’s websites for information about school programming, schedules, and policies.
- Visit the Department of Education, Culture and Employment’s website for more information about JK/K programming:  
<https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/junior-kindergartenkindergarten>
- Encourage your child to dress or change their own clothing independently.
- Show your child how to wipe properly and teach them how to wash their hands after using the toilet.



### May – August

- Visit the new school before your child’s first day. Point out how the room is similar to existing early childhood program or home such as similar toys, books, friends, etc, but also discuss how it holds new materials to explore.
- Label all of your child’s items including clothes, lunch bag, and backpack.
- Plan lunches with your child allowing choice of favourite healthy foods.
- Establish a clear drop-off and pick-up routine with your child.
- Provide opportunities for your child to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Talk about what will remain the same and what will change.
- It is important your child gets used to their new school routine. For at least two weeks before starting school, put your child to bed early and wake them up at the same time they will need to be up for school.
- Celebrate how much your child has learned by looking at drawings, paintings, photos, and writing. Talk about the new things your child might learn in school.
- Draw pictures and/or write good-bye messages for your child’s friends or early childhood program teachers.
- If possible, arrange opportunities for your child to play with classmates.
- Visit the school or your local library to read books about change, transition, and school to start discussions. A list of books include:
  - *The Night Before Kindergarten* by Natasha Wing and Julie Durrel
  - *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate
  - *Kindergarten Rocks!* by Katie Davis
  - *Look out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson
  - *I Am Too Absolutely Small for School* by Lauren Child
  - *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
  - *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst
  - *Will I Have a Friend?* by Miriam Cohen
  - *If You Take a Mouse to School* by Laura Numeroff



## First Day of School

- ❑ A good night's sleep and eating breakfast every day is important.
- ❑ Help your child pack the backpack and lunch the night before. Consider including a familiar food or item that gives them comfort.
- ❑ Dress your child in clothes that is easy for your child to pull on/off independently without buttons or belts. Slip-on or velcro shoes are easier for children than tying shoelaces.
- ❑ Pack an extra set of clothing including underwear, pants, shirt, and socks in case of accidents. Clothing should be comfortable and easy for children to independently take on and off.
- ❑ Being on time without rushing reduces anxiety and gives your child an opportunity to get settled before the day starts. The teacher may show where coats, backpacks, lunch bags, and shoes may be kept for the child to access while giving time for your child to observe the classroom environment.
- ❑ Many young children experience separation anxiety during drop-off. This is normal and healthy. It is important to remain calm and reassure your child of when you will see each other again. Sometimes keeping a photo of family members in a pocket may help your child feel secure.
- ❑ Explain to your child when and how they will be picked up after school.
- ❑ Talk about the day with your child, ask questions, give positive feedback, and discuss what to look forward to for the rest of the week or year.



## August – October

- Establish a communication approach with the teacher that works best for you such as emails, phone calls, or an agenda that goes between home and school.
- Ask the teacher about opportunities to visit the classroom, volunteer, or attend school events and field trips throughout the year.
- Offer stress-reducing activities for your child at home such as water play, puppets, drawing, or play-dough.
- Plan ways to keep in touch with daycare peers or organize a regular play group.
- Regular attendance and punctuality build skills for children and establish good habits.

### Resources

If you have questions or would like more information on how to support your child's transition to JK/K programming, please contact your local school's principal, call the JK/K Hotline at 1-844-698-5655 or visit ECE's website at <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/junior-kindergartenkindergarten> to learn more.

If you have questions or concerns regarding healthy development or services, please contact your local health care provider or The Stanton Child Development Team at 867-669-4375.







## Additional Resources

### Department of Education, Culture and Employment

Early Childhood Coordinators are available in the Early Childhood Development and Learning Division and provide information and support regarding licensed early childhood programs, Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten programming.

For more information, contact Debbie Mutford, Early Childhood and Primary Coordinator at [debbie\\_mutford@gov.nt.ca](mailto:debbie_mutford@gov.nt.ca).

Regional Early Childhood Consultants provide residents and programs with information and can answer questions regarding licensed early childhood programs and about early childhood development and learning.

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### Health and Social Services

The Stanton Child Development Team, at the Stanton Territorial Health Authority, works in partnership with northern families and communities to optimize child development and wellness.

Some services include Diagnostic Assessment for children from birth to 16 years of age (Dehcho, Tłı̨chǫ, and Yellowknife), Territorial case conference services to children and their families in collaboration with the Regional Rehabilitation Services (Beaufort Delta, Hay River, and Fort Smith Health and Social Services Authority). The Child Development Team can be contacted at 1-867-669-4375.



