

AT HOME LEARNING PACKAGE

EY
Early Years

Great Beginnings

Start at the  **DDSB**
Ignite Learning



INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Great Beginnings Start at the DDSB is for every child to enter Kindergarten healthy and secure, emotionally and socially competent, and confident and eager to learn. As research has shown, the experiences within a child's first five years of life are the most crucial for their future well-being and can significantly influence their overall development. The Durham District School Board (DDSB) recognizes that play is children's work, and that through play-based, developmentally appropriate learning, children's social, emotional, cognitive, language, math, and literacy skills will be enhanced. With this philosophy, the Great Beginnings At Home Learning Package guides children in their developmental journey and helps prepare for a successful transition to Kindergarten.

The DDSB acknowledges the important role that families play in their child's learning and development. DDSB shares the belief that the family is the first and most powerful influence in a child's life, aligning with the vision of the Kindergarten Program (2016):

*"Families are composed of individuals who are competent and capable, curious, and rich in experience. Families love their children and want the best for them. Families are experts on their children. They are the first and most powerful influence on children's learning, development, health, and well-being. Families bring diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspective. Families should feel that they belong, are valuable contributors to their children's learning, and deserve to be engaged in a meaningful way." - **The Kindergarten Program, 2016, p. 9***



INTRODUCTION

The Great Beginnings Start at the DDSB At Home Learning Package has been developed to provide information, activities, and resources for families to engage in with their child(ren) in the at-home learning environment. Alongside each activity, families will be provided with a full explanation of the connection to children's development, and how it will benefit their future well-being, sense of belonging, math and literacy behaviours, and problem-solving and innovative skills while enrolled in the Kindergarten program at the DDSB.

Included at the end of the package is a link for the developmental checklist that families may wish to use, based on the age of their child. This checklist is a tool to help inform families of where their child is in their development and where their development will continue to progress. It is a helpful resource for families to use to support their child in their learning journey.

Thank you for your partnership as we work together to ensure your child has a smooth transition to Kindergarten!



IT'S ALL ABOUT ME!

A sense of self starts at birth and continues throughout your child's life. This sense of self will influence how your child approaches new experiences, makes friends, and so much more.

Help your child to develop a sense of self:

- Look at baby photos – share stories with your child of their early years
- Create a growth chart – measure your child and allow your child to mark their height on the chart
- Work together and create an all about me book

Include:

- A photo of your child
- Your child's full name
- Ask your child their eye and hair colour and record it
- Measure your child's height
- Ask what your child's favourite food is
- Ask what your child's favourite toy is
- Ask your child who their best friend is
- Ask what your child wants to be when they grow up
- Trace your child's hand
- Ask your child to draw a self portrait
- Together, draw a picture of your family

These activities help children to develop a sense of self, health and well-being.

ME AND MY FAMILY

It is imperative for every child to have a sense of belonging. They develop this when they are connected to others and contribute to their world.

Discuss:

- Who is in your family?
- What makes your family special?

Plan a family activity night:

- Board game
- Charades or Pictionary (make your own cards)
- Puzzle
- Read a book
- Cook a meal

**Did you have a favourite song or rhyme you sang with your family growing up?
Teach it to your child.**

Families

Some families are large (spread arms out wide)

Some families are small (bring arms close together)

But I love my family (cross arms over chest) best of all!

These activities help children to develop a sense of belonging where they are connected to their world.

EMOTIONS

Children's responses to the different feelings they experience everyday have an impact on their behaviour and their ability to cope in various situations. Developing skills to recognize and manage these emotions is important for their overall well-being. When children are calmly focused and alert, they are better able to control their emotions.

Sing **"If You're Happy and You Know It"** with your child.

Use your face to show the various emotions throughout the song:

**If you're happy and you know it clap your hands,
If you're happy and you know it clap your hands,
If you're happy and you know it and you really want to show it,
If you're happy and you know it clap your hands.**

Keep singing using these variations to the song:

**Sad and you know it cry boo hoo
Mad and you know it say, "I don't like that"
Silly and you know jump up and down
Funny and you know it laugh out loud,
Excited and you know shout, "Hurray!"
Tired and you know give a yawn**

When reading a story ask your child, "How do you think that person feels?"

Look through magazines and ask your child to identify how they think the people are feeling and why based on their facial expressions.

These activities help children to be capable communicators who express themselves in many ways.

EMOTIONS

Open-ended questions have no right or wrong answers. Instead, they help to broaden children's thinking processes, to develop their speech and language skills, and to build confidence in their ability to express themselves using words.

Open-ended questions:

- Encourage children to think beyond the simple answer
- Increase understanding and allow for more information
- Expand vocabulary and improve communication skills
- Require adults to listen attentively, demonstrating that what the child is saying is important

The following are things you can ask your child rather than “how was your day?”:

- What or who made you smile today?
- When did you feel most proud of yourself today?
- Did you make any new friends? Who did you play with?
- What did you have for a snack today?
- Did you see anyone doing something funny?
- What was the funniest thing that happened today?
- What was the nicest thing you did for someone else?
- If you had the chance to be the teacher tomorrow, what would you teach the class?

Every child is a capable communicator.

MUSIC TO MY EARS

Music not only increases the bond between you and your child, it is also an effective tool to teach children.

- Music enhances brain development in areas tied to pattern recognition, the ability to predict, and rhyme.
- Music introduces children to the sounds and meanings of a wide range of words, and helps strengthen memory and communication skills.
- Music supports literacy development through alphabet and number songs, which help children remember letter and number sequences and build their vocabulary.

Below are some examples for how to incorporate music:

- Sing songs that you sang as a child
- Play music from various cultures
- Learn a new song together
- Do silly action songs together
- Use songs to help with challenging transitions (e.g., bedtime, getting ready in the morning)

Singing promotes language, communication and expression.



SONGS

The Hokey Pokey

You put your right arm in,
You put your right arm out,
You put your right arm in,
And you shake it all about.
You do the hokey pokey,
And you turn yourself around.
That's what it's all about!
(left arm, right foot, left foot, whole self, etc.)

Sticky Bubble Gum

Sticky, sticky, sticky
Bubble gum, bubble gum, bubble gum
Sticky, sticky, sticky, bubble gum
Sticking to your (choose a place on your body)
And we pull, and we pull, and we pull, And POP!

Ten Little Bubbles

One little, two little, three little bubbles
Four little, five little, six little bubbles
Seven little, eight little, nine little bubbles
Ten little bubbles go POP, POP, POP!
Pop, pop, pop, let's pop those bubbles
Pop, pop, pop, let's pop those bubbles
Pop, pop, pop, let's pop those bubbles
Ten little bubbles go pop, pop, pop!

Old MacDonald

Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O
And on that farm he had a horse, E-I-E-I-O
With a neigh, neigh here,
And a neigh, neigh there,
Here a neigh, there a neigh,
Everywhere a neigh, neigh
Old MacDonald had a farm,
E-I-E-I-O (dog, cat, cow, pig, etc.)

SONGS

Head and Shoulders

Head and shoulders, knees and toes
Knees and toes, knees and toes
Head and shoulders, knees and toes
Eyes, ears, mouth and nose
Hands and fingers, elbows, knees
Elbows, knees, elbows, knees
Hands and fingers, elbows, knees
Eyes, ears and a great big sneeze

Itsy Bitsy Spider

The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout.
Down came the rain and washed the spider out.
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain.
And the itsy bitsy spider went up the spout again.

The Wheels on the Bus

The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round.
The wheels on the bus go round and round, all through the town!
The people on the bus go up and down, up and down, up and down.
The people on the bus go up and down, all through the town!
The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep.
The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep, all through the town!
The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish.
The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish, all through the town!
The babies on the bus go waa, waa, waa, waa, waa, waa, waa, waa, waa.
The babies on the bus go, waa, waa, waa, all through the town!
The parents on the bus go shh, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh.
The parents on the bus go, shh, shh, shh, All through the town!

PLAY DOUGH

Benefits of Play Dough:

- Hand-eye coordination
- Imagination and creativity
- Math and literacy development
- Science and discovery: make play dough together
- Strengthens fine motor development: making the hand muscles ready for scissors and pencils
- Calming and soothing: some children can struggle to express their emotions, and using dough while talking and singing can help that process

Add items to play dough to enhance the experience!

Developmental Skills	Add-In Items
Sensory Exploration: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scents• Visual	Spices: turmeric, cinnamon, ginger, garlic, nutmeg, etc. Fruit juices, extracts and essential oils, food colouring, paint, etc.
Sensory Exploration: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Textures	Food: couscous, oatmeal, cornmeal, rice, beans, etc. Seeds: poppy, sesame, bird, coriander, etc. Other: dryer lint, beads, ripped up newspaper, sawdust, sand, etc.
Science Exploration	Natural materials; rocks, pebbles, sand, sticks, etc.
Fine Motor Skills	Rolling pins and cookie cutters Cutting play dough with scissors
Letter Recognition	Letter shaped cookie cutters, letter placemat templates, alphabet pasta, etc.
Language Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using language to search and find buried treasure	Small items: gems, pebbles, beads, sequins, etc.
Math Exploration	Play dough: creating shapes out of the dough, long, thin, big, small, round, etc. Shaped cookie cutters

PLAY DOUGH RECIPE

Ingredients:

- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup salt
- 1 tbsp alum (or cream of tartar)
- 2 packages of unsweetened Kool-Aid
- 2 cups boiling water (keep out of reach of children)
- 3 tbsp cooking oil

Mix all ingredients together and knead dough thoroughly until mixed. If still sticky, add a touch more flour and continue to knead until it is the right consistency. Cool and store in airtight container or zip-lock bag.



TALK AND LISTEN

Talking and listening to your child is important. It helps develop a stronger bond, encourages them to listen to you, and builds communication skills, confidence, and self-esteem.

- Share stories at mealtime, and provide prompts. For example, “Tell us what your dolly did today”.
- Talk to your child about things that have happened in their day, and ask them to provide specific examples.
- Join your child’s imaginative play by assuming a role. Once in the role ask questions that will enhance the play. For example, while playing construction, pretend you are a construction worker and ask, “How big are we building this tower?”
- After reading a story, encourage your child to predict what events may happen next. For example, after reading Robert Munsch’s book *Mortimer* ask, “What do you think will happen at bedtime tomorrow night?”
- After reading a story, help your child to develop empathy and to express emotions by asking, “How do you think that person feels? What would you do to make them feel better?”
- Help your child to learn problem solving skills. For example, when leaving the house your child informs you that they can only find one mitten. Ask them, “What do you think we should do?”
- Create stories with your child. Offer a prompt, such as “once upon a time...”, then ask your child to share an idea on what may come next in the story. Continue to build on the story together. Record it on your phone so you can re-listen to your story together.

These activities help your child to be an active and engaged learner who explores the world with their body, mind, and senses.

1,2,3...NUMBERS AROUND THE HOUSE

Counting is the first math concept that will create the foundation of future learning. There are many ways you can incorporate counting exercises into daily routines.

Below are some examples you may wish to explore with your child:

- While setting the table, ask your child to count the plates and forks.
- While you walk up the stairs, count the number of steps with your child. For example, “How many stairs do we climb to get to bed?”
- While engaged in play, talk about the number of objects/materials with your child. For example, “You have 3 red cars. How many blue cars do you have?”
- While cooking, ask your child to help. For example, “How many cups do we need to put in to make these cookies?”
- While having a meal or snack, talk to your child about the number of items on their plate. For example, “How many crackers are on the plate?”
- While playing a simple board game, ask your child to identify the number shown on the dice. For example, “How many dots do you see? How many spaces do we move?”
- While grocery shopping, count the number of fruits and vegetables you put into the cart. For example, “How many apples do you see in our bag? How many bananas?”
- While engaging in play with your child, collect a variety of items that they can count (e.g., keys, buttons). For example, “How many buttons do you see on the table?”

POINT OUT PRINT (P.O.P)

Before your child can learn to read or write, there are many things they need to understand about print.

For example, they will need to know that:

- Print has meaning
- Print represents spoken language
- Print is read in a specific order – we read from left to right and from top to bottom
- Print includes letters, words, spaces and punctuation marks;
- Books are used in specific ways (for example, they are held right side up and read from front to back)
- Letters of the alphabet combine to make words
- Letters have names, as well as upper case and lower case forms
- Words are separated by spaces
- Words are combined to make up sentences

*Taken from Hanen Centre

Point Out Print during:

- Meal times – point out the letters vs. print on the cereal box, yogurt or other containers
- Routines (i.e., bath time) - point out the letters on the shampoo and soap bottles
- Grocery shopping- point out the letters and names as you walk through the store
- Outside – point out letters on trucks, billboards, store signs

Where else can you point out print? Get the entire family involved.

SORT IT OUT

As children explore their environment, they will begin to notice how things are alike and different. Sorting, matching, and classifying are the beginning concepts of developing math skills. Objects can be sorted and classified by colour, shape, texture, size, and more.

Find objects you have around the house and give them to your child to sort – rather than telling them how to sort the objects wait to see how they would sort them.

Example of items that you can use:

- Pompoms or Buttons
- Lego
- Socks
- Recycled materials
- Smarties
- Rocks or nature items



GET OUT

Studies have shown children that play outside are happier, more attentive, and less anxious. Playing outside builds confidence, promotes creativity and imagination, allows children to move and explore their environment, and reduces stress.

Below are some examples you may wish to explore with your child:

Alphabet Hike

Go for a walk and try to find at least 1 item for each letter of the alphabet. The item should be something your child is able to identify and explore in the immediate area (i.e., a rock). Once the walk is complete and you have recorded your findings reflect on the activity. Think of some questions you may be able to ask your child. For example, Which letter was the most difficult? Which letter had many items in nature? Did you find something that surprised you?

Building

Gather a variety of natural materials with your child such as rocks, logs and sticks. Using these materials build a creation, large or small.

Deer Ears

Ask your child these questions to get them thinking about their sense of hearing:

- Why do some animals have large ears?
(To direct sound waves into the ear)
- Can you name some other creatures with large ears?
(Deer, canines, some bats, cats, mice. The larger the outer ear, the better an animal can hear)

Encourage the child to cup their ears and stand perfectly still, listening to the sounds around them. Let the child experiment with this for a short time and discuss what they observe.

GET OUT

Shadow Tag

The object of this game is to step on someone else's shadow. It is fun to play this game on a cool but sunny day.

I-Spy Clouds

Discuss with your child the shapes you notice in the clouds. Try playing I-Spy using only the sky ("I spy with my little eye, a cloud that is shaped like a circle", "I spy with my little eye, a cloud that is shaped like a bear")

Nature's collection

Collect natural items with your child. Use the items to engage in sorting activities, to create a collage, or to build into a variety of shapes



I SENSE SOMETHING

From birth, children use their senses to figure out the world around them. Children learn best and retain more information when their senses are engaged. Sensory play is any activity that involves your child using their senses.

There are 5 senses:

- Touch
- Smell
- Hearing
- Sight
- Taste

Sensory play activity ideas to do at home:

- Play dough (please see page 11 for the benefits of play dough, and ideas for how to enhance the experience)
- Water – fill the sink and provide your child with measuring cups, spoons, funnel. Add bubbles, food colouring, ice cubes
- Sensory bags – fill a zip lock bag with liquid soap, hair gel, paint, glitter glue
- Coop – cornstarch and water
- Place beans, rice and various other small objects in a plastic bottled/containers to make different sounds
- Herbs and spice for smelling
- Touching and smelling fruits and vegetables at the grocery store

Sensory play promotes language development, cognitive growth, fine motor and problem-solving skills.

LITERACY AT HOME

Parents and families are a child's first and most important teacher. Strong reading skills form the foundation for learning in all subjects.

Ideas to promote literacy at home:

- Shopping list – provide your child with the grocery store flyers. Ask them to create their own grocery list by cutting out the items they would like to buy
- Salt letters – put some salt on a cookie sheet and ask your child to use their finger to write out letters
- Letter scavenger hunt – ask your child to find something in the house that starts with the letter...
- I-spy – engage in play with your child by stating, “I spy with my little eye something that starts with the letter ...”
- Letter twister – write letters on paper and call them out write letters on a large piece of paper, and call them out for your child to follow. For example, “right hand on the letter M”, etc.
- Imaginative play - find ways to incorporate literacy into your child's play episodes (i.e., create an eye chart for the 'doctor's office')

Every child is a capable communicator who expresses themselves in many ways.



I DID IT!

Self-help skills enable your child to meet their needs and become increasingly independent. Teaching self-help skills takes patience and time, but when your child has accomplished their goal they will burst with pride.

Examples of self-help skills include:

- Toileting
- Opening and closing backpack, lunch bag and containers
- Zipping up coat
- Pulling up pants, zipping zippers and buttoning buttons
- Putting shoes on the correct feet
- Pouring milk
- Putting belongings away

Find fun ways to teach your child self-help skills that will allow them to be successful in kindergarten.

Self-help skills allow your child to develop a sense of self, health, and well-being.



SO MUCH DRAMA!

When children engage in pretend play, they build skills that support critical developmental areas, including:

Social/Emotional – when children engage in dramatic play, they are experimenting with social/emotional roles of life

Language – children will develop stronger language skills using words that fit the role in which they are playing.

Problem-solving skills – when engaged in dramatic play, children will explore negotiation skills (i.e., when two children want to wear the same costume or play the same role)

Builds imagination – engaging in dramatic play allows children to take on a new role

Dramatic play at home:

- Clothing Store - fill a laundry basket with some old shoes, clothes and some fun props
- Doctor's office – white dress shirt, band-aids, create an eye chart, thermometer
- Hair dresser – elastics, barrettes, brushes
- Bake shop – wooden spoons, spatulas, cookie sheets, muffin pans, apron



GREAT BEGINNINGS BINGO

Practice putting on your shoes!	Identify simple patterns!	Rhyme familiar words!	Go for a nature walk!	Practice scissor skills!
Play with a friend!	Sing a song!	Practice getting dressed by yourself!	Use simple math language!	Roll little balls with play dough!
Practice taking some deep breaths!	Create a pattern using a snack! (i.e crackers)	BINGO	Play a matching game!	Practice writing letters!
Play a game with mom or dad!	Write your first name!	Practice opening lunch containers!	Count to 10!	Retell your favourite story!
Play a game of tag!	Identify some shapes!	Read a book with a parent!	Identify lowercase letters!	Count objects!

LOOKSEE CHECKLIST

The Looksee checklist is used to help monitor a child's development from 1 month to 6 years of age with parenting tips to promote your child's ongoing development. It is a quick and easy checklist of skills typically observed in children of this age. It requires a "yes" or "no" answer and it will help monitor your child's development.

Children progress through milestones at their own pace and some areas of development may take longer than others. The checklist can help you support your child's development, and highlight activities that promote specific areas of development.

If you select 'no' for any of the questions, or have concerns about your child's development, connect with a health care and/or child care professional for further support and information.

What are the benefits of monitoring development?

The Looksee checklist can help you:

- Learn about your child's development
- Recognize your child's skills and abilities
- Identify possible developmental areas that may need extra attention

Pick the checklist that matches the age of your child and answer the questions. The **Looksee checklist** can be found through the [Region of Durham website](#) and can be downloaded for free.

