**Welcome to Kindergarten at Bruce**

*Parent – to – Parent Primer:*

*Some things we thought parents would want to know*

By the Bruce School Council

September 2018

Dear Kindergarten parents,

It goes without saying that the transition into kindergarten is exciting but can also be challenging and emotional. We know, we’ve been there. In an effort to ease this transition, the school council has created this parent-to-parent kindergarten primer. Our aim is to provide parents with information concerning issues that may arise in kindergarten and to give you a sense of what to expect. It has been written by parents from the perspective of things we wish we’d known going in to kindergarten. We hope you find it helpful as you start this journey with your child.

**Preparing for Kindergarten**

1. **This is a big transition**

Starting kindergarten will be a transition for you and your child. You might be surprised at what a big transition it is. Your child is probably going to bump into some challenges along the way - crying and not wanting to go to school; peeing their pants; not eating their lunch, etc. This is normal as they get used to their new routines and gain confidence in their new surroundings. If you have a concern, or are uncertain of how things work, don’t hesitate to speak to your child’s teacher. Beyond that, we suggest you just breathe and trust that even if things seem a little challenging in September, they usually settle down within the first month or so.

Keep in mind, kindergarten is different than daycare. Most notably, childcare programs have a lower child to teacher ratio than kindergarten. We are projected to have one teacher and one ECE for about 28 students. This means that a high degree of independence is expected of your child. We’ve set out below some specific areas that you can work on with your child to ease the transition to school.

1. **Getting ready for kindergarten**

There are a few skills that will really help your child with the transition into kindergarten. If you can work on these beforehand you will put your child in the best possible position in September.

That said, teachers understand that ***all children develop at their own pace*** and some children will be ahead or behind the curve on these skills. If you have a concern about your child’s independence in one of these areas, you may wish to discuss this with the teacher in September. For example, if you know your child still has the occasional accident, it’s best to let your child’s teacher know this. The staff try to help more with food/potty/dressing support in the first month or so of school, but as a parent you may want to be aware of potential issues and make staff aware of these.

1. **Bathroom routines**

With 2 adults for around 28 students, your child will be expected to use the bathroom with a high degree of independence (unless they have an accident).

So, we know this sounds basic but we suggest you work with your child on:

1. Being aware of when they need to use the bathroom (unlike daycare or homecare, children do not necessarily take regular bathroom breaks. They will generally be expected to use the bathroom as the need arises.)
2. wiping their own bottoms
3. peeing into the toilet (believe us, this has been an issue)
4. flushing the toilet
5. washing and drying their hands
6. **Eating lunch**

There is one lunchroom supervisor on duty at lunch for each class. This is all the board provides funding for. The lunchroom supervisors will make sure all the kids have their food in front of them, and will encourage the children to eat their lunch, but they cannot feed individual children. This is an example of the difference between daycare/home and school.

We encourage you to have your child practice eating a school lunch at home before school starts. Make sure they can open all zip lock bags and containers, put a straw in their juice box etc. Again, the lunchroom supervisors will help with these tasks but due to the number of children in the room it may take some time for them to provide the needed assistance.

As noted below, a school snack is provided in the morning and most children eat this enthusiastically. So, even if they don’t eat their lunch, they are likely getting some food during the day.

Truthfully, lunchtime can be a little hectic. Be prepared for many children in free play mode during the time between the first children finishing their lunch and the last children finishing their lunch. Parent volunteers are greatly appreciated to help entertain and manage the activity during this time.

1. **Getting dressed for outside**

Again, due to the teacher/student ratios, children will need to be able to get dressed with some independence. Before school starts, we suggest practicing dressing for outdoors together. While this is not such a big deal in September, it will become more important as winter approaches.

**What will happen in September?**

1. **Class Assignment**

In the last two weeks of August, you will receive be contacted by the school Principal with information about the first day of school, including what time to arrive, which class your child is in and where to go when you arrive on the first day. Information on first day procedures and who is teaching what class will also be on the Bruce School Website (<http://schoolweb.tdsb.on.ca/bruce>) in the beginning of August. If, for whatever reason, you haven’t been advised as to when your child is starting, call the school the week prior to the first day of school to find out.

1. **Changes in September**

Based on our current numbers, Bruce will have two kindergarten classes with up to 29 students in each with one teacher and one ECE. There will also be one kindergarten class of 15 students that has one teacher and no ECE.

Due to higher than projected numbers, or considerations at the school level, changes to classes are often made in September. This means that your child could start off in one class and be moved to another. This is part of life in the TDSB and occurs in all grades. The school council works with the administration to ensure that such changes are communicated to parents in a timely and clear manner to minimize the stress of any transitions. We only mention this now so that you’re not surprised if such changes occur in September.

1. **Hours/Schedule**

**School starts** at 9:00 a.m. Supervision is provided as of 8:45am in the front North playground (unless it is raining). Children cannot be dropped off before 8:45 am.

**Lunch** is from 11:45 to 12:45 – Once students are done eating and are ready, they are taken outside for lunch recess.

We also have a snack program through which all students receive a nutritious snack each morning.

**School ends** at 3:30 p.m. for kindergarten students. Students are picked up at their designated classroom exit promptly at 3:30 p.m.

1. **What to send to school with your Child**

Each child has a cubby to hold their things, with hooks for their jackets, snow pants, etc. They have a bin for lunch boxes, and another bin for water bottles. You will want to label both. You will also want to send suntan lotion in September and label it (send two if you are doing before/after care).

Send a change of labeled clothes in case your child has an accident or gets wet during the day.

1. **Before and After Childcare**

If you are signed up for before and/or after childcare it goes from 7:30 am to 9:00 am in the morning, and 3:00 pm when school ends until 6:00 pm. Please contact Lori Gray, Woodgreen Childcare manager at the school (416.393.0672 ext. 20008), if you have any questions.

**Communicating with the school**

1. **The Basics**

Your child’s teacher will inform you of the way school communication will be sent home (whether it is a mailbox, website, communication folder) In particular, the school sends home a bi-monthly newsletter with important dates and news about what is happening in the school.

School Advisory Council (Parent Council) coordinates most our communications with the school newsletter however we also maintain an email list and send out regular updates to parents about school and community events, educations issues and other information. To be added to the Council newsletter please email us at: council@ bruceconnection.com.

Just as an FYI, Junior kindergarten students do not get a report card until term 2, after the winter holidays.

1. **What to do if I have a question, problem, concern?**

If you have a problem, question or concern the first step is to talk to the teacher. Do not hesitate to ask questions or discuss a problem. Feel free to drop by or leave a message in the office for your teacher - they will call you back. Please note that most teachers do not communicate regularly by email.

If you feel that your question or concern has not been addressed adequately by the teacher, or if your concern relates to a school-wide issue or policy, contact the principal directly by phone, email or drop into the office.

Nancy, our office administrator, is another great resource and may be able to answer your question if it relates to completion of forms, school routines, programs, etc.

If you need information or want to get another parent’s perspective, you may email the school council (see info. below). Keep in mind, these folks are volunteers but they may be able to provide you with valuable information or perspective.

**School Council**

Bruce has a diverse and vibrant parent community. Parental involvement is one the cornerstones of both an individual child's success in school, and the success of a school as a whole, so we encourage our parents to find ways to get involved. The school council is a great way to get involved in your child’s school and to have a positive impact on the life of all Bruce students and staff. School Council involvement also gives members the opportunity to be fully informed about what is happening at the school.Any parent or guardian who has a child enrolled at Bruce can become a member of council. **New Bruce parents are particularly valued as they bring a fresh perspective and energy to our work.** No particular set of skills or experience is required.

Parents or guardians can attend council meetings on an occasional basis as a way to find out more about our activities and to discuss matters that may concern them. And we *always* need occasional volunteers to help out with our fundraising activities and initiatives. You don't have to come to every meeting (or even any meetings!) to make a difference.

To get in touch with the school council anytime please email Lorna Morin, our School Council Chair at: mailto:council@bruceconnection.com.

**Contact Info.**

Bruce Jr. Public School

51 Larchmount Ave.,

Toronto, Ontario

M4M 2Y6

416-393-0670