



For immediate release

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Extended Gradual Entry to Kindergarten proves successful

Comox Valley, B.C. – Young children starting school for the first time are easing into their new lifestyle as a student thanks to a pilot program designed to make the transition far easier for toddlers and parents.

The Welcome to Kindergarten (WTK) Gradual Entry program provides a seamless transition for kindergarten families as they enter the school and kindergarten classroom at the start of the school year.

During the first two weeks of school, kindergarten families engaged in one classroom visit for one hour and share in a conversation with school staff to learn more about their child's kindergarten program and goals for the upcoming year. Students and the family are introduced to the classroom and other school facilities.

Classroom time gradually works up over a two-week period to two hours then to a half day until the child is fully integrated into a full day of kindergarten.

A key element to the extended gradual entry is an emphasis on “welcoming conversations” in which parents and care-givers engage in one-to-one meetings with teachers. Teachers gain valuable insight about the child and parents gain a good understanding about what a kindergarten full day program entails.

The benefits include the opportunity for parents and care-givers to experience first-hand that the school does view them as a significant partner and teacher in their child's education. Parents and care-givers and their child can build a strong bond and relationship with the kindergarten teacher and school team. Ultimately, parents will become more engaged with their child's school.

The familiarity with the learning environment and expectations that is developed through the gradual entry method that extends over two-weeks also helps children and families /care-givers feel more comfortable and less anxious.

-More-

WTK was first introduced in the school district in fall 2018 at Huband Park Elementary and grew to include Ecole Robb Road for the September 2019 start-up.

A new parent to Robb Road was part of the pilot program introduced this year and expressed positive sentiment about its impact on her child.

“The first impression that our child has of the school is so important. To do it carefully and slowly so she is feeling excited and positive has been helpful. It’s worth all the scheduling challenges. I think it will make the rest of the year much easier. I’m so grateful for it.”

WTK is a joint program introduced by the Learning Partnership. Research shows that when families engage with children early in through play-based learning this helps children become successful in school and in life. According to the Learning Partnership, early education is of vital importance in laying the foundation for future academic and social success. The WTK program helps prepare children for a positive start to their school journey.

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For more information about the Welcome to Kindergarten program visit
<https://www.thelearningpartnership.ca/programs/welcome-to-kindergarten>



Image (Source: Comox Valley Schools)

Easing into kindergarten gradually to reduce anxiety and stress and build positive relationships with parents are some of the goals of the Welcome to Kindergarten pilot program offered at Ecole Robb Road

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