



June 30, 2015

Dear Kindergarten 2015-16 Families,

Welcome to Kindergarten in the West Vancouver School District. The start of Kindergarten marks an important and exciting developmental milestone in your child's life. We look forward to working together to ensure your child's entry into our public education system is a positive and happy experience.

This September 2015, all of our schools in West Vancouver will continue to offer a gradual entry model for the beginning days of Kindergarten. This district wide approach to the beginning of Kindergarten allows for extended opportunities for your child to connect with his/her teacher and classmates in a small individualized and personalized setting.

Attached you will find an informational pamphlet outlining the importance and rationale behind **Kindergarten Gradual Entry**. We understand that the beginning of the school year can be a balancing act for busy families; but the advantages of Kindergarten Gradual Entry are well-worth the extra effort. We hope this early notice will allow you to plan in advance if you will need child care for the first days of your child's entry into school.

The West Vancouver School District is committed to providing our students with a wide variety of innovative, high-quality programs and services to ensure continuous improvement in student growth, development and achievement. **Kindergarten Gradual Entry** is a research-based, proven approach to help your child reach their learning potential from the very first day of school.

Please feel free to contact us with any further questions you may have regarding this process. Thank you for choosing the West Vancouver School District!

Sincerely,

SL Shortall

Sandra-Lynn Shortall
District Principal – Early Learning
sshortall@sd45.bc.ca

Tips to help prepare your child for Kindergarten this summer

- Listen and talk to your child about what Kindergarten will be like. Express excitement and enthusiasm so that your child will look forward to Kindergarten.
- Try to arrange for your child to spend independent time with relatives or close family friends. This often helps children develop a growing sense of independence and capacities for communicating needs with other adults. It also gives parents a window to see how their child reacts to being without them.
- Set up playdates – Informal socialization is important to maintain over the summer months for all children, regardless of pre-school experiences. Setting up playdates with children who will attend the same school can help your child establish early friendships.

First day of class

- Invite your child to take a token (stuffed toy, sticker or other small item of comfort) from home.
- Arrive early and walk around the school/ playground to help orient your child.
- Remain cheerful and let your child know you will be back at the end of the school day. Remind him/her about all the exciting new things he/she will learn and take some time to talk to the teacher together.
- Make your good bye cheerful and brief. Don't come back after you have already said good-bye and don't slip out of the room unnoticed.
- Remind your child when you will return, and make sure you are not late picking him/her up!

Source: <http://www.schoolfamilyeducation.com/>

“Gradual Entry is a successful and long accepted practice in preschools and child care centres. It provides time for the child, parent and teacher to get to know each other better making the transition to a new setting (like Kindergarten) a happier, more comfortable and secure experience for all. The good beginning to school we all want for our children.”

Laura Lee Kent
West Vancouver Child and Family Hub Coordinator
District of West Vancouver

“The ‘key places’ where children and young people develop resiliency are in the family and at school. Your program (Kindergarten Gradual Entry) has a focus on the child-parent-family-school and is building a wonderful foundation for the individual to have the ability to bounce back and to face the inevitable challenges he/she will meet in life.”

Dr. Norah Fryer,
Early Childhood College Professor, New Zealand

Questions?

Please contact Sandra-Lynn Shortall
District Principal, Early Learning at:
sshortall@sd45.bc.ca

Kindergarten Gradual Entry 2015/16



What is 'Kindergarten Gradual Entry'?

Kindergarten Gradual Entry is a developmental model of transition planning emphasizing the interconnected relationships among the child, teachers, family, peers and community that are developed across time (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

All schools in the West Vancouver School District follow a Kindergarten Gradual Entry program.



What does 'Kindergarten Gradual Entry' look like in West Vancouver?

In WVSD, Kindergarten children will be welcomed into their new school at the beginning of September by their classroom teachers in small groups. The children will also attend for shorter periods of time during the first 2 weeks of school to ensure a smooth and successful transition into Kindergarten.

You will be contacted by your school principal/ Kindergarten teacher via a "welcome" letter in July, 2015 with assigned attendance dates and specific times for your child's gradual entry.

Schedule Outline

(specific times to come from school)

Week one

Tuesday	Kindergarten not in session
Wednesday	2-hour K session
Thursday	2-hour K session
Friday	2-hour K session

Week two

Monday	Kindergarten full day
Tuesday	Kindergarten full day
Wednesday	Kindergarten full day
Thursday	Kindergarten - early dismissal/ In-take conferences
Friday	Kindergarten - early dismissal/ In-take conferences



During the first week of school, children and their parents will have many opportunities to personally connect with their child's Kindergarten teacher and other key school staff members. Continuity between early care, preschool programs and elementary schools will be a focus for each child during the gradual entry approach to Full Day Kindergarten.

During the second week of school, the children will experience 3 full days of classes (Mon-Wed). On Thursday and Friday of week 2, each family will be invited to participate in an in-take interview with their child's teacher. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about each new student from a parental and developmental perspective. Each interview will be guided by a series of questions about a child's emotional, biological, cognitive and social development.



What does this mean for my child?

This means your child will have focussed time to connect with his/her Kindergarten teacher and adjust to the new social and emotional realities of the elementary school context. This 'gift of time' will also allow children and teachers to work in smaller groups, adapting to the new learning environment that the Full Day Kindergarten program offers.

Teachers will be introducing children to classroom routines and procedures, easing the transition in a more individualized way so your child feels comfortable and valued as an important new member of the school community.

What does this mean for our family?

The West Vancouver School District recognizes that a child's first teacher is his/her parent(s). The gradual entry process gives families the opportunity to share valuable background knowledge with school personnel.

When are children ready for school?

Children don't begin to speak or walk on a schedule, so it's no surprise that chronological age is often not the best predictor of school readiness. How ready each child is for school depends more on their level of social, perceptual, motor and language development. Gradual entry can help teachers identify which children may need help, and make sure resources are delivered where they're most needed.