

# HWDSB

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## Countdown to Kindergarten

From registration to your  
child's first day of school.



**BE YOU. BE EXCELLENT.**



# Welcome to Kindergarten, from the Director of Education

Dear Families,

We warmly welcome your child and family to Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB). Thank you for joining us at the beginning of your child's journey in education.

Kindergarten is an important milestone for children and their families. We want this exciting introduction to school to be an experience filled with joy for your child and your family.

Research shows that attending two years of Kindergarten gives children a solid foundation for future learning. It gives them the opportunity to socialize with other children, while also improving their skills in early reading, writing and math.

HWDSB classrooms are inclusive learning environments where caring adults help students explore the world, solve problems and build lasting friendships. Kindergarten students gain a solid foundation for reading and math in a play-based program.

At HWDSB, educators lead early-learning experiences rooted in creativity, inquiry and exploration. We nurture classrooms that foster a culture of acceptance and well-being so students can be their authentic selves.

We respect your role as your child's first and best teacher. As educators, we are here to serve students, families and communities. We are proud of the service that Kindergarten staff provide. We strongly believe that students come with varying strengths and interests.

A successful partnership with families helps ensure we can best support their diverse needs.

We are pleased to welcome you as part of the HWDSB family! We look forward to collaborating with you to support your child's education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SRP', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini  
Director of Education

# What is Kindergarten?

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) schools are exciting, enriching places where children learn to explore the world, solve problems and make friends.

Kindergarten is a two-year, full-day program that helps children get the best possible start in school. Your child will be challenged and encouraged to do their very best. Our caring team of educators, including a teacher and an early childhood educator, are with them every step of the way! They are also a great resource for you to talk with.

Your child is eligible for the two-year Kindergarten program in the year they turn four or five.

# Why is Kindergarten important?

- Early learning experiences are crucial to the future well-being of children.
- Early interactions affect the way connections are made in the brain.
- A solid foundation for reading and math must be built.
- Participation in developmentally appropriate play-based experiences builds skills.



**Children learn by doing.**

**Children learn by interacting.**

**Children learn at their own rate.**

# How to register – As easy as 1,2,3

Note, only parents or legal guardians can register their children for school.

## Step 1.

Find your neighbourhood school in our School Locator tool [hwdsb.on.ca/find/](http://hwdsb.on.ca/find/) or call 905-527-5092.

## Step 2.

Register online at [hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/](http://hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/) to create an account, enter details and add your child to our student information system. If you have questions, please contact your local HWDSB school.

**OR**

Register in person at your neighbourhood school. Complete and print the Kindergarten Registration Form, which can be found at [hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/](http://hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/) as well as at your school.

## Step 3.

Contact your elementary school to book a registration meeting.

Required documents include:

- Proof of age (child's birth certificate or passport);
- Proof of address (identification that shows parent/guardian's current home address);
- Verification of date of arrival/immigration documents (if the child was not born in Canada).

If registered using our print method, bring a completed Kindergarten Registration Form found at [hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/](http://hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/) as well as at your school.

# What will my child learn?

During the two-year Kindergarten program, your child will have opportunities to experience and learn:

## Foundations of Language and Mathematics

- Recognize, write and know the sounds of letters
- Recognize their written name and high-frequency words (the, and, a)
- Retell a story that has been read aloud
- Identify numbers from 1 to 20, assemble them and take them apart (e.g. 6 and 4 is 10)
- Know basic shapes (square, triangle, rectangle, circle)
- Playing with sounds in words (e.g., what is the first sound you hear in the word “mat”? mmmm)
- Talk about thoughts and feelings
- Write simple messages using classroom resources
- Handle a book and show an interest in reading
- Ask questions and seek own answers

## Problem Solving and Innovating

- Be curious about the world and eager to explore
- Explore coding by following instructions and directions through movement
- Use problem-solving skills
- State a problem, pose questions to answer questions
- Use problem-solving strategies to support math and literacy
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## Self-Regulation & Well-Being

- Take care of their needs and belongings
- Know when to ask for help
- Be confident and willing to try new things
- Self-control and responsibility for actions
- Empathy for others
- Knows how to make and keep friends
- Understand healthy eating and activity
- Control of large muscle groups (balance and coordination) and small (use of scissors and pencils)



## Belonging & Contributing

- Play co-operatively, respect others and their property
- Take turns and solve problems when playing with friends
- Share ideas, feelings and points of view, listen to other ideas
- Be part of a community and help others
- Stand up for themselves and others
- Be comfortable in school environment



# The Looksee Checklist

The Looksee Checklist is a simple, easy-to-use developmental tool designed to help monitor a child's development from 1 month to 6 years of age, featuring a short list of "yes" or "no" questions about the child's abilities. With the vision of helping all children reach their developmental potential, the Looksee Checklist (formerly the ndds checklist) was created in 1993 by ndds, a Canadian non-profit organization made up of early childhood specialists. In the 25 years since, it has been translated into over 10 languages and has helped thousands of children worldwide through initiatives with organizations like the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and World Vision.

Visit [lookseechecklist.com](http://lookseechecklist.com) to learn more about the Looksee Checklist.

## Developmental Markers

### Emotional

These items look at the child's ability to discover self and the relationship of self with others. Also included in this area is the development of a sense of safety and security.

### Fine Motor

These items look at the child's ability to develop strength, stability and control of the arms and hands for functional movement. The development of eye-hand coordination; visual motor integration; and oral motor coordination for feeding and speech are also included in this area.

### Gross Motor

These items look at the child's ability to develop balance, coordination, strength, stability and body awareness through movement.

### Social

These items look at the child's ability to develop turn taking, sharing, cooperation and empathy through interactions, games and imaginative play. Attachment and development of joint attention are also included in this area.

### Self-Help

These items look at the child's ability to develop responsibility for daily activities and move towards independence.

### Communication

These items look at the child's ability to develop language comprehension and language expression through sounds, gestures, words and word combinations. Receptive language, expressive language, articulation, fluency and conversation are also included in this area.

### Learning & Thinking

These items look at the child's ability to explore, increase knowledge, and improve memory, reasoning and perception by acting upon objects in the environment through the use of touch, smell, taste, hearing and vision. They demonstrate an awareness of self and others, motivation and attention to task.

### Vision & Hearing

 Keep in mind that visual and hearing acuity can impact the child's ability to perform successfully on many items. If there are any concerns, make sure that an appropriate referral is made to an eye care and/or hearing professional.

**1** Speak clearly enough to be understood all of the time by family?

Y  N

**2** Understand two and three step directions?

Y  N

**3** Speak in sentences of five or more words?

Y  N

**4** Understand and use some describing words?

Y  N

**5** Walk up the stairs using the handrail?

Y  N

**6** Stand on one foot briefly?

Y  N

**7** Throw a ball forward at least one metre (three feet)?

Y  N

**8** Twist lids off jars or turn knobs?

Y  N

**9** Turn the pages of a book one at a time?

Y  N

**10** Play make-believe games with actions and words?

Y  N

**11** Dress or undress with help?

Y  N

**12** Share some of the time?

Y  N

**13** Show affection with words and actions?

Y  N

**14** Play with others comfortably?

Y  N

**15** Cooperate with parent's request half of the time?

Y  N

**16** Listen to music or stories for 5-10 minutes with you?

Y  N

**17** Greet friends and familiar adults when reminded?

Y  N

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Importance of Families

You are an important part of your child's education!

Young children come to school capable, curious and rich in experiences. Important stages of learning and development occur between birth and six years of age in all areas of growth — communication, emotional, intellectual, physical and social.

Children learn at different rates and in different ways.

Our team of educators recognizes the unique strengths, interests and needs of children entering our program and adjust teaching methods and materials to support their growth.

Help your child prepare for Kindergarten:

- Be responsive and positive – listen to your child.
- Talk, read and sing to your child daily.
- Encourage clear speech.
- Encourage safe exploration and play.
- Encourage independent toileting and dressing.
- Promote sharing and co-operation.
- Expose your child to painting, crayons and scissors.
- Introduce your child to letters and numbers.

Visit your local library and family resource programs such as Early ON programs. Find online resources at [hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten](http://hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten)

Complete the Looksee Checklist developmental tool and review with a health and/or childcare professional.

Remember, families help us learn about their child's unique strengths, needs and interests.

# Plan Ahead

## Before-and-After-School Care

Independent providers offer licensed before- and after-school care at many HWDSB schools. Programs run at schools with sufficient demand. [Learn more about Before-and-After-School Care by visiting hwdsb.info/childcare.](#)

## Child Care

The Hamilton Child Care Registry makes finding licensed childcare providers simple. You can browse childcare options by location and age group. You can also view details about a childcare program, hours and type of care being offered on the [City of Hamilton website Early Years and Child Care page: hamilton.ca/people-programs/early-years-child-care](#).

## Specialized Services

Children enter Kindergarten with various needs and abilities. At registration, please tell staff if you have any concerns about your child starting school. We have many resources to support language development, behaviour concerns and special needs in the classroom. Special education programs and services are available for children to support success at school. We want all children to have a positive and seamless transition to school. [Learn more at the Entry to School page: hwdsb.info/entrytoschool](#)

## Transportation

Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS) provides transportation for eligible HWDSB Kindergarten students. Eligible students receive a letter from HWSTS in mid-August detailing the online parent portal and busing. First Rider orientation sessions prepare young bus riders and their families. First Rider program details are posted in June on the Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services website: [www.hamiltonschoolbus.ca](http://www.hamiltonschoolbus.ca).

## Orientation

HWDSB schools typically welcome families to Kindergarten orientation events in May of each year. This is a great chance for families to visit the school with their child(ren) to learn more about Kindergarten. Contact your local HWDSB school in the spring to find your date or learn more at [hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/orientation/](http://hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/orientation/).



# Is your child “language-ready” for school?

Many parents considering Kindergarten wonder if their child is ready for school. In addition to the Looksee Checklist, HWDSB staff offer the following guidelines for early language.

By age four, your child should:

- Follow simple directions with two or three steps (e.g. Get your boots and hat and meet me at the front door).
- Pronounce words like other children their age.
- Be understood by people they don't know most of the time.
- Speak in sentences that sound about the same as an adult.
- Use endings on words like dogs, jumped, or biking.
- Play a pretend game and describe it to you in enough detail for you to understand.
- Ask questions about a book you just read together, like “Who was your favourite character?”

## Early Words

If your child is unable to do the things listed above, a speech-language pathologist should meet with your child. This can be arranged in Hamilton through Early Words, a publicly funded organization that provides speech and language services to pre-school children. Learn more on the Affiliated Services for Children and Youth website at [ascy.ca](http://ascy.ca).



# Questions and Answers

## Can my child attend Kindergarten part-time?

Kindergarten is not mandatory, and parents can choose to have their child attend Kindergarten on a part-time basis. Schools will explain how part-time attendance would be structured (e.g., half-time mornings/afternoons etc). Your child can begin full-time attendance when you feel your child is ready.

## Does my child need to have learned to use a toilet?

All children have a right to attend Kindergarten in the calendar year they turn four years old. Children arrive with diverse abilities and needs, and all are welcome at school. HWDSB staff will work with parents/guardians to help children with toilet learning, and a school plan that meets each child's needs and honors their dignity. If a child has not learned to use a toilet by age four, the Canadian Pediatric Society recommends a visit with your family doctor. School toilets are standard sized.

## What if my child still naps?

Each child is unique and the rate at which they adapt to school will vary. Educators strive for a sense of calm in the classroom and provide large blocks of time to engage children's attention in sustained, complex play and inquiry. There is no dedicated nap time in Kindergarten but educators respond to the variety of needs in their class. Educators provide children with a mix of active and calming learning opportunities

## How well can your child see?

Good eyesight is important for children to be able to play and learn. Your child may not tell you they have problems seeing. You may not notice your child is having problems with their eyes. Contact Hamilton Public Health Services to find out how to access free eyeglasses. 905-546-2424 x5369 or [www.hamilton.ca/visualhealth](http://www.hamilton.ca/visualhealth)

## Does my child need to be vaccinated?

Some vaccines are required for school attendance. Parents are responsible for reporting their child's vaccines to **Hamilton Public Health Services**. Report your child's vaccines:

Online: [hamilton.ca/reportingvaccines](http://hamilton.ca/reportingvaccines)

Mail: Vaccine Program, P.O Box 897, Hamilton, ON, L8N 3P6

If you have questions about vaccine requirements, please contact **Hamilton Public Health** at **905-546-2424 x7556** or visit [hamilton.ca/vaccines](http://hamilton.ca/vaccines).

# Community Programs and Services

## Hamilton Public Library

Visit a library location or bookmobile to sign up for a library card and step into a world of reading. Staff can suggest books you and your child may enjoy or, you can choose using our popular list of 100 Books to Read Before Kindergarten. The HPL runs free summer literacy-based programs such as Summer Reading Club to help your child feel ready for school in September.

Hamilton Public Library Website: [www.hpl.ca](http://www.hpl.ca)

## City of Hamilton Dental Clinics and Programs

Your child (age birth to 17 years) could receive free dental care if: you have low income, and your child needs urgent dental care, and you cannot pay for it. Your child (age birth to 17 years) is automatically enrolled in the City of Hamilton Dental Clinics and Programs if you receive Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, Temporary Care Assistance, or Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities. Call 905-546-2424 x5369 to find out if your child can get free dental care or visit the City of Hamilton website: [www.hamilton.ca/dental](http://www.hamilton.ca/dental)

## EarlyON Child and Family Centres

EarlyON Child and Family Centres are open to all families across Ontario, and provide support, advice, personal connections and a network of resources as well as play- and inquiry-based programs for young children.

EarlyON centres are great places to visit with your child before they begin Kindergarten. Research shows that quality early learning and childcare has positive outcomes for children and families. For more information on the programs, please call (905) 524-4884.

EarlyOn Child and Family Centre: [www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre](http://www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre)  
Affiliated Services for Children and Youth: [ascy.ca/earlyon-child-and-family-centres/](http://ascy.ca/earlyon-child-and-family-centres/)

## UnlockFood.ca

UnlockFood.ca (formerly EatRightOntario.ca) is a bilingual award-winning website brought to you by Dietitians of Canada. On UnlockFood.ca you'll find information on nutrition, food and healthy eating as well as recipes, videos and interactive healthy eating tools. The content focuses on healthy eating through the lifecycle as well as chronic disease prevention. Popular content includes diabetes, infant feeding, digestive concerns, weight management and heart disease. There are also useful resources on cooking, shopping, meal planning, picky eating and more. [www.UnlockFood.ca](http://www.UnlockFood.ca)

## McMaster Children's Hospital - Family Resources

McMaster Children's Hospital offers a variety of family supports and resources. The Growing Together Guide is a free, seasonally updated community education guide that lists courses, workshops and groups offered across the Hamilton area. The focus is to help learn skills related to parenting, child development and mental health. This guide brings together both hospital offered programs and community partner resources. To access the guide, visit the Hamilton Health Sciences website: [www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/mcmaster-childrens-hospital/family-resources/](http://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/mcmaster-childrens-hospital/family-resources/).

# Countdown to Kindergarten

Kindergarten is a two-year, full-day program that helps children get the best possible start in school. Your child will be challenged and encouraged to do their very best. Our caring team of educators is with them every step of the way!

Use this guide to help learn about:

- ✓ Registering for Kindergarten.
- ✓ Classroom experiences for your child.
- ✓ Planning for the first day of Kindergarten.
- ✓ Community programs and services.

HWDSB schools are exciting, enriching places where children learn to explore the world, solve problems and make friends.



Scan the QR code or visit [hwdsb.info/kindergarten](https://www.hwdsb.info/kindergarten) to learn more.

## HWDSB

[www.hwdsb.on.ca](https://www.hwdsb.on.ca)

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

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