



June, 2017

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for another amazing year. In recognition of your busy schedule this time of year we have created a **Summer Communication Tool Kit**. Over the summer we get numerous calls from families inquiring about school specific policies and procedures during the summer. For many families the summer leading up to their child's first day of school comes with a myriad of emotions. Seeking to support families during this transition period, as well as assisting you in welcoming students who are ready and prepared for school; we have created this tool kit to make communicating with your families over the summer easier.

Enclosed, please find:

- A Sample Letter to families
- 10 Ways to Get Ready for Kindergarten Tip Sheet
- Kindergarten Buzz Word List
- Additional Suggested Documents you may want to send home to families.
- Suggested Welcoming Activities
- Kindergarten Family Questionnaire
- Sample Summer Reading Activity

You can download many of these materials from SIS under Countdown to Kindergarten. If you need additional support or materials, please do not hesitate to contact me or another member of Countdown to Kindergarten. Again, thank you for all you do to ensure the City's children get off to strong educational start.

Sincerely,

Sonia Gómez-Banrey  
Director  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
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## Sample Letter to Families

Dear families,

Welcome! I hope you are having a wonderful summer. As fall quickly approaches, I am becoming increasingly excited to meet you all. My goal for the year is to provide meaningful experiences as I teach your kindergartner so that s/he develops a lifelong love for learning. I truly want our students first year of school to be a positive experience. If you ever have any questions, you may e-mail me ([\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:_____@bostonpublicschools.org)), call me at school or send in a hand written note.

### Countdown to Kindergarten

Please visit the site [www.countdowntokindergarten.org](http://www.countdowntokindergarten.org) for summer activity ideas, family resources, tips and general information. Once on the site, click on the title "Steps" and from the drop down choose Step 2 Getting Ready. You will find useful information on preparing your child for Kindergarten during the summer months. Also there is a section titled "Resources" which families may find helpful as well.

### First Day of School

On the first day of school you can expect ([please outline any special requests for the first day of school here](#)). Enclosed in this packet is a sample schedule of our weekly routine. We make every effort to take the children out for recess on a daily basis regardless of the weather conditions. Therefore, it is very important that you dress your child warmly (boots, hat, gloves, scarf, etc.) and in layers as we enter the colder months. I will do my best to ensure that the children leave the building with everything that they arrived to school with; however, sometimes things do get misplaced. To prevent the children from losing their belongings I highly recommend that you label ALL of their items with their first and last names. Please provide an extra pair of clothing in case your child has a bathroom accident or spill, a phone number where we can reach you in case of emergency, and also let us know if your child has a food allergy.

### Arrival and Dismissal

[In the mornings children are to be dropped off at the \\_\\_\\_\\_\\_ at \\_\\_\\_\\_\\_am. For dismissal children can be picked up\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_ at \\_\\_\\_\\_\\_pm. If students arrive after \\_\\_\\_\\_\\_am they must be signed in by adult in the main office.](#) For those who ride the bus, our policy is ([please explain any important information for those who ride the here](#)).

### Lunch

A menu will be sent home. On the first day of school we ask that you provide a home lunch in case your child does not like the lunch provided on that day, please send a lunch from home. Lunches from home cannot be heated at school. You should be aware that some schools provide only one breakfast and one lunch choice. If your child does not like the

## **Snack**

As you will see on our schedule we will have an afternoon snack break. I ask that you provide a snack each day in a bag separate from your child's lunch and label it with their name. Popular items include Fruit, cut vegetables, goldfish crackers, animal crackers, and pretzels. Please try to avoid anything with peanut oil or chocolate to protect classmates with allergies.

## **Home Links for K0/K1**

At the start of the unit, families will receive a newsletter explaining what the unit will cover as well as a list of books being read during the unit. In addition, there will be an activity sheet where families can work on related activities throughout the month and return to the teacher when it is completed.

## **Building Blocks for K0/K1**

Building Blocks is the math program used at this grade level. There is a weekly newsletter that includes what students will be learning and what is upcoming for the next week. Included are activities families can work on at home. In addition, there is a weekly homework sheet that a student can complete with their family.

## **Home Links for K2**

Every week you will receive a Home Links letter with suggested activities to do at home with your child. These interactive activities are easy to do and are connected to what your child is learning in the classroom. We encourage you and your child to choose and complete three of these activities over the course of the week.

## **Volunteers**

The first couple of weeks of school are a period of adjustment for kindergarten students. Leaving home, getting to know new friends, and learning about the classroom and school are very big steps. This adjustment is often easier when parents allow children to establish the classroom as their own space with their peers. Therefore it is best to postpone having classroom volunteers working in the classroom until after the first few weeks of school. Once children have adjusted, there will be plenty of opportunities to volunteer. In order to volunteer in your child's class or chaperone a field trip you must complete a CORI form. The CORI forms will be sent home with your kindergartner the first week of school. CORI stands for: Criminal Offender Record Information. **No adult is allowed to work around, chaperone, or volunteer a child if they have not been screened through a CORI form.** Return your CORI form as soon as possible as the process can take several weeks to process. Our children's safety is always first priority!

## Supplies

Many of the items that your child will need will be provided by the school. However, I do ask that you supply the following items. Please label these items with your child's first and last name.

1 two-pocket folder

a full sized backpack

Glue Sticks, pack of crayons labeled with your child's name,

Other items that are very helpful to have in the classroom include:

a box of tissues

a box of wipes

dry erase markers

Hand sanitizer, all purpose cleaner

Clothing in case of bathroom accident or spill (shirt, pants, underpants) that can be left in school

Bus Tags

Students riding the bus should have bus tags attached to their backpack with the in/out going bus numbers and stops. Please help by making sure the tag is attached to your child's bag each day.

If you so choose, you may also donate a box of snacks. If sending a box of snacks to school is difficult because your child rides the bus, you may send \$2 (or any amount you are comfortable with) and I will purchase snacks with that money. A picture of the purchased snacks will be provided as proof of your contribution.

At home, please make sure your child has access to paper, pencils, crayons and glue sticks. Please let me know if you need any help providing these materials to your child at home

## Transitioning

The transition to kindergarten is a very exciting milestone for children and it can also be overwhelming or scary. To help your child have a smooth and successful transition to kindergarten I have enclosed a tip sheet. The more that you talk to your kindergartner about this transition in a positive manner, the easier it will be for him/her. If you have any additional questions I will be available after September \_\_\_\_, 2016.

Have a great summer!

Sincerely,

Kindergarten Teacher

School Name

## 10 Ways to Get Ready for Kindergarten

1. Create a routine over the summer. Give your child a bedtime (8:00 PM is great!) and stick to it.
2. Have your child practice writing her/his first name. If your child can do this, try the last name, or practice lower case letters.
3. Use counting in your daily activities. Count how many steps it takes to get to the mailbox or the park. Count out fruit, placemats, napkins, and so forth.
4. Take your child with you to the grocery store, post office, library, and other errands. Talk with her/him about what you are seeing, hearing and touching. It's all part of learning!
5. Visit your local library and help your child get a free library card. Then use the card to visit the library each week and borrow a book. Talk about the books you read. (you can also get passes to museums and zoo)
6. Let your child practice independence by allowing her/him to make choices ("Do you want an apple or a banana?"), and by encouraging him/her to try new things and to solve problems.
7. Limit the amount of TV your child watches (1-2 hours should be the maximum). When possible, watch TV together and talk about what you see.
8. Prepare a "school spot" for your child and supply it with crayons, paper, scissors and other kindergarten "tools." Set aside a time each day for your child to draw there.
9. Read, Read, Read! (In English or **your native language!**)
10. Help your child:
  - know her/his own name, address, and telephone number
  - use the bathroom independently
  - button and zip clothes
  - share and play with other children

## Kindergarten Buzz Words

*Families, below are some words you may hear around the classroom. If at any point you have a question about the terms your child is using, please do not hesitate to ask.*

**K0:** our program for three year olds

**K1:** our program for four year olds

**K2:** our program for five year olds

**Playgroups:** 1 year old to 4 visit: [www.countdowntokindergarten.org](http://www.countdowntokindergarten.org) for locations

**OWL:** our K0-K1 curriculum, “Opening the World of Learning”

**Focus on K2:** part of our K2 curriculum, which combines the most current research on teaching and learning with attention to high standards for achievement

**SWPL (/swipple/):** in K1, whole group activities focused on “Songs, Word Play and Letters”

**Building Blocks/BB:** our K1 math curriculum

**Small Group Time:** a period in which children work on literacy and math activities in groups of 3-5 children

**Center Time:** a block of time (at least one hour) when children explore activities in literacy, math, building, art, drama, science, and social studies

**Whole Group:** the class gathers all together for discussions and other activities

**Let’s Find Out About It:** in K1, using information from non-fiction text and experiences to explore concepts relating to OWL units (Examples: what’s a pinwheel? washable vs. permanent colors)

## Additional Suggested Documents

*In addition to the sample documents included you may want to send your families a copy of the following:*

- Important dates for the year/fall
- Boston Public Schools calendar
- Information about your school's Parent/Family Council and School Site Council
- Uniform policy
- Parent expectations
- Before/after school information
- Key contact list
- "How You Can Help Your Child Succeed" books from Office of Engagement
- Countdown to Kindergarten Family Handbook (Available in August)
- Sample Report Card

## Suggested Welcoming Activities

*Along with the documents you send out, you may want to provide a summer activity for your classroom to give incoming students and families an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the classroom. Here are some suggested activities:*

- Scavenger Hunt around the room
- Make Name Acrostic Poems
- Take family photographs and individual student photographs
- Name Tag Decorating
- Story time with these books about getting ready for kindergarten:
  - **Kindergarten Rocks** by Katie Davis
  - **Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come** by Nancy Carelson
  - **Off To Kindergarten** by Tony Johnston
  - **When You Go To Kindergarten** by James Howe
  - **Annabelle Swift Kindergartener** by Amy Schwartz
  - **The Kissing Hand** by Audrey Penn

## Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Starting Kindergarten is a big step for young children. They are both excited and anxious about going to a big kids' school. You are probably filled with emotion, too, about this milestone. There are many things you can do to prepare your child for kindergarten, but three areas stand out the most as the best ways you can help your child get ready!

### ***Help your child become more independent by:***

- Managing his/her own bathroom needs,
- Taking care of his/her own clothing, including zippers, buttons, belt buckles,
- Encouraging him/her to clean up after meals and playtimes,
- Providing him/her with opportunities to use pencils, crayons, and safety scissors.

### ***Help your child develop social skills by:***

- Sharing toys and materials with others,
- Following the rules created by the adults in their lives (pre-school, home, etc.),
- Asking for help and offering help to others when needed.

### ***Help your child acquire a love of learning by:***

- Talking with your child about the things you do together,
- Listening to your child's ideas and answering his/her questions,
- Encouraging him/her to try new activities and problem solve their challenges,
- Reading books and telling stories together,
- Singing their favorite children's songs and reciting your favorite chants/rhymes.

Also remember to foster daily routines and good eating habits at home, such as a consistent bedtime, nutritious snacks, and limited TV watching/computer game playing! Kindergarten is a busy place with a full day of activities where well rested, healthy children thrive.



## KINDERGARTEN FAMILY QUESTIONNAIRE

*Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below and then return the completed form to your child's new kindergarten teacher. This questionnaire will help the teacher get to know your child better and help to inform instruction. Thank you!*

**CHILD'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BIRTHDAY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please share something special about your child.
  
2. Please list the names, ages and relationships of other children in your home.
  
3. What is the primary language spoken in your home? Are there any other languages spoken? Does your child know more than one language?
  
4. With whom does your child live (i.e. mom, dad, grandmother, other)?
  
5. Is your child able to care for his/her own personal care needs, such as dressing, toileting, opening lunch and snacks? If not, how do you help her/him at home?
  
6. What time does your child typically go to bed?
  
7. What responsibilities does your child have at home?
  
8. Please list any fears your child may have (dogs, being alone, etc).

9. What comforts your child when he/she is upset?

10. What are your child's interests and hobbies?

11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your child (daily routines, likes/dislikes)?

12. Please list any allergies your child has.

13. Does your family have special celebrations that you'd like to share with the class?

14. Has your child had previous experience in a preschool or daycare setting? If yes, please include the name of the center or school.

16. Are there any strategies you use when your child is having a difficult time to help them get back on track?

What are your hopes for your child in K1/K2 this year?

*If there is any other important information you would like to share in a more confidential manner, please feel free to set up an appointment with your child's teacher. Best wishes for an exciting year ahead! Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.*



Dear [Student Name],

I'm so excited for the start of Kindergarten in September, and I hope you are, too! To get ready for the start of the school year, I am reading \_\_\_\_\_ [or] doing \_\_\_\_\_.

What are you reading? Draw your favorite part of the book in the rectangle below!

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to draw their favorite part of a book.