



Welcome to Kindergarten™
CANADIAN EDUCATION WAREHOUSE

DESIGNING WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN™ CENTRES



Introduction

This document is designed to help educators and school staff plan activities for your **Welcome to Kindergarten™** (WTK) family orientation session(s).

- Welcome to Kindergarten™ offers the opportunity to:
- warmly welcome families to school and promote positive home-school relationships
 - offer play-based learning activities that they can replicate easily at home
 - provide information to help families with their child's transition children to school
 - honour families as their child's first and best teacher

We invite your school team to use the WTK Planning Checklist when planning your WTK family orientation. Please refer to Appendix 1, Tips for Planning, for further considerations.



Nine Areas of Learning:

- Playing with Playdough 2
- Talking and Reading Together 3
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- Creative Exploration 5
- Healthy Choices 6
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- In each activity area, we have included:
- suggested materials
 - possible activities
 - prompts/questions and ideas for families
 - more information for you to investigate, including a link to the nine WTK Posters



WTK Centres

This guide offers activity suggestions in nine (9) areas of learning. These centre ideas may assist you when planning your WTK family orientation session(s).

We encourage you to integrate areas of learning and create 3 - 5 centres with several activities.

Your team decides on the length of your WTK family session and how many learning options you will offer at each centre.

Some examples follow.

Exploring Literacy Together

Include books, some loose parts, magnetic letters, and playdough at a centre. Children can use the play dough and loose parts to demonstrate the story. Highlight the WTK Pocket Dice Story Cards.

Exploring Math Together

Include math books and games with counting and dice. Highlight the Snakes and Vines game in Chirp and use the WTK Pocket Dice to play the game. Use the Shape Cards with the WTK Pocket Dice. Add loose parts, magnetic numbers, and egg cartons to encourage counting objects. Use nature inspired materials.

Creating Together

Include playdough, crayons, scissors, glue, markers, and various kinds of paper (coloured construction, newsprint/ copy, tissue). You could add beads and pipe cleaners/string to make bracelets). Have books that celebrate creating together (e.g., Beautiful Oops by Barney Saltzberg, What Do You Do With An Idea? by Kobi Yamada, Anywhere Artist by Slade Robinson).

Moving and Music

Use the [WTK music](#) to do a Freeze Dance. Dance/move your body or use a scarf while the music plays. Hold your body still in position when the music stops. Discuss being able to regulate your body – important for social/emotional learning. Using the **Number March** (WTK Music), provide families with various instruments and encourage them to play along to this song. Have balls, skipping ropes, agility ladders, cones available and encourage creating agility courses. Encourage families to download WTK music for home.



Playing with Playdough

Suggested Materials

- Playdough (see the **Family Activity Guide** for recipe).
- WTK Books, magnetic letters and numbers.
- Items found at home (e.g., large buttons, rolling pin, paper straws, combs, garlic press, leaves, twigs, pebbles, shells).
- Egg cartons and scissors to model 5 and 10 frames.
- Space to play – a table/flat surface (e.g., tray, cookie sheet) indoors or outdoors.



Activity Ideas

- Invite children and families to explore playdough and items assembled from the home.
- During the play, engage in discussions to build on what children are saying, doing, and thinking.
- Encourage them to use the playdough to create scenes from the book.

Possible Prompts/Questions:

- How does it feel?
- What do you notice?
- Tell me about what you are creating/doing/thinking?
- What will happen if ... [we press the button into the playdough]?
- What did you use to make it?
- What happens when ... (we add a stick, leaf...)?



Your child will learn...

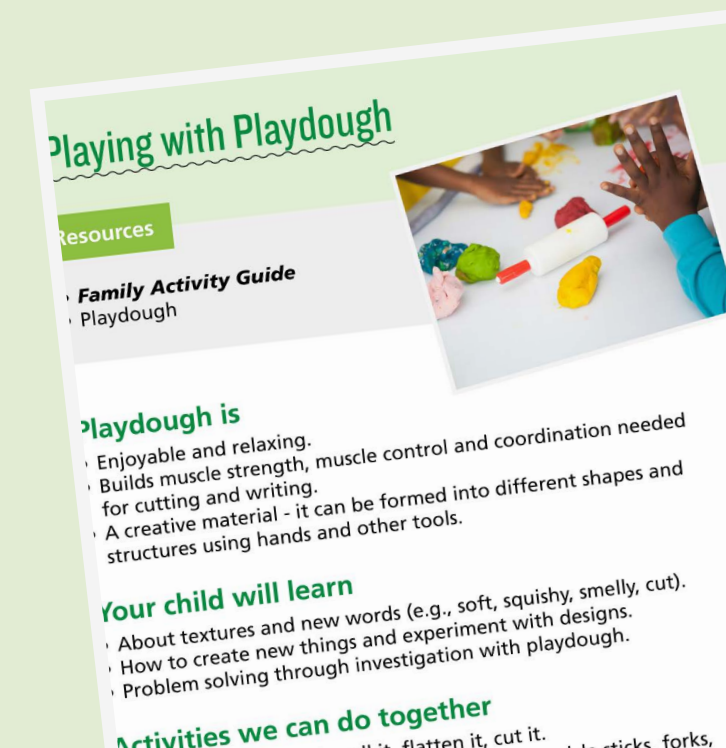
- About textures and new words (e.g., soft, squishy, smelly, cut).
- How to create new things and experiment with designs.
- Problem solving through investigation with playdough.
- To feel proud of their imaginative creation.
- Independent and cooperative play skills (e.g., sharing, initiating).
- About trial and error, compare sizes and shapes, explore quantity and counting.

Families will be engaged and encouraged to

- Support their child to take the lead in their learning.
- Describe with words what their child is doing.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage the child to investigate.
- Assist during challenges and support their child to solve problems.

More Information

- NAEYC, [Playdough Power](#)
- Gowrie, NSW. [The Benefits of Playdough](#)



WTK Posters

Talking and Reading

Suggested Materials

- Display the WTK books and read them at the centre.
- Add a variety of other books including singing and rhyming, concept books (e.g., numbers, ABC), and books representing diverse families. You may want to include non-fiction books on animals, insects, dinosaurs. Comfortable seating in a quiet location, if possible.
- WTK Pocket Dice, with Story or Animal Cards.



Activity Ideas

Invite people to enjoy looking at the books together. Show families the books that they will take home in their WTK bag. Briefly explain the benefits of reading daily with their child. Model reading aloud (e.g., model strategies - reading with expression, making connections, making predictions, talking about events). Place books outside on "picnic blankets" - include a tent card with possible prompts on each blanket. Have the WTK Pocket Dice and story cards. Show families how they can roll the die and encourage children to tell a story about what they see. Family members can add to the story or roll again and start a new story.

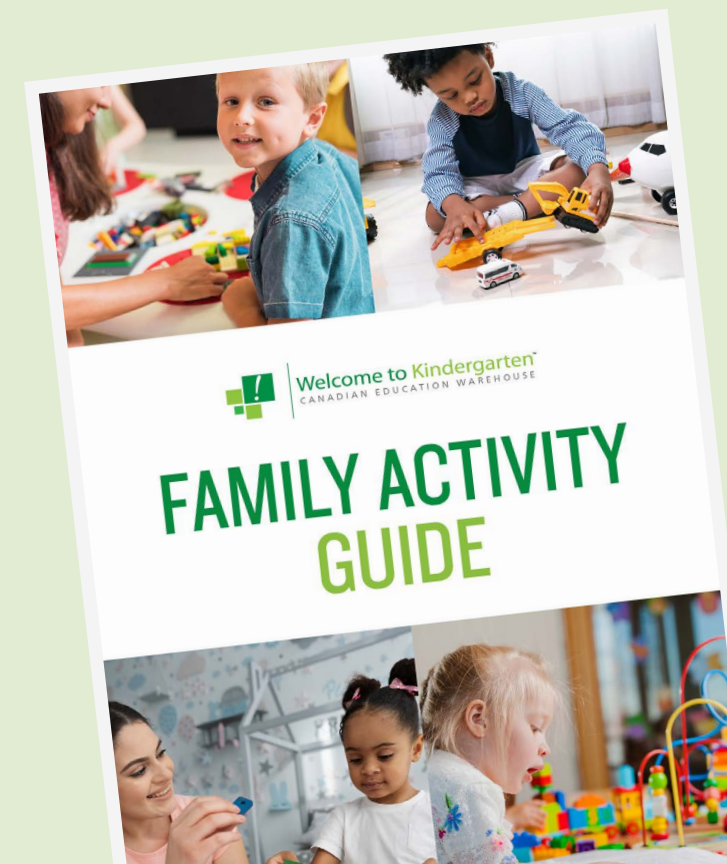
Possible Prompts/Questions:

- What do you think it's about?
- What can you see?
- What do you think will happen next?
- I wonder why...
- What does this remind you of?

Invite the public librarian to join this centre to read books and/or provide information about library programs for children and families.

Families will be engaged and encouraged to

- Enjoy reading together with their child.
- Use the three C's of daily reading: Cuddle, Conversation, Choice.
- Use open-ended questions and prompts to help their child learn concepts about print and new ideas.
- Help their child to make connections between the book and themselves, their community, the world.



Family Activity Guide

Your child will learn...

- Vocabulary and basic knowledge.
- Listening and speaking skills.
- Print, letter, and number awareness.
- A sense of story.
- A lifelong love of reading.

More Information

- [Caring for Kids Read, Speak, Sing to your baby](#)
- [Government of Canada Public Health: Encouraging Literacy](#)
- [What's Going On In Your Child's Brain When You Read Them A Story?](#)
- [For Young Brains, a Storytelling Sweet Spot](#)
- [The Reading Tree](#)

Noticing Print

Suggested Materials

- WTK magnetic letters and alphabet template.
- Magnetic surfaces (e.g., cookie sheet, whiteboard).
- Name Cards (either premade or printed at the centre).
- Collections of Environmental Print (e.g., food cartons, product containers, advertisements, restaurant menus).



Activity Ideas

- Invite children and families to explore magnetic letters and environmental print samples. Encourage children to talk about what they see/notice.
- Make connections to signs and print found in the environment by sorting and reading samples provided (e.g., Cheerios, McDonald's, Walmart). Create an "I Can Read" book or poster using environmental print.
- Explore alphabet letters: sort letters in various ways; link alphabet letters to environmental print (M like McDonalds, S like Stop sign); use child's name, match the letters in their name; link magnetic letters to alphabet frieze.
- Make letters and words using natural materials (e.g., sticks, stones, pinecones).

Possible Prompts/Questions:

- What do you notice?
- Tell me about what you are doing/thinking?
- Can you find the letters for your name?
- How are you sorting the letters?



Your child will learn...

- To identify letters by their characteristics (e.g., the stick letters, the circle letters...).
- That we read and write for a variety of purposes and reasons.
- Through investigation and problem solving.
- To notice print in their everyday lives explore everyday print, including their name.

Families will be engaged and encouraged to

- Support their child in playing with letters and noticing print found in the environment.
- Use their child's name as an invitation to play with letters.
- Use environmental print to instill that all children are readers and writers.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage the child to investigate.

More Information

- [Reading Rockets, Basic Alphabet Knowledge](#)
- [Exploring Print in Our World \(WTK BLOG\)](#)
- [Environmental Print - Reading Rockets](#)



WTK Posters

Creative Exploration

Suggested Materials

- WTK scissors and crayons.
- Creative tools (e.g., markers, pencils, glue, tape).
- Assorted paper (e.g., recycled wrapping paper, cards, flyers, foil).
- Recycled material (e.g., ribbon, yarn, paper rolls, fabric).
- Hole punches, button fasteners, staplers, and/or “fancy” scissors.



Activity Ideas

- Invite children and families to explore materials and use them to create open-ended art works.
- During the play, engage in discussions to build on what children are creating/saying/doing/thinking.
- Set up a few easels/ painting area and invite children to paint with a variety of materials.
- Set up areas with various loose parts (e.g., cardboard boxes, feathers, scrap) and invite families to build their own creation.
- Have stand-up mirrors so families can draw their faces.

Possible Prompts/Questions:

- I noticed you used glue to ... what happened?
- Tell me about what you are working on/creating.
- I see that you used lots of red and yellow...
- What would happen if...?



Your child will learn...

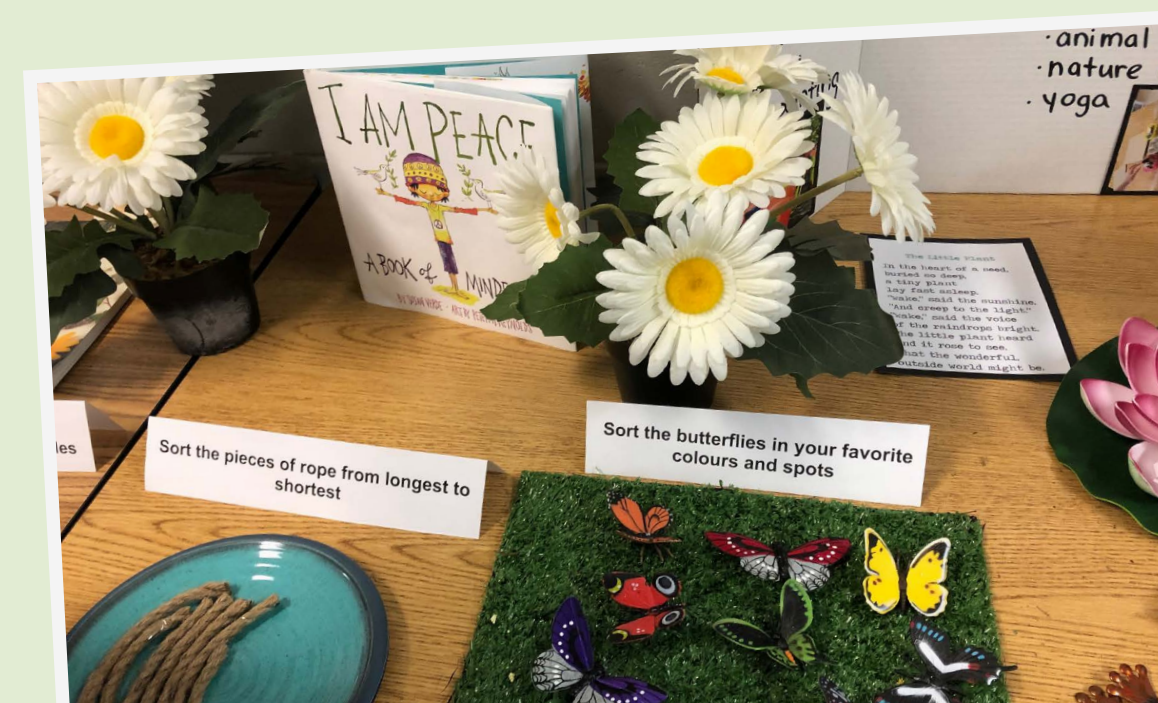
- To listen, talk, and share with others.
- To express thoughts and ideas in a variety of ways.
- To investigate and problem solve.
- To feel safe and relaxed while working.
- To enjoy the creative process.
- To use and control small muscles, hand-eye coordination, the use of their senses.

Families will be engaged and encouraged to

- Celebrate and support exploration and creativity (not the product).
- Sit and talk with their child as they are creating.
- Explore a variety of materials, textures, and art activities with their child.

More Information

- [An Introduction to the Visual Arts in Early Childhood Education](#)
- [Creating Toys and Activities for Children from “Beautiful Junk”](#)
- [Children’s Learning Through Play - Visual Arts](#)



Healthy Choices

Suggested Materials

- [WTK Cookbook](#).
- Books about food (see WTK Cookbook book list).
- Healthy snacks, where appropriate.



Activity Ideas

- Invite families to look through the WTK Cookbook and other food-related books.
- Engage families in making a healthy snack recipe from the Cookbook (e.g., Yogurt Crunch or Apple Ladybug snack or provide a healthy snack, where appropriate).
- Plant a vegetable seed to take home, and talk about gardening.
- Share information about healthy food for school lunches and snacks.
- Provide information on healthy routines for sleep, self-management, dressing, hygiene, mealtime and healthy media use for children.
- Community Health partner may help with this centre.

Possible Prompts/Questions:

- How do you like to help in the kitchen?
- What are your favourite foods?
- What sorts of food do you make at your home?



Your child will learn...

- To become responsible for their decisions and choices.
- To be active and make healthy food choices that keep their bodies healthy and growing strong.
- To follow healthy routines for sleep, self-care, hygiene, mealtime, and media use.

Families will be engaged and encouraged to

- Involve their child in making healthy choices.
- Support their child in learning independence and self-care routines.

More Information

- [Canada Food Guide](#)
- [Appetite to Play](#)
- Caring for Kids: [Food and Nutrition](#).
- Caring for Kids: [Healthy Habits and Physical Activity](#)
- [Active for Life](#) (available in English and French)



WTK Posters

Mathematics Exploration

Suggested Materials

- WTK magnetic numbers.
- Copy of Chirp Magazine and mathematics related books.
- WTK Foam die and shape cards.
- Collections of “loose parts” that may be found in homes (e.g., small rocks/gems, shells, pinecones, clothes pins, napkin rings, spools, corks, buttons, little people/animal figures, toy cars, small blocks/Lego).
- Egg cartons, small bowls, muffin tins (for arranging quantities).
- 5 and 10 frames, Rekenreks, dot plates dice, bingo chips.
- Double sided counters, attribute/ pattern blocks/Unifix cubes.
- Recycled ribbon, strings (for measuring).
- Decks of cards and dice.
- Paper measuring tapes.



Activity Ideas

- Invite children to explore the various “loose parts”.
- **Roll and Count:** Roll the WTK Pocket die, count the dots. Create “how many?” (e.g., roll a 2 and show 2 cars; roll a 6 and count 6 rocks). You can use an empty egg carton - roll the dice, count how many, then place the small objects in the empty egg spots. Once the egg carton is full, a winner is declared!
- **Toss a Shape:** Put the shape cards in the WTK Pocket Dice. Practice tossing the dice and identifying the names of the shapes. When the question mark (?) comes up, find another shape in your environment (i.e., heart, star, octagon). You can roll the dice and look for that shape around you.
- Engage families in counting, sorting, and arranging the objects.
- Model various ways to encourage mathematical thinking through playful interactions [Educators may wish to create intentional provocations and use questions like: Can you stack 5 rocks? What pattern can you make with the gems? How could you sort the people/ animals/cars?].
- Set up “5 and 10 Frame Game – roll dice, magnetic numbers, count quantities.
- Use buttons or coins and dice to play “Snakes and Vines” found in Chirp magazine
- Take your math centre outside: use chalk to create and play various math games such as hopscotch; create an obstacle course and use math talk as children walk over, through etc.; count/measure how far from one area to another; provide materials for families to create shapes and then challenge them to throw their ball through these shapes etc.

Possible Prompts/Questions:

- How could you count and show ___ (insert number)?
- Can you make ___ (use magnetic numbers and create quantities)?
- How many ways can you make ___?
- What different types of patterns can you make?
- Do patterns always make straight lines? (encourage spiral, designs)
- How might we compare objects? (e.g., what is taller/shorter/longer)



Your child will learn...

- To count, represent and compare quantities in many different ways.
- To create and describe patterns as something that keeps repeating.
- To sort and classify various objects according to certain characteristics.
- To notice numbers and shapes in their environment.
- To take turns and share materials.
- A lifelong love of mathematics.

More Information

- Master, A. NAEYC [10 Things to Know about Math](#)
- McLennan, D. NEYC (2014). [Making math meaningful for young children](#)
- Edutopia (2019). [Using play to approach math](#)
- [Math for Families](#)

Families will be engaged and encouraged to

- Look for numbers and shapes in everyday objects and situations. (e.g., clocks, keypads, house numbers, in books, keys, license plates.
- Practice counting, sorting, measuring, and weighing in everyday home activities (e.g., how many shoes/steps long is the room? How much milk goes in the pancakes? How many days until your birthday?).
- Play various dice and board games that involve counting and other mathematical thinking (e.g., Snakes and Vines, Go Fish, Memory/Concentration game).

Social-Emotional Learning

Suggested Materials

- Provide an array of books that show SEL topics, for example, ***When We Are Kind, You Hold Me Up***, and ***Beautiful You Beautiful Me***, (see Discussion Guides in WTK Member Portal).
- Some other books you could consider include *Ruby's Worry* and *Ravi's Roar* by Tom Percival, *Big Feelings* by Alexandra Penfold, *We All Play* by Julie Flett, *How to Be Kind in Kindergarten* by D. J. Steinberg.

Provide materials you use in kindergarten or school-wide related to self-regulation.

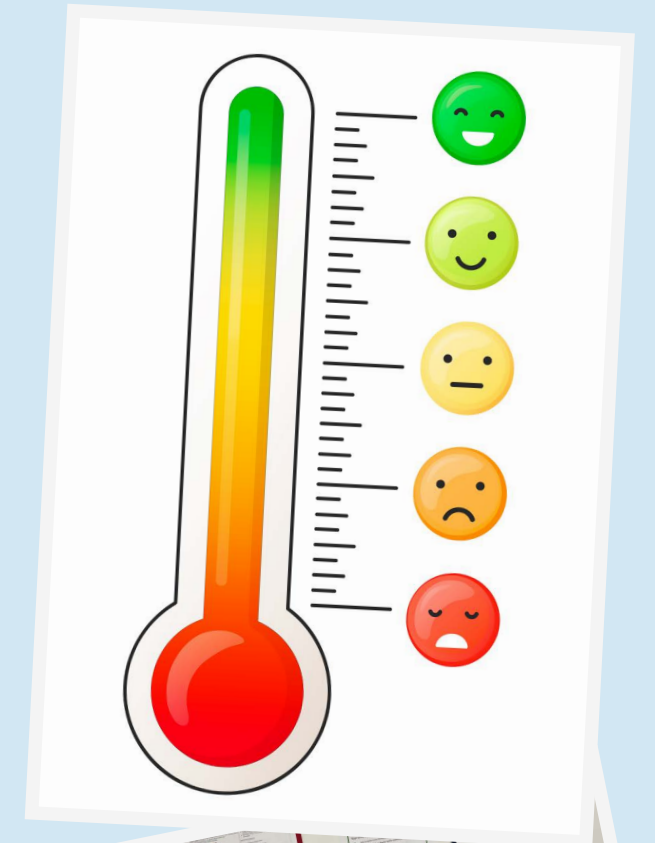
- Calming jars – have a few available.
- Calming tools (e.g., smooth stones, fidget toys, squeeze balls).
- WTK Pocket Dice with Emotions Cards.



Activity Ideas

Recognizing our Feelings

- Have families read a book about feelings together.
- Share a Feelings Thermometer with their child and indicate how each of them are feeling.
- Invite parent and child to make their own calming jar; shake the jar and think about how the jar helps us feel calmer and more relaxed.
- Encourage families to discuss with their child all the different emotions everyone feels.
- Go on a brief "listening walk" and talk about the sounds they hear and the calming benefits of being outside.
- Using the WTK Pocket Dice with the Feelings cards, roll the dice and act out the feeling (e.g., make a happy face, sad face, etc.). Next time, roll the dice and think about a time when you are tired after a long bike ride or excited about an upcoming birthday. Talk about other feelings we experience.



Possible Prompts/Questions:

- What are some different emotions everyone feels? (e.g., happy, sad, angry, excited, worried)
- What makes you feel happy, unhappy, anxious?
- When do you feel brave?
- What are some different things we can do to calm ourselves? (e.g., hold a stuffed animal, read a story, listen to music)
- How might we help our friends who sometimes have unhappy or anxious feelings?



Your child will learn...

- Personal skills to better know themselves and get along with others.
- Social responsibility to develop healthy relationships and contribute to their family and those around them.

Families will be engaged and encouraged to

- Develop their child's sense of well-being and belonging.
- Reflect on how they can nurture responsive relationships that encourage their child to use strategies to acknowledge and manage their emotions.
- Build healthy relationships with their child.
- Listen carefully to their child and respect their thoughts.

More Information

- Vancouver Public Library - [Social and Emotional Book Lists](#)
- Dalai Lama Centre - [Top 5 Heart-Mind Online Resources](#)
- [New York Public Library, Emotional Learning Picture Books](#)

WTK Posters



Science Exploration

Suggested Materials

- Copy of **Chirp** Magazine and science related books.
- Collections of “loose parts” that may be found in homes and outside (e.g., small rocks, gems, fabric samples, magnets, shells, pinecones, leaves, flowers), cinnamon sticks, worms, bird nest,)
- Magnifying glasses, tub of dirt and worms.
- Paper measuring tapes.
- Books related to animals, plants, gardening, weather, insects, birds, discoveries, inventions.



Activity Ideas

- Invite children to explore the various “loose parts” by touching, measuring, examining with a magnifying glass. Discuss the patterns, textures, and colours they observe. Encourage them to compare different leaves and plants.
- Provide a science activity for children (e.g., plant seeds in a paper towel or you can provide a few seeds for them to take home. Make homemade play dough or slime with the children).
- Make families aware of Eco-Bingo! in Chirp magazine.
- Share local Indigenous knowledge about nature and the environment.
- Provide information regarding local agriculture and food production.

Possible Prompts/Questions:

- Do you see a pattern in the leaf? Flower? Tree bark?
- What do you observe? What happens when..?
- What colours do you see? What is the texture (e.g., rough, smooth, cool)
- Can you draw the pattern you see?
- What do you want to learn more about?



Your child will learn...

- Skills of observation, measuring, sorting, classifying, predicting, using certain characteristics.
- About cause and effect.
- Develop new vocabulary.
- To create and describe patterns.
- To take turns and share materials.
- Develop an appreciation and curiosity of the wonders of science.

More Information

- To Do Canada: [30 Science Experiments to Do at Home with Kids](#)
- Canadian Museum of Nature: [Learn and Explore Activities](#)
- [Welcome to Kindergarten™ Cookbook](#)
- Government of Canada - [A Collection of Science Games, Experiments and Activities.](#)

Families will be engaged and encouraged to

- Look for patterns and shapes in natural items.
- Practice sorting, measuring, and describing things (e.g., cooking, gardening, weather prediction).
- Recognize science in everyday life.



Appendix I

Tips for Planning Welcome to Kindergarten Orientation(s)

- How can we highlight the materials in the WTK Kit?
- What can we do to ensure that the parents/caregivers and children play and discover together at the centres?
- Consider the number of centres, their location (i.e., indoors/outdoors) and the duration of the WTK Orientation session(s) when planning.
- Make families aware of the WTK Family Activity Guide found in each WTK Kit.
- Consider using WTK music during introduction and/or transition times between centres.
- How can we use the WTK posters to enhance the Key Messages?
- How can we incorporate the outdoor environment and include nature-based learning?
- How can we Involve Community partners wherever possible?(e.g., co-facilitate activities; share information).
- Invite Central Office/Support staff to support WTK Orientation Sessions to share information about services and programs. (e.g., Speech Language Clinicians, Occupational Therapists, Consultants, Outreach Workers, Settlement Workers).
- Include Translators and/or Settlement Workers as needed to support families.

Make use of the varied resources that support educators and families in the WTK Member Portal and at www.welcome-to-kindergarten.ca





DESIGNING WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN™ CENTRES



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