



Kindergarten Transition Progress Update



March 9, 2010

The Kindergarten Transition

The transfer of kindergarten to Prince Edward Island schools is one of the largest educational projects undertaken in recent years. A Kindergarten Transition Team and nine working groups are coordinating the many tasks. The team includes representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the three school boards, PEI Teachers' Federation, Early Childhood Development Association, PEI Home and School Federation and la Fédération des parents de l'Î.-P.-É.

Registration

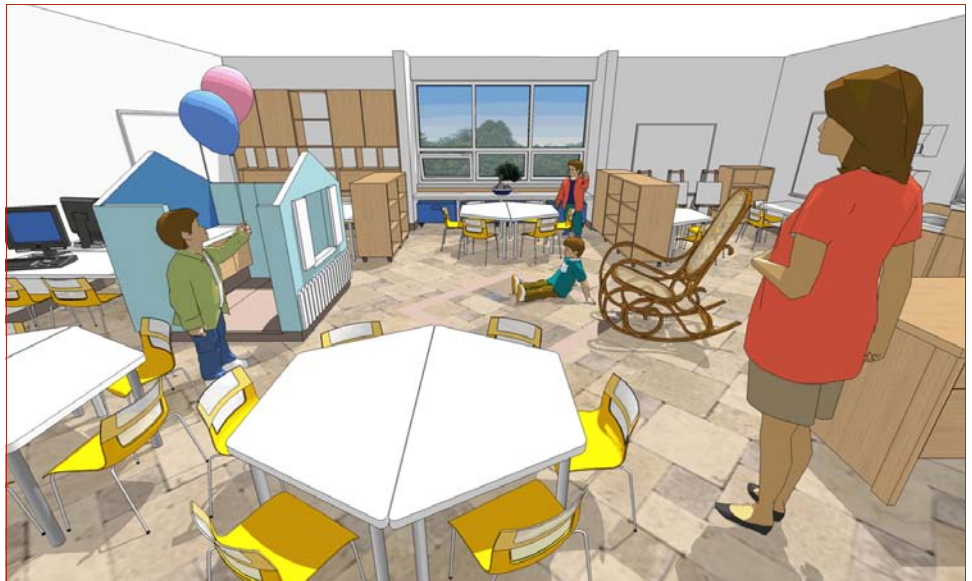
Over 1,200 students have registered at Island schools for kindergarten in September 2010. This includes 800 students in the Eastern School District, 423 in the Western School Board and 64 in la Commission scolaire de langue française. There are 922 children enrolled in English programs, 301 in French Immersion, and 64 in French first language programs. Parents are asked to register their children immediately if they have not already done so.

Classroom space

Space for kindergarten has been determined in all schools. The schools that have adequate space, based on current registrations, are making plans to accommodate new students. In other schools, construction or renovations are planned or underway.

Transportation

Over 50 new school buses have been ordered and bus routes are being developed. It is anticipated that there will be an adequate number of child safety seats on school buses for children who weigh less than 18 kilograms or 40 pounds.



Equipment and supplies

Kindergarten furniture, equipment and supplies are being ordered or tendered. Rather than rows of desks in these classrooms, there will be tables, computer centres, learning centres and soft floor space. Furnishings will include natural wood finishes and bright primary colours.

Kindergarten classrooms will be well stocked. Supplies for each classroom will be shipped to schools over the summer months, and in time for teachers to get their classrooms ready for September.

Play-based learning sessions

Sessions on play-based learning and the kindergarten curriculum have been held for over 300 department and board staff; principals, vice-principals, Grade 1, resource, music and phys ed teachers. More sessions will be offered soon for school counsellors, teacher librarians, Grade 2 teachers, specialists and support staff. These are excellent learning opportunities that have met with very positive response from school staff.



Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Doug Currie welcomed kindergarten teachers to schools at a recent information session.

Specialist services

At least five per cent of kindergarten instructional time will be spent on phys ed and music, which is the same for all elementary students. In-service on meeting kindergarten curriculum outcomes will be offered soon for music and phys ed teachers.

Students with special needs

Most children with special needs have been identified before they are of kindergarten age. Many children with special needs now receive services in early childhood centres, and these services will continue in the school setting. Case conferences will be held soon so parents, teachers and specialists can discuss school

supports such as resource time, individualized educational plans and educational assistants.

A parent may choose to keep a child home for an additional year; however when the child enters the school system, he or she will be required to complete the kindergarten program before entering Grade 1.

Class size

Each kindergarten teacher will have a maximum of 15 students. If there are more than 15 kindergarten students in a school, there will be two teachers. Schools with larger classrooms may choose to combine classes and have two teachers working in the same class. A minimum 3.5 square metres of classroom space will be available for each student.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is developing a policy that will enable schools to address kindergarten class composition and situations where more students enroll during the school year.

Legislation

Required changes to the *School Act* and the *Child Care Facilities Act* will be made during the upcoming Legislative Session.

Kindergarten teacher positions

Certified early childhood educators are being given first consideration for new kindergarten teacher positions. A new B.Ed. program is being developed by UPEI to allow them to obtain their degree over a six-year period by 2016. This temporary program will accept two intakes of 75. During the first year, there will be 60 English seats and 15 French seats.

Exemptions have been made for existing certified educators who are at least 50 years old, and whose years of experience teaching kindergarten add up to 60 or more, with five of the years of experience since 2000.

UPEI Dean of Education Dr. Tim Goddard has assured kindergarten educators that the interim program will be a high quality program. While students from four-year programs gain content knowledge in areas like math, students in the



Pamela MacMillan and Dr. Tim Goddard of UPEI provide an update on the new B.Ed. Kindergarten program at UPEI.

kindergarten program will have gained equivalent education and experience working with children. The 20 courses they will take at UPEI are very similar to those taken by students in the B.Ed. Early Years concentration. Students will have six years to complete the two-year program. Dean Goddard said he expects that some students will do it very quickly while others will take longer. He assures prospective teachers that they will adapt quickly and function well in the university environment.

UPEI expects that the program will receive required approvals from the university and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) in time for it to be offered in September.

Teacher hiring

Early childhood educators have applied to the UPEI program and they have been interviewed for the new positions by department and school board staff.

On February 27, the candidates who successfully completed the interview process attended information sessions hosted by the department and the school boards. They were advised that the Teachers' Federation must now ratify amendments to the collective agreement before early childhood educators can teach in the schools while earning their degree. This process could take about a month to complete.

When the agreement is ratified, the school boards will be able to issue offer letters to candidates who in turn will provide the letters to the UPEI Registrar's Office. At that point, UPEI will be able to officially accept the students into the B.Ed. Program. The new teachers will work under a letter of authority from the Certification and Standards Board until they complete their B.Ed. and receive their teacher certification.

School boards will assign kindergarten teachers to schools based on the skills and experience of the team of kindergarten and other teachers in a school. The four preferences that each teacher provided will be considered as much as possible. The school boards will be as fair as they possibly can.

It is expected that additional recruitment will be needed for French Immersion kindergarten teachers. Ads are being placed to create a list of both certified bilingual early childhood educators and people who have a Bachelor of Education degree along with superior oral proficiency in the French language.

Teacher training

Once kindergarten teachers are assigned to schools, they will be contacted by their principals regarding how they will be supported to prepare for students in September. The principal will be the new teacher's primary support person. Kindergarten teachers will continue to be supported by early childhood coaches.

All kindergarten teachers will participate in the Beginning Teacher Induction Program. Each teacher will be assigned a mentor who is an experienced teacher in the school. They will be given time to work together. They will also participate in school-based professional development and peer learning programs. Sessions are also being planned in areas where the new teachers would like more help, such as computer use and working with special needs children.

Preparing for kindergarten

All Island children who are entering kindergarten this fall will take part in an assessment of their developmental skills this spring. The new Early Years Assessment (EYE) indicates how well children are developing in four key areas, including self-awareness, cognitive skills, language and communication, and gross and fine motor development. The half-hour assessment will be administered in local schools from April 19 to 30. Parents of children who are registered for kindergarten will receive information on the assessment in the mail within the next few weeks.

This spring, families will be invited to take part in the *Welcome to Kindergarten* program at their child's school. This will provide them with the opportunity to meet their kindergarten teacher and receive information on how they can prepare their child for kindergarten.



Four-year-old Maria Redmond (centre) will be a member of the first class of kindergarten students in Island schools. Maria shows off her fine motor skills to Principal Pat Campbell while attending kindergarten registration at Glen Stewart Elementary School. Maria's mom, Karen, looks on.

For more information
visit the Kindergarten Transition website at
www.edu.pe.ca