



COVID 19 Considerations - Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

The following guidelines are intended to support Early Learning educators in establishing Provincial health and safety recommendations with reference to the Provincial Response Team Plan, LOCCS School Division's *Return to School Plan* while continuing to implement quality practices and responsive learning opportunities for children in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten programs.

Developing Successful Transitions and Connecting with Families

Orientations to School

During the first week of school, teachers will provide brief information meetings (virtual meetings/home visits) with families. It would be beneficial to provide a virtual tour of the classroom and the entrance the students will be using to enter the school. This can take place on September 1st, 2nd, & 3rd. Families will need to drop children off outside at their schools' designated entrance to be met by the teacher or Educational Assistant. Parents are not to come into the school in order to minimize physical contact. Pre-K students have three hours of instruction. Entry and departure times are set by schools.

- Throughout the school year, teachers will regularly communicate with families through EDSBY.
- The division/school will be hosting tutorials with families to help them with using the technology that is integrated in classroom practices (e.g., EDSBY, Teams Meetings for Family Days).

Home Visits and Family Days

- For Pre-Kindergarten home visits, conduct outdoor visits with families in the local school playground, a nearby park, etc. in September to begin building a relationship with parents/caregivers.
- Family Days may be hosted virtually or in-person in a community space on one day in October and December in small 30-minute sessions (three to four families at a time if in-person). Duration and occurrence of Family Days for the rest of the school year, will be determined at the division level based on provincial recommendations.
- November Student Led Conferences will be held virtually. Parents will sign up for a specific time on EDSBY.

Daily Hygiene and Safety Practices

- Teachers and Educational Assistants will educate and establish consistent routines for proper hygiene practices and follow handwashing guidelines as outlined in the provincial health regulations and the division plan.

- Children wash their hands when they enter the classroom; before and after eating; after coming in contact with bodily fluids: after they blow their nose, cough or sneeze; after using the washroom; and before and after using sand/water/sensory bins and painting centres.
- When soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer in extremely limited quantities.
- Look for learning/teaching opportunities within the extra cleaning and hygiene routines (e.g., practice counting, singing rhymes and songs, following a sequence of steps/directions).
- Follow the school's plan for cleaning and disinfecting eating surfaces.
- Stay within the classroom as much as possible and avoid having to go into other areas of the school.
- Follow the staggered recess times set out by the school plan.
- Ensure that Educational Assistants and substitutes are aware of the hygiene and cleaning procedures and understand the adaptations to routines and instructional practices.

School Supplies and Personal Belongings

- Children are not to bring supplies to and from home.
- Each child will have their own kit/package of supplies at school. These supplies should be in containers to keep them contained and help with cleaning.
- Students should only bring water bottles. Each school will have water bottle filling stations. Children are not to have juice boxes or thermos.
- Children are to use books from classroom libraries. Books are not to be sent to home from school. Sets of library books can be assigned to classrooms and exchanged on a weekly/monthly basis.

Considerations for Play-based Learning, Environments and Learning Materials

- Create spaces that surround the children with hope and possibility; inspire innovation and curiosity.
- While considering the elements of space – materials, physical and aesthetic as interdependent and interconnected to go beyond “an environment” to assist with teaching curricular outcomes, strive to maintain a home-like, cozy, safe and culturally responsive environment.
- Wash all learning materials before offering the materials to children and placing in learning centres.
- Put away materials that may be hard to clean or cannot be washed in a washing machine.
- Ensure everything is well organized, labelled and in containers (e.g., take photos of the items and include the names of materials).
- Provide individual buckets or materials/mini invitations for learning for children to use through the week (e.g., I Spy bins). Include closed and open-ended materials to keep their interests. Assign to a child for the week then clean at the end of the week and rotate invitations to another child the following week.
- Limit the amount of materials in learning centres – less is more. Think about how one material or group of materials can offer numerous opportunities as opposed to having numerous materials (Quality over quantity).

- Use open-ended materials in learning centres that can be used in many ways and repurposed throughout the day. Boxes, cardboard tubing, gems, rocks, sticks, recycled materials can be used for several things throughout the day, in play and through inquiry-based learning.
- Extend materials to include things that cannot necessarily be touched – exploring light and shadows, exploring sound, colour (e.g. use the smart board, overhead, projector, flashlights, prisms, crystals, water, and food colouring, paint).
- Offer materials that keep the children’s interests, allow them to work with their favourite materials. Look for opportunities to use the materials in a variety of ways (e.g., Lego can be used for building, for counting, shape, size, patterning/math, for print making/art, for exploring properties, designing structures/Science).
- Pay attention to how the materials are set up to invite the children to play and explore to keep children’s interests and offers possibilities for discovery or inquiry rather than telling them how to play with the materials. We can accidentally restrict how we use materials based upon how it is set up.
- Interchange materials and rotate items to keep interest; add complex materials as the year progresses.
- Change the context of space that the materials are being offered in – take the materials outside, closer to a window, move to a different shelf or in another part of the room.
- Look for ways to open or close off areas in the classroom space or outdoor environment (e.g. pylons to map out a space for big body play).
- Engage and interact with the children to model inquiry/exploring materials; “Have similar materials to what the children have so you can: imitate what they are doing, expand on what they are doing by doing something different using the same materials.
- Use open-ended questions or the Expanding Expression Tool (EET) to further the children’s learning with the materials.

Minimizing Physical Contact and Interactions that Build in Conversations

- While minimizing physical contact, aim to be at the child’s level so that they can read non-verbal cues and engage in interactions/conversations.
- Follow the child’s lead when involved in an activity; incorporate activities that build on language and interactions without materials (e.g., I spy, Simon Says, 20 Questions).
- Look for opportunities to have incidental conversations using Hanen strategies: talk about what you are doing, make interesting comments, ask questions to invite conversations, change routines into games.
- Minimizing Physical Contact ideas: use painter’s tape, round rubber spot disc from Physical Education room.
- Always wash before having groups come together.
- Provide materials for each child to avoid too much sharing of materials. Keep materials contained and sorted. Rotate materials on a weekly basis and clean at the end of the week.

Considerations for Whole Group Discussions/Small Group Activities

- Focus on including imaginative play, physical games that can respect some social distancing, singing, individual art projects.
- Include times that offer activities, games, and projects where each child can contribute individually (e.g., shared writing experiences: whole group writes a story).
- Provide shared reading experiences to encourage whole group engagement through puppetry, storytelling, singing new songs, interactive read aloud/big book, turn and talks, think, pair, share (SK Ministry of Education [Early Literacy: A Resource for Teachers, 2000](#)).