Welcome to Kindergarten™
THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

# Family Activities for Early Learners

## Resource Book

2018 - 2019

**thelearningpartnership.ca**

#WelcometoKindergarten

Welcome to Kindergarten is a program of The Learning Partnership, a national charity dedicated to enhancing publicly funded education to prepare students in Canada for a globally connected world by building partnerships between government, education and business. We do this through innovative student programs, executive leadership for educators, knowledge mobilization and policy, tribute celebrations of excellence, and collaborations across Canada. Since 1993, more than 6.9 million students have participated in The Learning Partnership's programs. For more information, visit **www.thelearningpartnership.ca.**

# You are your child's first and best teacher!

Family engagement helps children be successful, in school and in life. You can help your child by

- Following your child's lead as you play and discover together.
- Talking and reading with your child in your first language.
- Helping your child to share and take turns.
- Encouraging your child to make choices and decisions.
- Celebrating your child's learning.

*Parent information is also available in 12 other languages.*

# Talk, Read, Sing, Play Everyday!

## Talk

Talking supports communication and relationship-building skills. Strengthen your child's vocabulary by listening and speaking to your child regularly. Share stories that are interesting to your child and encourage their imagination.

- Look at and talk about the pictures in your books. Make connections to your child's world.
- Count items in your home (pairs of socks, numbers of forks, knives, spoons needed for a family meal).
- Discover what materials the magnetic letters and numbers in your Welcome to Kindergarten bag will attach to.
- Create patterns and sequences of colours, letters, shapes and numbers (ababa 123 123).

## Read

Reading daily with your child will help develop vocabulary and foster an interest in stories and pursuing knowledge. Strengthen your child's abilities to recognize print, letter and number relationships by linking letters and numbers in the bag to books, objects in the home and in the environment.

- Read different types of stories that are of interest to your child.
- Visit your local library and participate in library programs.
- Match the magnetic letters and numbers in your Welcome to Kindergarten bag to the template; sing the ABC song; and build your child's name on the fridge, cookie sheet or placemat.
- Match the letters and numbers to those in a book, on a cereal box or to any form of large print.

### Tactile Play

Playdough helps children develop their imagination as well as finger control, coordination and measurement skills. Encourage your child to create objects, shapes, animals or letters in different colours.

#### Playdough recipe:

600 ml of flour (2 1/2 cups), 120 ml of salt (1/2 cup), 10 ml cream of tartar or alum (2 teaspoons), 480 ml boiling water (2 cups), 30 ml of oil (2-3 tablespoons), 2 packages unsweetened kool-aid.

1. Combine the ingredients together and stir well.
2. Knead the dough and it is ready to use.
3. Store it in a covered plastic container or zip-lock bag.

# Sing and Move

Music teaches children to recognize rhythm, rhyme and patterning. It stimulates learning and helps young children develop communication and thinking skills. As children engage in singing songs, poems and chants, they are exposed to many concepts about language. Movement and being active develop habits to support healthy choices and long-term health.

## Sing and dance together!

Children's songs are available for free download through our Welcome to Kindergarten app or website.

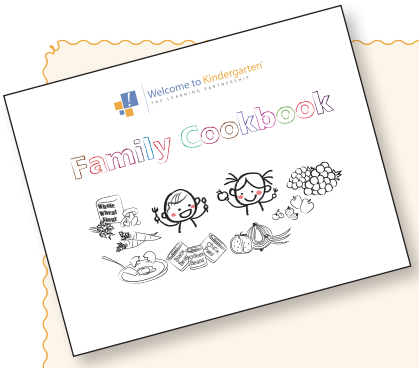
**thelearningpartnership.ca/WTK-music**

- Sing, dance, clap and count as you listen to the Welcome to Kindergarten music.
- Bounce, kick and catch the ball to the rhythm of the songs.
- Explore with your child how you can play with the ball: squeeze, throw, bounce, pass, catch, roll, kick using one hand, two hands, one foot and two feet. Use words to describe the ball and what it can do: "Let's roll the ball fast / slow / through the legs / with two hands / with one hand / with our feet. Let's bounce the ball three times."
- Encourage taking turns and expand ball activity time to include others.

# Play

Playing strengthens decision making and cooperation skills. Playing with objects, such as a ball, helps children develop muscle control, spatial awareness and hand-eye coordination. Use the items in your bag to encourage your child's curiosity, creativity and imagination!

- Encourage your child to draw and paint pictures with crayons, markers, finger paint or other fun materials, such as sand and shaving cream.
- Search for and cut out pictures your child finds interesting from old magazines and newspapers.
- Explore different ways of attaching favourite pictures to paper or other items, such as a shoe box.
- Praise your child's art and post it for everyone to see.




## Cook, learn and enjoy eating together!

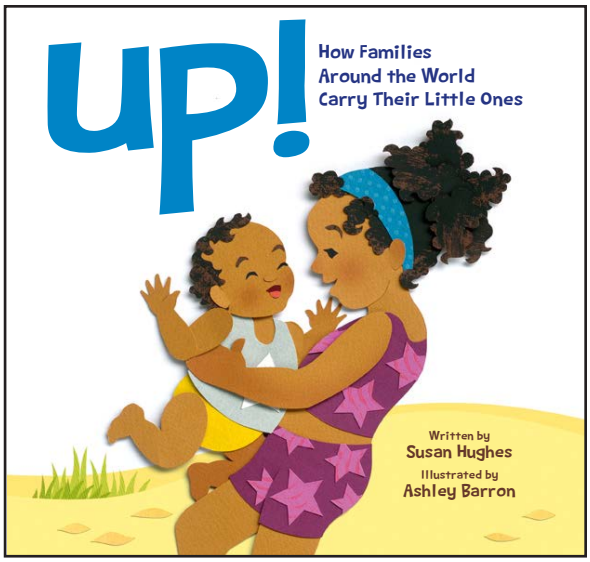
Download the free *Welcome to Kindergarten Family Cookbook* from our website!

Family cooking will support children in learning early math and science concepts such as the difference between liquids and solids, the concepts of more and less, and the concept of sequence and order of numbers.

thelearningpartnership.ca/WTK-resources

Take pictures of your creations and post them online with other families on Twitter: #WelcometoKindergarten

***UP!*** Explores how little ones are carried in many different ways. It is a wonderful story that presents the universal love that exists within all families around the world. This book provides a marvelous opportunity to explore how love is expressed in your family.

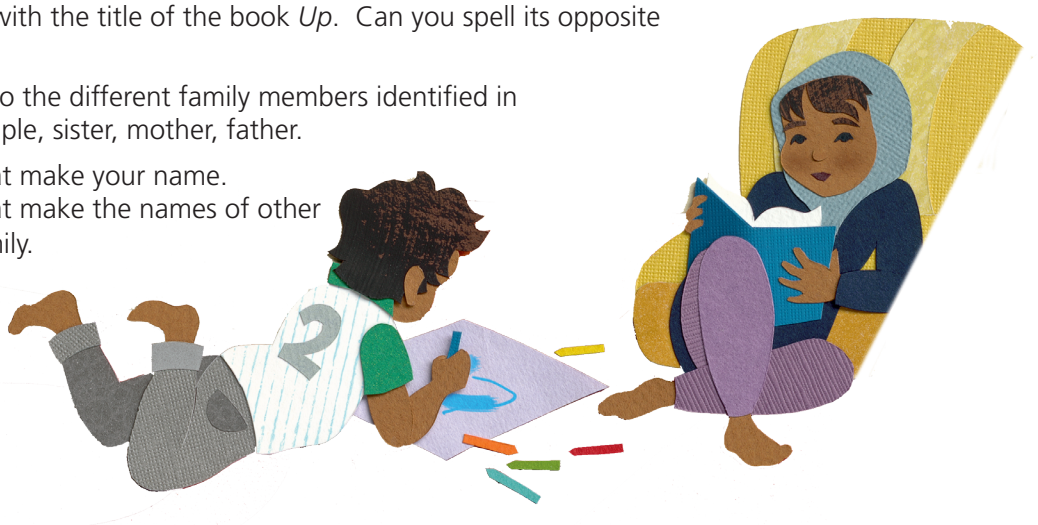



## Talk

- Go through the pages. Explore the many different ways families carry their babies. Talk about why babies love to be carried.
- Talk about how we show and express our love to others in our family.
- Identify all of the different family members who carry the babies.
- Talk about who carried you as a baby and the ways that you were carried.
- "Upsy-daisey" is what families in the book say when they lift up the babies. What does your family say?
- What other expressions are used in the book? (i.e. "peek-a-boo," "rise and shine") Do you know other expressions that your family uses?

## Read

- Each page represents a different country. Find the 10 different countries on a globe or in an atlas.
- While sitting side by side with your child, hold the book and read each page. Now and then, stop reading to look at the pictures and discuss what the child sees.
  I. What type of clothing are they wearing?
  II. What are the different places where babies go with their families?
  III. What are the other people doing in the pictures?
- Line up your lower case magnetic letters from your Welcome to Kindergarten bag.
  I. Match the letters with the title of the book *Up*. Can you spell its opposite "Down"?
  II. Match the letters to the different family members identified in the story, for example, sister, mother, father.
  III. Find the letters that make your name. Find the letters that make the names of other people in your family.



## Sing and Move

- Play *One Big Family* from the Welcome to Kindergarten songs list. Have fun learning how different languages say hello. Create your own dance steps to go with the rhythm of the song.
- Play *Jump Up Jump Down* and follow the actions of the song for a fun workout. Create other actions (e.g. Touch your ears, stomp your feet, move around to the beat).

## Play

- With the crayons from your Welcome to Kindergarten bag, draw a picture of you doing something you love to do with one of your family.
- The pictures in *Up!* are collages made from coloured paper. Cut with the scissors or tear shapes from coloured construction paper to create your own pictures of family places and activities.

Take pictures of your creations and post them online with other families on Twitter: #WelcometoKindergarten

# Family activities with the Chirp magazine

## How Gwiingwa'age Came to Earth: pages 12 to 15

**Talk:** "Gwiingwa'aage" is the traditional Anishinaabe name for Wolverine. Talk about the elements of the story with your child: shooting stars; the crater; deep pool of water; the plants and animals that came to the lake; the gifts the lake offered the Anishinaabe; the new animal that emerges; and the reason for its name.

**Read:** Find a time each day to sit and read with your child. Make reading a special time to share. Practice the three Cs of reading: Cuddle, Conversation and Choice.

**Sing and Move:** Learn the *Welcome to Kindergarten* song and all of the actions. Make up some of your own.

**Play:** Check out the Chirp video series on the CBC Kids website. Provide a place and materials that allow your child to recreate the Chirp adventures or create his/her own pretend stories.

## Visit a Classroom: page 6

**Talk:** Talk about your child's first day at school. Have your child show their Welcome to Kindergarten bag to family and friends. Use it to talk about school and what going to school will be like. Have other friends and family use the materials with your child.

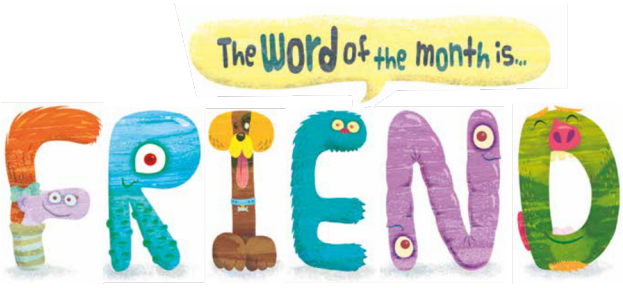
**Read:** Read other books about going to school. Visit the library and ask the librarian to help. When you read the stories with your child, talk about the pictures. Ask questions about what they see on the page. "Have you ever felt that way? What do you think will happen next?"

**Sing and Move:** Download the WTK songs and learn the lyrics and actions to *Welcome to Kindergarten, The Kindergarten Class is Going to the Zoo,* and *In the Morning.* (thelearningpartnership.ca/WTK-music)

**Play:** Create one of the "Rock Out" musical crafts from page 19. What other objects in your home make interesting sounds? Share your creations on social media.

At home collect magazines and flyers that include pictures of musical instruments. Let your children practice cutting and pasting the pictures on coloured paper.

## Word of the Month: page 8




**Talk:** Help your child notice letters in places that are familiar: street signs, family names, and the grocery store. Use the magnetic letters in the Welcome to Kindergarten bag to match the names of family and special friends.

**Read:** Visit the school library and read alphabet books. Re-read your favourite books and pick out favourite words to print, colour and create in funny and interesting ways.

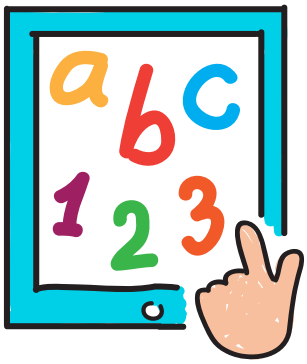
**Sing and Move:** Learn the Welcome to Kindergarten song *Jump Up Jump Down,* and have fun following the actions and making up your own actions.

**Play:** Use playdough to roll and shape letters of the alphabet. Put the letters together to make favourite words.

# Welcome to Kindergarten app

We encourage you to explore the Welcome to Kindergarten app and learn many new things with your child. The app is free and can be used on an iPad (2 or higher) or an Android-supported tablet.

To download and install, visit: **thelearningpartnership.ca/WTK-app**




Use the Welcome to Kindergarten app to:

- Talk about and play with letters and numbers
- Use fingers to paint and create
- Make choices, share and take turns
- Identify letters and numbers
- Discover shapes and colours
- Sing along with the music player
- Play and learn together

We welcome your feedback on the Welcome to Kindergarten app. Tap the "Information" button and type in the numbers listed at the top of the page. Tap "Take Our Survey" and then tap "Yes" to leave the app. Tap "Submit" when you have responded to the four questions. Thank you!

# Healthy media use

Through digital media we communicate with each other freely and entertain ourselves endlessly. Any type of information we want is just a click away. Computers, tablets, cell phones, video games and television are all around us, and the influence of media is everywhere.

Raising children in this digital age is filled with opportunity and also with challenges. The early years are a critical time in making healthy media choices and developing good habits that nurture positive growth. How can families successfully structure and navigate the virtual world on behalf of their young children?

## Healthy media activities

- Engage with your child in their media experience to help your child develop socially, promote language development and enrich learning.
- Be selective about your child's media experiences and look for open-ended, creative opportunities that generate conversation.
- Balance media time with playtime. Make unplugged playtime a daily priority. Keep family mealtimes and other social gatherings tech-free.
- Use parental control settings that keep your child safe from inappropriate Internet content. Check out the excellent parent resources at: **commonsensemedia.org**

*"Screen time in the preschool years should be limited. Instead of screen time, children can be encouraged to engage in unstructured free play (especially outdoors and in nature), physical activity (e.g., playing at the park, dancing to music), pretend play, dress-up, exploring, imagining, building, looking at and listening to books, playing with other children, creating (e.g., create a craft box) and fine motor skill activities (e.g., puzzles, beading)."*
— **Dr. Joelene Huber,** Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto, and medical journalist.

## Unhealthy media activities

- Passive viewing, content with adult or violent themes, fast-paced frenetic imagery and repetitive click-and-swipe game experiences.
- Using technology to manage behaviour: Media can be very effective in keeping kids calm and quiet, but it should not be the only way they learn to calm down. Children need to be taught how to identify and handle strong emotions, come up with activities to manage boredom, calm down through breathing, talking about ways to solve a problem, and finding other strategies for channeling emotions.
- Allowing children to access media whenever and wherever they please: Tech use is often sedentary. Kids need to be active to be healthy.

*"Video gaming before bed creates stress that leads to poor sleep; reading a book before bed creates relaxation that leads to restorative sleep."*
— **Dr. Stuart Shanker,** The MEHRIT Centre

**Special thanks to our program partners:**

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