

HELPFUL HINTS FOR PARENTS

RICHMOND KINDERGARTEN ENTRY

Child's Name:

Kindergarten Transition Facilitator:

Agency: Supported Child Development Program

Phone:

E mail:



**Vancouver Coastal Health
Richmond**



**Richmond Society for Community Living
Supported Child Development Program**



November 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	2
WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK.....	2
WHO WILL HELP FACILITATE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY.....	3
HOW WILL MY CURRENT THERAPY SERVICES CHANGE AT SCHOOL ENTRY?....	3
WHAT ABOUT ONGOING AFTER SCHOOL CHILD CARE NEEDS.....	3
SIGNING CONSENT TO RELEASE INFORMATION.....	4
INFORMATION SHARING AND TRANSITION MEETINGS.....	4
WHAT IF WE WANT AN ADDITIONAL PRESCHOOL YEAR?.....	4
LEARNING MORE ABOUT RICHMOND SCHOOLS.....	5
SUGGESTED STEPS IN PLANNING FOR KINDERGARTEN ENTRY.....	6
THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP).....	10
WHO WILL SUPPORT US AT SCHOOL?.....	10
MEETING WITH THE PRINCIPAL.....	12
MY CHILD’S KINDERGARTEN TEAM.....	15
WHAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO SHARE ABOUT MY CHILD.....	16
HOW CAN I BE A GOOD ADVOCATE FOR MY CHILD?.....	18



INTRODUCTION

This document is intended as a resource of *Helpful Hints* for parents who are preparing for their child's entry into kindergarten.

While there is a lot of information presented in this booklet, not everything is appropriate for every parent. Some information may be helpful in the years to come; other information may be important now. We hope that parents will use it as a guide and choose what is helpful for them.

Entering kindergarten is a very exciting time for children. We hope this information helps parents and children feel prepared for this transition and look forward to this important

WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK

This booklet was developed by:

- Social Work Department, Centre for Ability (CFA)
- Supported Child Development Program, Richmond Society for Community Living (SCDP)
- Vancouver Coastal Health - Richmond

We have also included information provided to us by the Richmond School District.

We welcome your questions and look forward to supporting you through this exciting time.

Alison Brook, MSW, RSW
Centre for Ability
Alison.brook@bc-cfa.org
Or 604 630-3011
2805 Kingsway Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5R 5H9
Website:
www.centreforability.bc.ca

Carrie McLellan-Haqq,
Coordinator
Supported Child
Development Program
cmclellan-haqq@rscl.org
Or 604 279-7016
280 – 7000 Minoru Blvd.
Richmond, BC, V6Y 3Z5
Website: www.rscl.org

Andrea Gates
Program Leader, Speech
and Language Services
Vancouver Coastal Health-
Richmond
andrea.gates@vch.ca
Or 604 233-3125
8100 Granville Ave.
Richmond, BC, V6Y 3T6

WHO WILL HELP FACILITE KINDERGARTEN ENTRY?

One of your current service providers will be pleased to assist your family with preparing and planning for your child's transition into kindergarten. This will include reviewing the planning steps, guiding you through the process and helping you put together relevant information describing your child's strengths and needs in order to best inform the school about your child.

HOW WILL MY CURRENT THERAPY SERVICES CHANGE AT SCHOOL ENTRY?

Both the Centre for Ability's Early Intervention Team and the Vancouver Coastal Health - Richmond Speech and Language program are mandated to provide services for children up until kindergarten entry. Therefore, your child will be discharged by the end of August. Your current therapists will be pleased to discuss your child's ongoing needs and will facilitate appropriate referrals for school based services. Should you decide to hold your child back in preschool for an additional year, please be aware that your early intervention services will still come to an end due to our mandates.

Once in kindergarten, Speech and Language Pathologists employed by the Richmond School District may be involved with your child.

If your child requires ongoing physiotherapy and/or occupational therapy consultation, a referral will be submitted to the Vancouver Coastal Health - Richmond's School Support Program which is funded by the school district. Nursing Support Services are also available through this team and are involved in supporting children with significant health and medical needs in the classroom. This team can be reached at 278-3361.

WHAT ABOUT ONGOING AFTER SCHOOL CHILD CARE NEEDS?

The Richmond Supported Child Development Program continues to support children who require support to participate in after school care programs. Speak to your consultant if you have any questions about your child's eligibility and programs available in your neighbourhood.

SIGNING CONSENT TO RELEASE INFORMATION

You may be asked to sign an updated consent form for the Centre for Ability, Richmond Society for Community Living/Supported Child Development and/or Vancouver Coastal Health - Richmond. Consent forms enable these professionals to release relevant information about your child to the school district in order to raise awareness of his or her needs. Your permission is necessary to share this information.

INFORMATION SHARING AND TRANSITION MEETINGS

In the spring, the school Principal or Resource Teacher may invite you to an information sharing meeting to talk about your child's strengths and needs. This meeting helps the school understand your child's safety and learning needs, so that appropriate supports can be organized. This meeting includes parents, therapists and preschool teachers as well as the school based team (teacher, principal, resource teachers, etc.).

Prior to the meeting your current team will prepare updated reports and/or support guides that help to describe your child's learning style, safety, support and equipment needs.

You may also want to write your own letter of introduction to the school, highlighting what you feel is most important for the new professionals to understand about your child.

In addition, the new school team may arrange to visit and observe your child in their current preschool in order to increase their understanding of your child.



WHAT IF WE WANT AN ADDITIONAL PRESCHOOL YEAR?

All children, regardless of abilities or challenges are welcome to attend kindergarten in the year they turn 5. There are no “readiness requirements” that must be reached prior to going to school.

If, however, you feel that it is in your child’s best interest to delay school entry the following information may be of assistance.

Given that the Ministry of Education is responsible for the education of children from their 5th year, they may cover the costs of this additional year of preschool. In order for this funding arrangement to be secured you need to:

- Register your child at the neighbourhood school but explain your desire for an additional preschool year.
- Write a letter to the Area Superintendent of the Richmond School Board explaining your request and describing your child’s special needs including diagnosis.
- Send a copy of this letter to the neighbourhood school principal.

Be aware that as preschools are designed for 3 and 4 year olds, priority must be given to children who have not yet had the opportunity to participate. Consequently, 5 year olds who require Supported Child Development assistance in order to participate in an additional year of preschool will only be accommodated if space permits. If your child requires additional support to participate the funding for an additional staff will need to be accessed through the Richmond School Board.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT RICHMOND SCHOOLS

After the New Year, you will receive a notice inviting you to a meeting hosted by the, Richmond School District. This meeting will give you an opportunity to hear directly from school personnel about the transition process and services at school for children who require extra support.



SUGGESTED STEPS IN PLANNING FOR KINDERGARTEN ENTRY



OCTOBER – DECEMBER

- Identify your neighbourhood school. If you are not sure, you can get this information by phoning the Richmond School District at 604-668-6083 or look on their website: <http://www.sd38.bc.ca/>
- Attend workshops that will increase your knowledge, confidence and your child's developing skills. Ask your current team members about workshop opportunities in your community.
- Talk with other parents who have experience to share.
- Think about all your questions and concerns. Don't hesitate to talk with your current professionals about these.
- If your child would benefit from further assessments, this is a good time to talk with your doctor and or therapists and actively pursue a referral.



JANUARY – FEBRUARY

- Meet with your designated Kindergarten Facilitator to update both consent forms, current Service Provider list as well as to complete the School Board's "Information Regarding Students in Transition to Kindergarten" form.

- If your child would benefit from further assessments, this is a good time to talk with your doctor and or therapists and actively pursue a referral.
- Complete school registration forms early in the New Year. It is very important that the Principal knows about your child's extra needs before Spring Break in March so that he/she can advocate for any additional staffing supports that may be needed to ensure the safety and well being of your child. *(Pg. 12-14)*
- When you go to the school to register you will need to bring the following documents:
 - *Child's original birth certificate*
 - *Proof of residence (e.g. mortgage document, rental agreement, etc)*
 - *Immunization record*
 - *Proof of Canadian citizenship **or** immigration / permanent residency documents for both student and parent*
- If you would like your child to attend a school other than the designated catchment school, you still need to register first at your neighbourhood school and then ask for a transfer application form. Schools prioritize cross boundary applications based on the date they are received, so it is best to ensure that a transfer request is made as early as possible.
- If you are considering a private or religious school, talk with the Principal of your preferred school and have an open discussion about this possibility. Many private schools welcome the opportunity to include members of their community and strive to provide additional supports required.
- Learn "who is who" in the school and school district. Participate in meetings and prepare your thoughts and questions ahead of time.
- Begin to gather information such as previous reports that you have been given by the various agencies, therapists and other professionals involved with your child. Some examples are:
 - *Sunny Hill Health Centre assessment reports*
 - *Centre for Ability assessment, progress and/or child profile reports*
 - *Vancouver Coastal Health-Richmond assessment and/or progress reports*
 - *Supported Child Development Support Guides*
 - *Behaviour Plans*
 - *Child and Family Support Plans*
- Early in the New Year, you will receive an invitation from the Richmond School District to attend a "Parent Information Night for Students with Special Needs". This will be a good opportunity to learn more about the kindergarten programs, services for children with special needs and how to best plan for the transition.

- If English is not the primary language spoken in your home, an appointment for English as a Second Language (ESL) assessment may be made for your child. The purpose of this is to take note of your child's English language skills as well as to inform parents of the School District's ESL services. It is important for the district to record accurate numbers of ESL students in order to secure additional government funding to support programs in the schools.



MARCH – APRIL

- With your signed consent, copies of recent assessment and therapy reports, support guides and treatment plans will be forwarded to the Richmond School District.
- If your child's health and safety needs indicate that ongoing physiotherapy, occupational therapy and/or nursing supports are required at school; your current therapists will facilitate a referral to the Vancouver Coastal Health-Richmond's School Support Team for follow-up.



MAY – JUNE

- Representatives from your neighbourhood school, including the kindergarten teacher, resource teacher, principal and/or special educational assistant may arrange to observe your child at their daycare or pre-school in order to better understand your child's needs.
- You will be invited to a **Transition and Information Sharing Meeting** at your school. This will be organised by the school Principal or Resource teacher and an invitation will be extended to your family and other key professionals on your child's team. The focus of this meeting is to begin to plan for your child's kindergarten year. It will help the school anticipate the type of support your child will require.
- If you are *not* contacted for a transition meeting and are interested in having one, contact the school Principal to request a meeting.
- Remember, parents are the most important part of the transition team, so don't be afraid to speak up. You are your child's best advocate and know your child best!***
- Ask the kindergarten teacher if you can bring your child to visit the classroom. Bring a camera and take some pictures of your child in the classroom and of the teacher so that your child can look at them over the summer.

- Discuss with your current therapists and the school whether any particular equipment or modifications will be required in the classroom or the school building (for example: toileting equipment, bathroom modifications, ramps, etc.). Having photos of the adaptations can be useful for the school your child will attend.
- Contact a neighbour or ask for assistance in connecting with another parent who has had experiences with the school you are considering.



JULY - AUGUST

- Consider writing a letter with a brief description of your child to be shared with teachers and parents of future classmates. Sharing of information openly can be a powerful way to promote friendship and acceptance.

You might include the following information:

- Talk about your child's personality and describe all the things he or she has in common with the other children; common interests, favourite TV shows, love of pets, etc.
 - Highlight important characteristics, abilities, learning styles and concerns regarding your child.
 - Share your goals and hopes for your child.
 - Include a picture of your child or prepare a video that shows routine activities, play times, group settings involving your child.**
- Seek out as many social opportunities as possible for your child to engage alongside typical peers.



SEPTEMBER

- School Starts!
- Children with special needs may have a "gradual entry". This will depend on your child's needs and your home school's philosophy.

- Arrange a time to meet with the teacher. Briefly review your child's abilities and your concerns with the teacher.
- Ensure reports and other written information has been received by the school.
- Ask the teacher when the Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting will be held and be sure to let him/her know that you want to participate and may want to invite additional family members and/or community professionals.

THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

What is an IEP?

An IEP is a document which outlines how the school will support your child's learning needs and, in particular, it:

- Develops an educational plan for your child
- Identifies goals
- Identifies who will implement goals and evaluate them
- Outlines strategies with which to achieve goals
- Outlines a timeline.
-

How is an IEP developed?

- It is a professional working document created in consultation with parents/caregivers, school team and other resource people who will be and/or have been working with your child.
- An IEP meeting is usually held in September or October and at least annually thereafter.
- It will involve determining priorities for the child and developing them into specific strategies.

How can parents prepare?

Prepare an outline prior to the meeting, including:

- Your current goals for your child
- Your child's strengths, needs and wants
- What your child can do, what your child is learning to do and how your child learns best

- **If you are not invited to an IEP meeting for your child, speak to the classroom teacher to request a meeting.**



WHO WILL SUPPORT US AT SCHOOL

Richmond School District

The following programs and services may be accessed through your child's school:

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program
- Learning Assistance Teachers
- Resource Teachers
- School Counselling
- School District Autism Team
- Speech-Language Pathology Services
- Vision Impaired District Resources.

Prior to your child starting school your main contact will likely be with the school Principal or Resource teacher. Once school begins, questions and concerns should always be initially directed to the classroom teacher.

You are also welcome to contact the Learning Service Department:

Sarah Loat
District Administrator
(604) 668-2477
sloat@richmond.sd38.bc.ca

Richmond School Support Team

604-278-3361

The following programs and services may be accessed and are co-ordinated through school based teams:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Nursing support services

MEETING WITH THE PRINCIPAL

It is a good idea to meet the school principal six to eight months before your child starts school. This will help you plan for your child's entry into school as well as to help you feel more comfortable with the planning process

Things to remember:

1. You are meeting with the principal to decide if you are comfortable with this school for your child.
2. You may take a partner to assist with debriefing, overall impressions and confirming details.
3. You should take notes and, if appropriate, or necessary, confirm expectations in writing.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PRINCIPAL

These are a list of suggested questions only. You may not need or want to ask them all. They can help you think about what you want to know before your child's first day of school.

Planning for Entry:

- How will staff and students be prepared for my child?
- What are (would be) your plans for integrating my child?
- Can you get release time for your staff to visit my child in his/her former school/preschool/daycare?
- Do teachers and teaching assistants get release time for in-service and meeting times?
- Who will be the person assigned to coordinate my child's program and coordinate supports on behalf of my child?
- Is there appropriate equipment for my child to use, given his/her needs? (if appropriate)
- Is the school physically accessible? (if appropriate)
- What lead time does the school require to plan for my child's entry?

Philosophy:

- What is the philosophy/attitude of the staff and school towards inclusion? How is that carried out in the schools day to day activities?
- What experience has the school had with including children with special needs?
- What is the general philosophy regarding parent involvement in the school?
- If issues arise regarding my child's program, how would they be resolved? What are the lines of communication if a concern arises?

Principal:

- Who will come to observe my child in his/her school/preschool/daycare and will those observations be shared with you?
- What reports/records would be helpful to you?
- Will the teacher be given my child's file in time to prepare for my child's start date? I would be pleased to talk with the teacher regarding anything in the file.

Classroom Situation:

- What would an average day look like for my child?
- Are students fully integrated in all classes?
- How is the time spent when a child is not fully integrated? Is it spent furthering their ability to be integrated or on life skills training?
- Do you have a buddy system/peer support for social situations?
- How is discipline handled? What kinds of situations would be considered appropriate for discipline?
- Can we (including our child) tour the school?
- Are we welcome to visit our child any time while he/she is attending school?
- Can we meet the classroom teacher? When?
- Can we meet with the classroom assistant? When? (if applicable)
- Does any one know sign language? (if appropriate)
- How do you accommodate IEP meetings?
- Are parents encouraged to be involved in the IEP?

Playground/Extra Curricular Activities:

- How will my child be cared for at recess and lunch?
- Is the playground safe for my child?
- Will there be someone to support my child while attending extra-curricular activities?

Getting Involved:

- Can you put us in touch with other parents of children with special needs?
- What can we do to assist the teacher in educating our child?

MY CHILD'S TEAM IN KINDERGARTEN

Here is a form some people have found useful. Remember that the information we are suggesting you gather must be helpful to you. Take what works and leave out the rest!

SCHOOL BASED RESOURCE TEAM

NAME

PHONE #

E MAIL

▪ My Child's Teacher

▪ Resource Teacher

▪ Principal

▪ Special Education Assistant

OTHER KINDERGARTEN RESOURCES

▪ Speech Language Pathologist

▪ Occupational Therapist

▪ Physiotherapist

▪ School Counsellor

▪ School Psychologist

▪ Community Health Nurse

▪ Other: _____

▪ Outside Agency Personnel

▪ Other: _____

Notes:

***WHAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO
SHARE ABOUT MY CHILD?***

My Child's Name: _____

1. To enhance communication with my child...
2. To encourage my child...
3. To prepare my child for change...
4. To facilitate social skills, play and interaction with my child...
5. To promote my child's independence in the classroom...
6. My child's specific learning style is...
7. My child's strengths are...
8. My child's safety needs are...
9. My child enjoys...
10. Any other concerns when my child is in kindergarten are...

**My goals for my child during
Kindergarten are:**



A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for parents to write their goals for their child during kindergarten.

HOW CAN I BE A GOOD ADVOCATE FOR MY CHILD?

- Learn to trust your instincts and your feelings. They are usually right.
- Remember that you are the expert on your own child.
- Be clear about your goals and your vision for your child.
- Know what you and your child need.
- Speak up for yourself and your child.
- Know your rights and responsibilities.
- Get to know the professionals working with your child.
- Form collaborative and supportive partnerships with others.
- Pay attention to what is working well.
- Acknowledge people when they are doing a good job.
- When you have a concern, start with talking to the people who are directly involved with the issue.
- Volunteer at the school, help on field trips.
- Attend school meetings.
- Become a member of the school's Parent Advisory Committee (PAC).
- Join a parent support group.

