

Toronto District School Board

Operational Procedure PR696

Title: **KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION**

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Authorization: Executive Council

1.0 RATIONALE

The Kindergarten Registration Procedure (“the Procedure”) supports implementation of the following policies: Early Learning and Care (P022), Optional Attendance (P013), Student Attendance and Safe Arrival (P085), and Students without Legal Immigration Status (P061).

Kindergarten Registration recognizes the importance of early learning and family and community partnerships. As children transition to school it is understood that schools must be ready for children, rather than children being ready for school. In consideration of the various transitions children experience in the early years, educators must put children’s needs first and be thoughtful in planning and implementing more seamless transitions.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

To establish a process for Kindergarten registration to be used in all elementary schools in the Board.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Before- and After-School Programs refers to programs in schools serving children between the age of 3 years 8 months to 12 years of age before the school day begins, and after it ends, as defined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act*. This includes Extended Day Programs, licensed child care, and authorized recreational and skill building programs.

Board refers to the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as “TDSB”.

Child Care refers to licensed early learning and care programs for children from birth to 3.8 years of age.

Kindergarten Registration refers to the processes used by families to enroll a child in school for the first time. This process involves completing all necessary forms including the Student Registration Form as well as the other activities that support children and families with the transition into the school system.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

Associate Director, Equity, Well-Being and School Improvement

5.0 APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Procedure applies to all TDSB staff involved in the Kindergarten registration process.

6.0 PROCEDURES

6.1. Key Principles for The Kindergarten Registration Process:

- All students are to be welcomed
- No student will be refused registration at their local school based on medical, complex and/or special education needs
- Children enter Kindergarten with various needs and abilities. School staff is responsible for working in partnership with parents/guardians and caregivers, consultants and community service providers to support children with special needs in experiencing the smoothest possible transition to school
- Students who require assistance with self-care (e.g., toileting) are eligible to register for Kindergarten
- While attendance in Kindergarten remains optional, it is mandatory to offer the program on a full day basis to every student that has a right to attend.
- If at any point during the school year, a parent/guardian chooses to transition their child from part-time to full-time attendance in Kindergarten, the child has the right to attend full-time. Principals and educators work with families to facilitate a child's transition to full-time attendance
- Only parents or legal guardians can register their children for school

6.2. Admission Eligibility:

A child has the right to attend Junior Kindergarten on September 1 in the calendar year in which the child turns four (4) years old. Students turning (4) year old as of September 1 and up to December 31 of that calendar year are eligible to attend school in that academic year. This means that a child can attend at the minimum age of three (3) years and eight (8) months.

A child has the right to attend Senior Kindergarten on September 1 in the calendar year in which the child turns (5) years old. Students turning (5) years old as of September 1 and up to December 31 of that calendar year are eligible to attend school in that academic year. This means that a child can attend Senior Kindergarten at the minimum age of 4 years and 8 months.

System-level responsibility:

- a) Identification of a common Kindergarten registration period in the first three weeks of February to welcome first time Kindergarten children and families into school. It is understood that children will continue to register after this time.
- b) Publication of the registration period dates in the Board System Planning calendar in September each year.
- c) Notification to the general public of the registration dates beginning in January (e.g. website, social media).
- d) Resources to advertise and plan for Kindergarten registration at schools and in the local community will be available on the website in December (e.g. school banner, poster, etc.).

6.3. School-level responsibility:

- a) Schools will develop a registration strategy by setting up a collaborative Kindergarten Registration and Orientation Team. Possible team membership could include school Principal, kindergarten educators, EarlyON Parent Workers, child care and before-and after-school program staff, Community Support Workers, Settlement Workers, parent volunteers and/or a school council representative. The Kindergarten Registration and Orientation Team will meet well in advance of the registration process to choose dates and times during the first three weeks in February for registration and to develop a communication plan and other strategies to support successful transitions to school (see Appendix A and B).
- b) Online registration will remain open and families can register online beginning the first week of February.
- c) Schools will send out information about registration at least one month in advance of registration ensuring that it is also distributed through local child care centres and community service providers such as libraries, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, doctors' offices, faith centres, etc.
- d) Administrator will ensure all staff, including office administrators and Kindergarten educators, have an understanding of the importance of their respective roles in welcoming new families during registration in the school.

- e) Training on using the Online Registration System (OLR) for office staff and administrators will be made available and advertised on System Bulletin, Direct Line and School Information System (SIS) monthly updates and SIS website.
- f) A welcoming space for families and their children, such as the library, EarlyON Child and Family Centre or private office, should be set up with appropriate materials and resources prior to registration.
- g) Families will have the choice of online or in-person registrations.

Registration should include:

- A personal welcome to the family from the school Principal or Vice-Principal;
 - A kiosk established at the office or the EarlyON Child and Family Centre where families may have the option of completing the Online Registration System (OLR);
 - Support from school personnel in the completion of the paperwork or support of the OLR;
 - Provision of interpreters as required;
 - The completion of the registration process, i.e. school registration form, attestation form, medical information and other forms as appropriate if families have them available;
 - The Developmental History Form (see PR512) can be completed at this time (either online or paper version) or could be deferred to a later meeting such as the Orientation or Open House; and
 - Information for parents and children welcoming them to the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and to the school. This could include: a copy of a “Welcome to Our Class” booklet created by current kindergarten students, the school profile, a recent school newsletter, before-and after-school program and EarlyON resources, information about special education resources, speech pathology services and other supports for students with special needs (see Appendix C), an invitation to subsequent orientation events, strategies to facilitate a successful transition process and information regarding family supports and community resources to support pre-school learning.
- a) Schools will register all students of kindergarten age from their attendance area. Parents/guardians have an option to use an Online Registration application (OLR) or a paper version.

- b) Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) Process-School Support Team (SST) meet with families and their support personnel, local agencies child cares, and before-and after-school programs as needed to ensure successful transitions for students with special education needs.
- c) Schools will confirm registration of students with the onsite before-and after-school program staff to support their program registration process.

6.4. Best Practices in Transitioning Students into Kindergarten

Transitions should not be seen as a one-time event. Effective transitions involve an ongoing process of planning and collaboration between a number of partners including, children, families, educators, community members, child care, professional organizations and community support groups. Planning for transitions allows schools to be proactive and to help bridge and overcome potential challenges. When working together to develop a plan of action, we can help provide children and families with the knowledge and skills to manage transitions successfully.

School-Wide Strategies:

- a) Compose a team to support transitions throughout Kindergarten.
- b) Communicate important information about the dates and what families need to bring for registration at least one month before kindergarten registration (Kindergarten banner, letters home, posters and partnering with Early Years centers or other organizations).
- c) Provide families with the TDSB Developmental History Form, Kindergarten Registration booklet and Kindergarten FAQ (available online in multiple languages).
- d) Share information with families, encouraging them to utilize free family support programs and family resource centers.
- e) Plan a kindergarten orientation event(s) prior to school entry.
- f) Provide opportunity for families to give suggestions or feedback regarding the Kindergarten entry process.

Classroom Focused Strategies:

- a) Attempt to minimize transitions within the classroom.
- b) Build a sense of community and belonging with each Kindergarten space, spend time speaking to and getting to know each student.
- c) Consider the age and attention span of Kindergarten students and minimize the amount of time spent on whole group instruction at the carpet.

- d) Consider a “less is more” approach at the start of the year with regards to learning materials.
- e) Spend time modelling strategies for self-regulation and identify “calmness.”
- f) Consider creating a Kindergarten welcome bag including materials used in the classroom and provide ideas to families on how the materials are used.
- g) Offer opportunities for families/caregivers to take part in the program and engage in learning experiences together.
- h) Be flexible and responsive to children’s social/emotional needs.
- i) Prepare students and families for “first day” experiences (e.g. creating a social story package).
- j) Where possible, offer opportunities for educators, lunchroom supervisors, school support/prep teachers to meet and engage with students and families.
- k) Consider one-on-one time for families to go over the TDSB Developmental History Form.
- l) Provide a welcome letter from each educating team/class.
- m) Suggest informal times of the year where families and children entering Kindergarten can meet with each other to discuss questions they may have about the program (e.g. meeting at the local park or library).
- n) Provide families with information on how to become a school volunteer or how to join the school council.
- o) Include families in the classroom inquiries and ensure there is opportunity for children to involve community members, parents/guardians and other family members.
- p) Use social media to engage and communicate with families during Kindergarten transition.

6.5. Staggered Entry

The Toronto District School Board recognizes that the first day of Kindergarten is an important milestone for all children and their parents/guardians. Every child has different needs. Often these needs are identified during transition to Kindergarten activities. Some children in Junior Kindergarten (JK) may benefit from a more gradual entry into school and staggering entry into school may create a more positive and nurturing first experience in a Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) classroom. A plan for staggered entry for children in JK is permitted when the circumstances and plan are approved by the Superintendent of Education (SOE) in advance of any communication with families.

Staggered entry must follow the following principles:

- All children in JK and SK enrolled in FDK Before-and After-School Care (located in the school or community) must start school on the first day.
- All children in SK are expected to begin school on the first day. Parents/guardians must agree to a delayed start to the school year for their child.
- Children will start school on the day they arrive regardless of the plan for staggered entry.
- All JK children must start school by Friday of the first week.

6.6. Connections and Partnerships with Child Cares and EarlyONs to Support the Transition to Kindergarten

- a) Provide child care and EarlyON staff with information about where to find information about the school (including the registration process, orientation events, Optional Attendance) and ask them to share this with families in their programs.
- b) Invite child care and EarlyON staff to visit the Kindergarten program to observe and ask whether school staff may visit and observe the child care and EarlyON program.
- c) Invite child care and EarlyON staff to bring children who will be beginning school to visit the Kindergarten program for a tour.
- d) Plan joint activities where possible (e.g. registration, trips, special events).
- e) Request that child care staff share information about children where the TDSB Consent to Share Information Form has been signed to support children's individual needs and effective transitions. Discuss the transfer of records if appropriate and consent has been obtained.
- f) Extend the offer for Kindergarten educators to come to a parent meeting in the child care and EarlyON setting to talk about Kindergarten.

7. EVALUATION

This Procedure will be reviewed as required, but at a minimum every four (4) years.

8. APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Transitions to School: Preparing for Kindergarten Registration
- Appendix B: Transitions to School: Ideas for Orientation
- Appendix C: Entry Plan for Students with Special Education Needs

9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Policies:

- Early Learning and Care Policy (P022)
- Optional Attendance (P013)

Procedures:

- Admission Eligibility Requirements (PR518)
- Kindergarten to Grade 2 – New Student Registration Developmental History Form (PR512)

Legislative Acts and Regulations:

- *Child Care and Early Years Act*

Ministry of Education Documents

- The Kindergarten Program (2016)
- Working Together in a Shared Space (2019)
- Supporting All Children to Attend Kindergarten (2019)
- Early Years and Child Care: Building a Shared Understanding (2019)

Additional Resources

- City of Toronto, EarlyON Child and Family Centres
Toronto.ca/EarlyON

Preparing for Kindergarten Registration

Informing Families about Registration

Guidelines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Display the TDSB Kindergarten Registration banner in front of the school so parents are aware of the timeframe for registration. Students could design a second banner to welcome parents as they come into the school. → Schools with billboards outside of the school can use them to welcome new registrants. → Use the posters provided on the TDSB Principal site to advertise the registration date and requirements in the local community. → Information about the dates of registration and what parents need to bring is communicated through a variety of channels (e.g. letters home, posters in community places such as EarlyON Child and Family Centres, health centres, libraries etc.). Included as appropriate might be information about the Optional Attendance Policy. → Information about registration is sent to agencies who may be involved with supporting children with special education needs.

Kindergarten Registration

The following checklist may be useful for school staff in thinking about practices and preparations to support the Kindergarten registration.

Preparing for Kindergarten Registration	
A variety of staff members are involved in planning the Kindergarten Registration (e.g. administrators, Kindergarten educators, child care staff, EarlyON Parent Worker (if on site), office staff).	
A time is chosen for registration that will meet family needs. Offer registration at staggered times (days, evenings) to encourage as many families as possible to register.	

Prepare a supervised area where children can explore materials that may be found in their future Kindergarten classroom while parents register. Consider using the EarlyON Child and Family Centre, if available, or the library.	
Prepare to have staff and parents available who speak other languages. Perhaps older students could take parents on a tour of the school highlighting available programs (e.g. the EarlyON Child and Family Centre, child care and onsite before-and after-school programs).	
Involve parent council members so they can make connections with new parents, assist in translations if appropriate and /or act as school ambassadors.	
Health care professionals may be part of the registration process. Agencies or community programs may be invited, as appropriate.	
Create and prepare a package for families that may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information about the school ● Information from agencies or community programs ● Resources for children (e.g., read alouds, loose parts, crayons, etc.) 	
Prepare refreshments, as appropriate.	
During the Kindergarten Registration Process	
Parents are welcomed to the school by the principal and staff.	
Kindergarten educators participate in the registration process to meet with parents, where possible.	
At the registration, ensure staff wear name tags so families know who staff members are and their role in the school.	
Children are invited to the registration. Provide a supervised area for children to explore materials while parents register. Educators could use this opportunity to get to know students and families.	
Kindergarten classes may wish to prepare a “ <i>Welcome to Our Class</i> ” booklet with photos showing what happens in the Kindergarten classroom. If a video of the program or classrooms is available, this could be playing at the time of registration.	

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Parents receive and complete the Developmental History Form either at the time of registration, at home or with the teacher at a later date.	
Families receive a welcome package of materials. This package may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Information about the school○ Information from agencies or community programs○ Resources for children (e.g. read alouds, loose parts, crayons, etc.)	
Provide refreshments, as appropriate.	

Transitions to School

Kindergarten Orientation

- Invite families to attend a Kindergarten Orientation event at the school in the spring to meet the Kindergarten educators and learn more about the Kindergarten program.
- Choose a time before the end of the school year for parents and children to come and visit the kindergarten classes.
- Invite new families to attend events held at the school during the remainder of the school year (where appropriate).
- Consider offering a workshop for families on pertinent topics (e.g. what a day in Kindergarten might look like, how parents can support their child's development and learning at home) before school begins in September.
- Consider planning a BBQ or Lemonade Day to welcome new families before the first day of school.
- Invite parents/caregivers to join their children in the classroom on the first day of school.
- Make a special name tag for children to wear when they visit the school or provide materials and invite them to create their own with their families.
- Be reminded that the Kindergarten Orientation event is one way of welcoming families and it should not be the only school plan for supporting transitions into Kindergarten.

Appendix C

Entry Plan for Students with Special Needs

Some students with special education needs which are extremely complex, who are newly registered but not yet attending a TDSB school, may, through a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) receive a recommendation for placement in a full time special education class upon enrolment. When approaching a TDSB school for registration, parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to share all pertinent information with the school principal about the special educational needs of their child. With parental permission, principal consultation with the School Support Team (SST) will determine whether or not a referral to a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) is appropriate.

Entry Plan for Students with Special Education Needs	Person Responsible	Timeline
If parents want consideration for immediate special education class placement when their child starts to attend a TDSB school, the child is pre-registered (registration “on paper”) in the home school by address, as early as possible in the year prior to the year of school entry. Parents do not have to proceed to SEPRC if they prefer regular class placement.	Home school Parent/Guardian	Up to 9 to 12 months before attendance in school for those students who are entering TDSB in JK/SK. Ongoing and throughout year for all other students
School welcomes family and supports family throughout the pre-registration and with parental permission, the SEPRC process.	Home school	Ongoing
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) provide school with pertinent documentation with consents (as appropriate) to share information and confer with others.	Parent/Guardian	As soon as possible and ongoing
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are given a copy of the TDSB Guide to Special Education for Parent(s)/Guardian(s) .	Home school	At least 10 days prior to the SEPRC meeting.
The principal confers with the Special Education Consultant and other members of the SST as appropriate. Special Education staff may observe those students who fall within the Low Incidence category of needs (i.e. Developmental Disability, Physical Disability).	Special Education staff Principal	Ongoing after registration occurs
Where it is determined that a SEPRC meeting will proceed by the SST, including the Special Education Consultant, a referral is completed by the home school and submitted to Special Education staff for scheduling.	Home school	Submit complete SEPRC package as soon as possible
SEPRC meeting will be completed prior to school attendance.	Special Education Inclusion Coordinator	Completed prior to school attendance
Where a full time special education class placement is recommended by the SEPRC and agreed to by the parent(s)/guardian(s), a specific Special Education program, with location noted, is offered. A visit to the program is arranged for parent(s)/guardian(s) prior to their signing final permission.	Special Education Coordinator, Home School	Subsequent to SEPRC

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<p>Where a full time special education class placement is not recommended or is declined by parent(s)/guardian(s), paper registration is finalized in the home school by address and the child will attend that school. The school-based special education resources will be available to provide support as recommended through a school support team (IST or SST).</p>	<p>Special Education Inclusion Coordinator Home School</p>	<p>Subsequent to offer of placement</p>
<p>A transition planning meeting will occur to address the special needs that a student may have upon school entry, whether or not SEPRC placement is accepted. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and agency staff as appropriate may be involved.</p>	<p>Receiving School Special Education Staff</p>	<p>After school placement; the meeting will involve school administration, parents, Special Education staff, school staff and agency staff, as appropriate</p>
<p>Transition planning strategies will be developed, as required. An entry process for September will be shared with families, including transportation arrangements. A written action plan is completed and shared with all participants. Follow up meeting(s) are scheduled, as needed.</p>	<p>Principal (or designate)</p>	<p>May-June</p>
<p>Where a full time special education class placement has been accepted by parent(s)/guardian(s), an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) will be convened within approximately 6 to 9 months. Students in the kindergarten intensive support programs have IPRCs in the spring of their senior kindergarten year.</p>	<p>Principal (or designate)</p>	<p>6 to 9 months after placement in the program for students in grades 1 and 2 Spring of senior kindergarten</p>

In addition to the above procedures the following also occurs for students who fall within the TDSB “Low Incidence” category of needs (developmental disabilities, physical disabilities) as well as for blind/low vision and deaf/hard of hearing.

Entry Plan for Students with Special Education Needs	Person Responsible	Timeline
Presentations are made annually to outside agencies regarding the entry process for students new to TDSB.	Special Education Staff Professional Support Services	January
TDSB will send a letter regarding pre-registration to selected preschool programs serving students with special needs.	Special Education Staff	January
Letter will also be distributed through the Early Years Advisory Committee and the Child Care Committee. Principals will be informed.	Early Years Advisory Committee Child Care Committee	January
Preschool programs/agencies forward names of potential students to Special Education Low Incidence Coordinators.	Preschools/Agencies	Upon receipt of TDSB letter
Special Education Low Incidence Coordinators will notify TDSB schools of pending pre-registrations.	Special Education Staff	Upon receipt of information
Please note the following:		
Children who have attained the age of three years and who have a significant hearing loss, may qualify for a special education class placement in our Deaf and Hard of Hearing programs.	Coordinator – Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Ongoing
Children who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder may receive additional transitional support (e.g., Connections for Students).	Central Coordinator – Autism Services	Ongoing

Schools can contact their Special Education Consultant for further information.

Toronto District School Board, Special Education Plan (July, 2019). P. 46-47