

Interim Early Identification and Intervention Procedure

RATIONALE:

Ministry Policy/Program Memorandum No. 11 requires each school board to have a procedure in place, which should be initiated when a child is first enrolled in school or no later than the beginning of a program of studies immediately following Kindergarten, for the identification of student's level of development, learning abilities, and needs to ensure that educational programs are designed to accommodate these needs.

TERMINOLOGY:

Early Intervention: Early Intervention is a process to identify the needs and abilities of early learners and to provide appropriate programs and supports to meet those needs. The process includes a general screening of all pupils at entry, a finer screening of some children, and a full assessment of a few children.

Parent and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs): PFLCs are school-based programs for parents and their children, to age 6, that operate during the school day. They offer programs to help prepare children for school and encourage families to be part of their children's learning.

Early Years Centres: Early Years Centres provide support for families with children to age 6. The centres provide parenting programs and resources, play programs, screening, and assessment services and referrals to other early year's services.

Registration: Registration is a time set aside for parents/guardians to register their child(ren) for entry into the Kindergarten program at school. Please refer to HWDSB Administrative Memo S.O. #8 which outlines specific procedures for Kindergarten registration.

Information Session for Parents of Young Students with Special Needs: The Information Session for Parents of Young Students with Special Needs is an evening session presented by HWDSB, HWCDSB, and Community Partners. Parents are given an overview of the transition process for their children entering school.

Parents as Partners Workshops: Parents as Partners Workshops are a series of evening workshops for parents of children with special needs to provide support and information as their child transitions into Kindergarten. It is hoped that by providing parents with the language of education and an understanding of the special education processes, true partnerships with school board personnel will be developed, parents' engagement will increase, and in turn that will increase the success of their child in school.

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Early School Transition Meetings for Young Students with Special Needs: Early School Transition Meetings for Young Students with Special Needs are held in the spring of each year to support the seamless transition process for young children with special needs and their families entering school. Information is gathered about the child so the educators can begin the process of getting to know the child. Specialized supports and services are also discussed so that the classroom and school environment is ready for the child at the beginning of the school year.

Welcome to Kindergarten Sessions: Welcome to Kindergarten sessions provide parents and their children with an opportunity to visit their home school to acquaint the parents with the school, its procedures, and the Kindergarten program. Community partners are invited to highlight programs available to families.

Early Learning and Child Care Visits for Young Students with Special Needs: Early Learning and Child Care Visits for Young Students with Special Needs are encouraged for the educators in school to observe the child in the early learning and child care environment prior to the child entering school. The purpose of these visits is to observe the child in a familiar environment.

Welcome to Kindergarten Postcards:

Welcome to Kindergarten Postcards are sent by the school to new to Kindergarten students to inform the family of the child's classroom, educator(s), School Visit time, Gradual Entry timelines, school start date and schedule (if applicable).

School Visits: School visits are an opportunity for new to Kindergarten students and their parents/guardians to visit their classroom to experience the Kindergarten learning environment. These small group visits are one hour in duration. At this time, the parents/guardians are asked to complete the Social History Form.

Social History Form: The Social History Form provides educators with information about the child's physical, social, emotional, and behavioural development and experiences.

Gradual Entry: Gradual Entry begins once all School Visits are completed. Young children require special consideration to facilitate a comfortable transition from the pre-school settings to the more formal school setting. A gradual staggered entrance allows young children to enter school in groups consisting of half of the class. This gradual introduction to classroom, educators, and classmates enables the child to feel more secure and self-confident as s/he participates in classroom routines and learning activities.

Gradual entry allows the educators to:

- Make the child and his/her family feel welcome and safe
- Build a positive rapport with individual children
- Respond more effectively to the anxieties of individual children and their parent (s)
- Establish important school and classroom routines related to student safety
- Observe each child closely in a small group setting in order to gather the necessary assessment data required to plan appropriate learning opportunities

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Speech and Language Pathologist Visits: The school Speech and Language Pathologist will dialogue with each Kindergarten educational team in the fall to discuss, observe and interact with some students who the kindergarten team has identified. A follow up meeting with the educators, the Speech and Language Pathologist and the Learning Resource Teacher may occur to discuss concerns and determine a plan.

Parent Observation Visits: The Parent Observation Visit is a planned opportunity for parents to observe their child in the classroom environment and discuss their observations. Parent Observation Visits occur in November for Junior and Senior Kindergarten students. An Educator/Parent Conference may occur where required.

Print Concept Assessment: The Print Concept Assessment is administered in January of Junior Kindergarten. The reading behaviours observable through this assessment reflect some of the key understandings necessary for reading acquisition. Assessing these behaviors provides information that is useful for identifying focuses for instruction.

Letter/Sound Knowledge Assessment: The Letter/Sound Knowledge Assessment helps educators identify which upper and lower-case letters, and sounds a student knows. Unknown letters and sounds are noted so that instruction can focus on what the students need to learn rather than on what they already know. The Letter/Sound Knowledge Assessment will be done, in September of the Senior Kindergarten year. The Letter/Sound Knowledge Assessment will be administered in January for French Immersion Senior Kindergarten students. The children should be reassessed by the end of April as appropriate.

Report Card: A Kindergarten Report Card will be issued in January and in June for students in Junior and Senior Kindergarten.

Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA): The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is a standardized reading assessment that has been mandated across the Board to track student achievement in reading. They are all research-based and assess a student's demonstration of comprehension, attitudes, and strategies that research supports as essential to developing as an effective reader. The DRA is administered in the winter and spring for Senior Kindergarten and in the spring for Junior Kindergarten. GB+ is administered to French Immersion Senior Kindergarten students in the spring.

Phonemic Awareness Screen: The Phonemic Awareness Screen targets phonemic awareness skills that are essential for literacy development. The Phonemic Awareness Screen is based on the developmental continuum and age appropriate for Kindergarten students. This assessment will be administered to Senior Kindergarten students in October. The students should be reassessed on an ongoing basis as needed.

Teacher Meetings: Meetings are held in the spring to discuss children transitioning from one grade to the next.

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PROCEDURES:

1.0 Responsibility

1.1 Superintendent Responsible for Early Learning

Oversee the Early Intervention Process by:

- Determining Early Intervention process
- Communicating details of Early Intervention Process (e.g. Calendar) to appropriate stakeholders

1.2 Manager of Communication Services:

Facilitate the Early Intervention Process by:

- Organizing the Information Session for Parents of Young Students with Special Needs
- Coordinating Early School Transition Meetings for Young Students with Special Needs
- Arranging appropriate support and programming for students with special needs as required

1.3 Early Learning Consultant:

Facilitate the Early Intervention Process by:

- Meeting with Corporate Communications to determine a plan for Registration
- Creating calendars for alternate day and delayed entry
- Providing responsive support for school personnel
- Responding to questions from parents
- Liaising with community partners

1.4 Principals/Vice Principals:

Oversee the Early Intervention Process by:

- Coordinating the Registration Process at the school level
- Arranging Early Learning and Child Care Visits
- Organizing Welcome to Kindergarten sessions
- Liaising with Kindergarten educators re: the achievement of students

1.5 Educators:

Follow the Early Intervention Process by:

- Participating in Welcome to Kindergarten Sessions
- Assigning classes, school visit times, and gradual entry dates
- Preparing and distributing Welcome to Kindergarten postcards before the end of the school year

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- Organizing School Visits and Delayed Entry sessions
- Liaising with Speech and Language Pathologists
- Administering Early Intervention Assessments and planning programming based on the individual needs of the students

Refer to the Kindergarten Tiered Intervention Model and Kindergarten Response Model for Student Achievement for developmentally appropriate assessments and intervention strategies.

1.6 Community Partners:

Support the Early Intervention Process by:

- Communicating with HWDSB personnel
- Supporting families and their children as they transition into HWDSB

2.0 Processes

2.1 Kindergarten and Assessment for Learning

The Full- Day Early Learning-Kindergarten Program states, “Four and five-year-old children arrive at school as unique individuals shaped by their particular cultural and social backgrounds, day-to-day experiences, and different stages of development.” p. 3

In the document, the Ministry recognizes that, “Every child grows and develops in a number of interrelated areas – social, emotional, communication/language, cognitive, and physical ... Children develop at different rates and in different ways.” *FDELK* p. 6

It is imperative that educators understand the ‘typical’ developmental pathway in order to plan a developmentally-appropriate Kindergarten program which meets the needs of each child. *Early Learning for Every Child Today* (ELECT) contains a developmental continuum that serves as a tool to help educators plan with child development in mind.

The Ministry notes the importance of being responsive to the different developmental needs of learners, “To give each child the best start possible, it is essential that early learning programs provide a variety of learning opportunities and experiences that are based on assessment information and the strengths, needs, and interests of the children.” *FDELK* p.3

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The Ministry recognizes that, “Children in Kindergarten are in their first years of school and are going through the process of adjusting to the school environment. They should be given ample time to demonstrate their learning opportunities that are appropriate for their stage of development and are with their range of things they can do and without guidance (zone of proximal development). Young children demonstrate their learning in many different ways. Therefore, assessment should be done on an ongoing basis in the context of everyday experiences, using a variety of strategies and tools. *FDELK p.29*

School Visits allow educators to begin gathering information about children’s interests, strengths, learning styles, social skills, habits and prior knowledge on the first day of school.

In the Kindergarten years, authentic assessment opportunities are key. Documented observations should be the primary assessment strategy used. With an ongoing focus on observation, educators can gain insights into all areas of a child’s development and plan opportunities to extend children’s thinking by building on what they already know.

Although observation is the major assessment tool in Kindergarten, it is important that educators have a range of developmentally appropriate assessments they can use to systematically gather data about students in key skill areas. Documented observation and the data gathered from the assessments in Kindergarten will be used to determine support and learning opportunities for all, some, or few students.

The *Early Intervention Process*, attached provides an overview of the two-year process whereby the needs and abilities of early learners are identified and appropriate programs and supports are provided to meet those needs.