

# “A Hamilton Parent’s Guide”



## *Answering 5 Common Questions*

Prepared By

Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion

July 2014



Funded By

Ontario Ministry of Education

Parent Reaching Out Grant

# What is in the Guidebook

1. Registering my child for School
2. School Supplies
3. Helping My Child Do Well
4. Making Good Home-School Connections
5. Problem Solving

**Disclaimer:**

The intent of this Guidebook is to support or clarify some of the information that is already available for parents and help them engage effectively with the schools their children attend.

For additional information please contact the school or the School Board directly.

**School Boards**

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board      [www.hwdsb.on.ca](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca)      phone 905 527-5092  
Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board [www.hwcdsb.ca](http://www.hwcdsb.ca)      phone 905 525-2930

**Community Organization**

Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion      [www.hcci.ca](http://www.hcci.ca)      phone 905 297 4694



1. How do I register my child for school?

School-age children go to the Public or Catholic School closest to where they live!

### **Junior Kindergarten (JK)**

If your child will be four years of age or older by December 31st, you can enroll them to start Junior Kindergarten in September of the year that they turned four.

### **Register for Senior Kindergarten (SK) or Grade 1**

If your child will be five years of age by December 31st, you can enroll them to start Senior Kindergarten in September of the year that they turned five. If they turned six, they can be enrolled in Grade one.

### **Elementary or Secondary**

- *If you're new to Canada and Hamilton, and your child was enrolled in an elementary or secondary school in your home country, contact the elementary or secondary school near to where you live, as soon as possible. The school may also direct you to the Assessment Centre to get additional information.*
- *If you're new to Hamilton, and your child was enrolled in an elementary or secondary school somewhere else in Ontario or Canada, register at the elementary or secondary school near to where you live, as soon as possible.*
- *If you have come to Hamilton during the summer, please contact the school near to where you live to find out the registration dates and make an appointment to meet with a principal or vice-principal.*

**Note:** *Under new Immigration rules, children from parents with a Study Permit, Work Permit, refugee claimant, or landed immigrant may attend a school with proper documentation.*

### **For Registration You Will Need**

- Proof of your status in Canada, i.e. Canadian Citizen, Permanent Resident, Refugee, etc.
- Proof of the age of your child (birth certificate or other identification)
- Proof of address (residency), a letter or bill sent to you showing your name and address
- Guardianship/custodianship documents (if applicable) – something to show that you are the parent of your child
- Immunization records – for City of Hamilton Public Health Services
- Health card number – optional
- Parent/guardian's place of employment and telephone number
- Previous school record and school contact information – if your child was previously enrolled in another school
- Emergency contact person and telephone number
- Doctor's name, address and telephone number
- For the Catholic Elementary school you will also need to show a Baptismal certificate

## **2. School Supplies – What should my child take to school?**

When you register your child for school, ask the school to give you a list of supplies that your child will need. Supplies such as paper, pencils, pencil cases, geometry sets, rulers, notebooks, crayons, and other school supplies can be found at Dollar and Discount stores. Ask your child's teacher or other parents for ideas where to buy these items.

Children also need a strong backpack to carry school supplies and lunch to school.

### **Backpack**

- look for well-padded shoulder straps that fits comfortably against your child's neck and back.



- Make sure that the straps can be moved easily to get a good fit
- If the backpack is too loose, it can hurt a child's back and neck muscles
- Make sure that the backpack is large but not heavy
- There should be space for books, lunches and sometimes extra clothes.
- Keep it clean - buy one that is washable and made from "soil resistant" material.

#### **Lunch-Containers:**

- If your child stays at school for lunch, send a healthy meal
- Most children will eat lunch in their classroom during a special lunch break. Insulated 'lunch bags' and re-usable food containers help to keep food fresh and protect from spills and accidents
- Plastic bags can be easily lost, torn or stepped on - even when they are in the backpack!
- Many schools have a 'litter-less' lunch program and ask students to bring re-usable containers to reduce waste and litter from food wrappers and paper.

#### **Lunch Choices:**

Food helps our brains! Lunches need to be healthy for children to have energy to learn, play, and concentrate on the activities they have to take part in at school - so make sure that their lunch includes fruit and vegetables and healthy choices from different food groups.

Many schools have nut-free, or other food-related rules - check with the teacher or principal to see what rules your child's school follows.

**If your child has a food related allergy, be sure to let your child's teacher know.**

The internet has many available resources with healthy lunch tips see link below:

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/School-Health/Ontario-s-School-Food-and-Beverage-Policy/The-School-Food-and-Beverage-Policy--A-new-way-to.aspx#.U9wqXXRzbIV>

#### **Clothing:**

Canada has four seasons. Clothes should always match the weather and temperature. Some days may start cold and get warmer later in the day. One good way to dress for the weather is to use layers – clothes you can add and take away, and if the temperature or weather changes during the day your child will have a few choices for inside and outside! Layers make an air space between the skin and the cold. This 'space' insulates or protects best. Three basic layers needed:

- Inner (Base) layer: Underclothing (pants or undershirts) keeps the body covered in a thin layer that helps to move moisture away from the body and which helps to keep the child warm and comfortable.
- Middle layer: This is an insulating layer and helps to insulate on cold days. The middle layer can be made up of several thin layers and could be sweaters or the inner part of the coat.
- Outer layer – The coat: A good warm coat is essential in winter and may also be necessary in the spring and fall. Coats that prevent water and wind from coming through work best. Coats should fit comfortably so that the child can move their arms freely and sit comfortably. They should have high collars and a hood.

**\*\*Tip:** *Add a tab or little toy to coat zippers so they can be opened and closed with gloves or mittens on the hand. Your child will always be able to put their coat on - on their own!*

#### **Gloves/Mitts**

Layers are also important for the hands. Hands are warmer when a thin pair of gloves is worn under a thicker and waterproof pair of mitts. Your child should also keep an extra pair in their backpack because gloves and mitts are easily lost or misplaced and often get wet when children play outside.

#### **Scarf / Hat**

Scarf and hat - A hat and a scarf are a must in cold weather - we lose a lot of heat from our head and neck, so it is important to keep them covered. A tube scarf is great for little ones because they go directly over the head, they keep the neck quite warm, and do not get tangled like the long scarves. A balaclava or similar cover for the head, ears and face may also be best in very cold weather.

**Shoes and Boots:** (indoor shoes – outdoor shoes)

**First, let's talk about boots.**

- In winter, boots are also a must! Boots should be warm and well insulated. Check the labels for water protection and low temperature protection. Make sure the boots have good treads to grip on ice and snow. Some parents like boots for rainy days too – they help keep feet warm and dry. Boots should have a 'little' extra room for comfort and for extra pairs of socks! More layers!
- Two pairs of socks should be worn on very cold days - a thin polyester sock close to the skin and a thicker cotton or wool sock over that. Sometimes children get their feet wet stepping into wet snow or rain puddles. An extra pair of socks will help keep their feet warm and dry.

**Indoor and outdoor shoes**

Many schools have rules for students to wear one pair of shoes outdoors in the playground, to and from school AND one for *only* indoor use. The indoor pair is always dry and clean and your child can wear them everywhere in the school – including the gym! In Canada's many seasons salt, dirt, mud can get tracked into the school as well as germs and bacteria. Indoor shoes help your child and the school.



**Note:**

*Remember to write your child's name on all their supplies and clothing. This will help them to find their belongings if they become lost, misplaced or mixed up with someone else's stuff.*

### **3. How Can I help My Child Do Well In School?**

There are many things you can do to help your child do well in school:

**Be an involved parent!**

1: **Be interested** in everything they do and pay attention to all the "stuff" they bring home.

(a) Let your child know that you care about their school success by asking them questions and have them tell you about their day.

*Questions like "What did you like best today?" or "What new or fun thing did you learn today?" are good questions to ask. Asking questions show you are interested and want to hear the details.*

(b) Read their Agenda with them. They can explain to you what they are doing. This is very important, especially in the early grades. Doing this every day gets your child in the habit of talking to you about what they are doing at school. Agendas also give you important information about special days, trips and \$\$ for extra activities.

2: **Read the school newsletters with your child.**

The newsletter explains what is going on in the whole school. Your child may tell you about special activities or let you know about an exciting presentation held in the gym. If translation is necessary – ask a friend or a school support person to help you understand all of the information and activities. This will keep you up-to-date with what is happening in your child's school.

3: **Get to know your child's teacher and class.**

When you get to know your child's teacher, you are letting them know that you are interested in what your child is doing at school. Ask the teacher questions about day to day activities and routines and also let the teacher know if your child has any special interests or needs and what works best for your child.

Offer to help with events and volunteer your time for trips, special days or extra help in the classroom (if you are able). Even if you think your English speaking skills are not very good, your presence at school activities lets your child know that you are there to support them and that you are interested in their school activities. Volunteer time also helps you to have positive time with your child's teacher.

**4: Make school related routines at home**

We know that when children have routines at home and at school - they learn good patterns of behaviour that help them do well in school. Some good routines are:

- Daily preparation to get to school on time. Help your child set out clothes, books, and supplies for school the night before so that it is easy to find everything in the morning!
- Make lunches the night before or help them make lunch in the morning.
- Make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast before going to school.
- Make sure homework time is scheduled everyday and that homework is completed before other activities get started.
- Set Bed-time and Wakeup-times – and stick to them every day.

**5. More things to help your child's success:**

- Continue to use your first language at home! All language skills are useful! If you cannot read to your child in English, read in your own language. This is an important way to help your child by showing them that reading is important.
- Reading together in any language builds strong family relationships.
- Some schools have dual-language books (2 languages in the same book!)
- Ask your child's teachers or speak to the ESL or Equity Department about these books.
- Ask your child's teacher about a school "language buddy". Many schools have students from many countries so there may be another student who speaks both English and your first language in the school. This student can help your child to learn more about the school in their language and practice new English words with someone who knows how hard it can be!
- Get to know your child's friends and the people they spend time with, and also try to meet the parents of your child's friends.
- Make sure that if your child has plans for after school activities, you have contact numbers and details about the after school plans (such as – where - location; When; What Time; With Whom;
- Support your child and help them get involved in extra-curricular activities and sports. Your child may make new friends and develop strong connections with the school and also help them to feel proud of their new school and their new home!



#### 4. How do I make good connections with my child's school?

1. Get to know the names and phone numbers of school personnel, especially  
(i) the class-room teacher      (ii) the principal      (iii) the school secretary
2. Have a handy book in which you should write (i) the first and last name of your child's teacher (ii) to grade of your child and the room number of the classroom that your child is placed (iii) the phone number of the school and the name of the Head Secretary, Principal and Vice Principal. Keep the notebook near the phone so that it can be a quick reference
3. Visit the school to meet the teacher. Attend the "meet the teacher" event in September. Visit the school even if there isn't a special problem to discuss. That way, you show interest and get information about procedures. If a problem does come up - you will know what to do.
4. Attend Parent information events and if you need an interpreter, let the teacher know in advance and make sure you have someone there with you. Read the school newsletters and visit the website so that you know about upcoming events and activities.
5. If your child is sick or will be away from school please let the school know. If your child will be away from school for a long or extended time, ask your child's teacher for work that your child can do from home or while they are away from school. This will help them keep up and you will know what they are working on.
6. Keep the report cards in a safe place so that you can find them and be able to refer to them easily.



#### 5. Problem Solving – Resolving Concerns

The first step in resolving concerns is to have a conversation with your child to get a full understanding of what is happening to your child in school. After you have obtained this understanding, then you should speak to your child's teacher or to the principal, depending upon the nature of the concern. As a parent you have a right to speak on behalf of your child (especially if they are under 18 years old), and you have a right to expect assistance and respect.

	Concerns	Actions to Take
1	My child is being bullied and is afraid to go to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reassure your child that everyone will be there to help</li><li>• Find out the details of what happened</li><li>• Speak with the classroom teacher and principal</li></ul>

2	I do not understand the report card	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak to your child’s teacher and ask them to go over the card with you to explain what it means.</li> <li>• If necessary, ask someone to interpret or translate the report card for you</li> </ul>
3	My child does not have enough home-work or is having problems with home-work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak to your child’s teacher</li> <li>• Ask for additional learning materials for your child to use</li> <li>• Find materials to supplement and expand on what your child is learning</li> <li>• Join a homework club</li> <li>• Ask your child's teacher if there is a time before or after school to go over the work with them</li> </ul>
4	My child brought home a letter but I do not understand it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak to your child’s teacher</li> <li>• Ask for the letter to be translated or for the school to make an interpreter available when you discuss the letter with the school</li> </ul>
5	My child has friends at school that do bad things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a good and positive conversation with your child</li> <li>• Find alternative activities for your child that will keep them away from bad friends</li> <li>• Get more information about what your child’s friends are doing</li> <li>• Share your concerns with your child’s teacher and the principal</li> </ul>

## Resources

General Info <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/eng/tips/>

Healthy Lunches <http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/School-Health/Ontario-s-School-Food-and-Beverage-Policy/The-School-Food-and-Beverage-Policy--A-new-way-to.aspx#.U9wqXXRzbIV>

Parents Tip Sheets <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/how-does-education-work/multi-lingual-information-for-parents/>