

## Welcome Back to School!

Dear Kindergarten Families,

We hope that you and your child are experiencing a safe transition back to school. It is a unique and unusual start to your child's first year in school whether they're learning at home or at school. We are delighted that each of you has a *Welcome to Kindergarten™* bag of resources to help you and your child talk, read, sing and play every day at home.

This newsletter includes additional information to support you as you engage in your child's learning in **your valued role as your child's first and most important teacher**.

### **"Be Calm, Be Kind, Be Safe": Lowering feelings of anxiety**

Are you or your child feeling anxious about returning to school this year? With everything going on it is normal that we should have feelings of concern.

Health experts explain that we can use this concern to take positive and protective actions such as: washing hands thoroughly; practicing physical distancing; using good etiquette when coughing or sneezing; staying home when you or your child(ren) feel sick; maintaining health through daily exercise, practicing good nutrition and healthy sleep routines; and making time for play and hobbies.



Image provided by Ottawa Public Health

Parenting expert Caron Irwin says that new COVID-19 protocols are bound to increase the pressure on children at school. Irwin offers the following suggestions for families:

- ✚ Offer a healthy snack as soon as your youngster gets home from school. Check out our [cookbook](#) for some fun, healthy ideas!
- ✚ Provide relaxing activities, e.g., colouring, cuddling while sharing a book, [listening to music](#), or playing with playdough.
- ✚ Engage in physical activities, e.g., playing catch, tag or riding a bike.
- ✚ Ask your kids what they want to do and have that activity available for them.
- ✚ Create an after-school routine that is predictable and consistent so that children know what to look forward to when they get home.

## Explore feelings

- ✚ Talk with your child and encourage them to share their feelings.
- ✚ Listen carefully to your child and respect their responses.
- ✚ Develop techniques that you and your child can practice to work through anxiety, e.g., slowing our breathing; counting to 10; finding a space to be on our own.
- ✚ Model compassion, positive coping, and self-care skills.

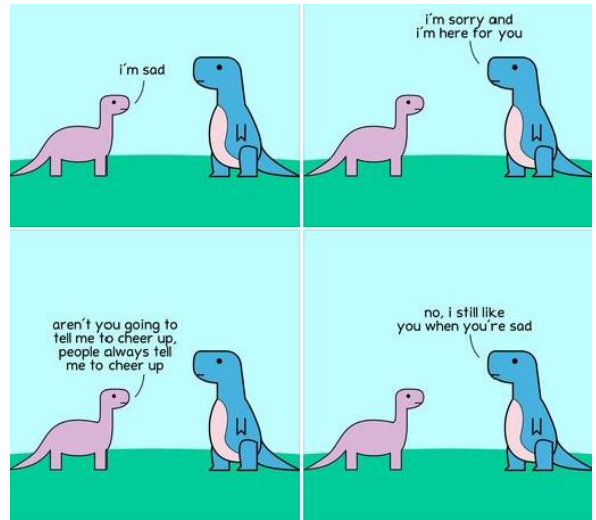


Image provided by [dinosandcomics.com](http://dinosandcomics.com)

## Play-based learning



- ✚ Young children often construct make-believe worlds to make sense of fears or traumas – like the global pandemic. Dramatic play can help children explore their feelings and is a powerful tool to allay fears and concerns.
- ✚ During play with others, children learn to take turns, follow rules and communicate with peers when resolving conflict.
- ✚ Physical activity provides motivation to explore, come up with ideas, connect with others, and imagine new possibilities.

## Play outdoors

- ✚ Go for a walk collecting rocks, leaves, and twigs to bring home.
- ✚ Look for a rock that catches your eye. When you feel sad, frustrated or worried, hold your rock and share what's bothering you.
- ✚ Check out more [activities](#) from First Nations Health Authority to help keep you kids active during the pandemic.

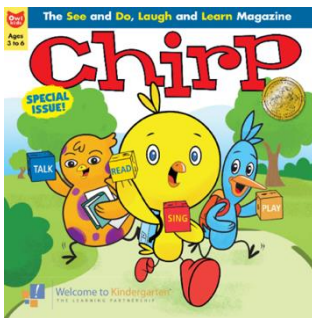


## Create

- ✚ Use items you have available, e.g., playdough, your collection of rocks and twigs, plastic animals, etc., take turns creating and telling stories with your child.
- ✚ Play a piece of music and ask your child to draw what the music is making them feel.
- ✚ Use the materials that you've brought home from your walk to create a unique piece of art.



## Talk and read



- ✚ Count all of the characters in your *Chirp* magazine: how many are there, what do they have in common, and what makes them different?
- ✚ Search for letters in your neighbourhood and use items in nature to form different letters – what words can you spell?
- ✚ Use the magnetic letters to spell your child's name. Scramble the letters and ask them to recreate their name. You can do this with other names or words that are familiar.

## Investigate

- ✚ Use the magnetic numbers in the bag and place the correct number of objects beside each one.
- ✚ Use your nature collection to count and sort, making observations about colour, shape, size, etc.
- ✚ Sing the song *The Number March* from [Welcome to Kindergarten](http://www.welcometokindergarten.ca) [downloadable music](http://www.welcometokindergarten.ca).



If you have not yet had a chance to fill out our parent survey, please tell us what you think of *Welcome to Kindergarten* at [www.thelearningpartnership.ca/WTK-survey](http://www.thelearningpartnership.ca/WTK-survey). Survey closes Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>.

### About The Learning Partnership

The Learning Partnership is a registered Canadian charity (CRA reg'n #140756107 RR 0001) that brings together business, educators and strategic partners to design and deliver innovation education programs focused on early learners in schools across Canada. Our programs build the essential skills and competencies needed in tomorrow's leaders, innovators and problem solvers. They enhance provincial curricula, are aligned with Canada's innovation agenda, and are made available to students, parents and educators through the generous support of our education sector partners and funding from corporate, government, foundation and private donors. Learn more at [thelearningpartnership.ca](http://thelearningpartnership.ca).

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