

# The H-N REACH EarlyON at Home

## FAMILY NEWSLETTER

### STARTING SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER!!

Is your child starting Junior Kindergarten in the fall? Are you wondering if your child is ready or not? No need to worry - we're here for you! We've compiled some wonderful information to help you through these worrisome times, with tips of the trade and ideas that will help everyone to be ready to start school. "But it's only May!" you say? Normally, before COVID-19, schools would be hosting 'Kindergarten Orientation' days right around this time. We, the EarlyON Centres, would be there to speak with families and share resources to help ensure you and your child are ready for the upcoming school year. Since we can't take that opportunity to connect with you at the schools, we're sharing our resources with you here. As always, if you ever have any questions or want to connect with any of us, just email us at: [earlyon@hnreach.on.ca](mailto:earlyon@hnreach.on.ca).



### BUILDING YOUR CHILD UP FOR SUCCESS

From the moment a baby is born, they begin to develop skills that will help them through life. Social skills, emotional skills, cognitive skills, physical skills - the list is miles long. Helping a child be successful in both school and in life requires warm and attentive parents to play an important role in helping them gain the skills to experience that success. We also know that, based on current research, life skills are far more important at this early stage in a child's life for school success than learning the alphabet or counting to 10. What a better way to build children up and prepare them for their future than to instill a sense of confidence!

Building a child's confidence has a lifetime impact. It is one of the biggest gifts we as parents can give to our children. Using positive language encourages children's self-confidence and an "I can do it" attitude (yes - you want that attitude for success in school!), increasing their willingness to learn and to take risks when challenged. Here are some positive statements you can share with your child to boost that confidence:

- You have such a gentle heart
- The hugs you give me makes me so happy
- You were very brave when you did that
- I am so proud of who you are
- I will always be there for you
- I love your creativity
- I'm so proud to call you my child
- I am so thankful for you everyday
- You encourage me to be a better person
- I love hearing what's on your mind



## READ, READ, READ!!

And then read some more!

Read constantly, and not just books: the cereal box, the ingredients on food packages, street signs as you are walking. Create a life-long reader by exposing your children to all kinds of literature!



## A KINDERGARTEN CHECKLIST

Instead of thinking about getting ready for kindergarten by knowing our ABC's and our 123's, let's change our lens and shift our focus to life and social skills - skills that will not only serve your children for their whole lives, but skills that will really help build school success.

### **Can they follow multi-step directions?**

School and life are filled with tasks that need to be completed in multi-steps, as well as being able to take and follow these directions from another person. By providing our children with opportunities to listen to sets of direction and supporting them to follow through, we strengthen their ability to do this with others and set them up for success.

An example of how we might do this:

"Take off your coat, put it in the closet, and join me at the table."

### **Can they ask an adult for help (that is not a relative)?**

There are many times your child may be in a situation that requires support from someone they are unfamiliar with and developing a comfort level in communicating with other adults is critical. The ability to be comfortable asking questions and communicating one's needs is a valuable life skill. You can help support the development of this skill by encouraging your child to ask questions of other adults when they are out and role model asking questions.



### **Do they have strategies to solve a peer problem?**

Solving conflict is a lifelong skill that will serve your children well! It's easy as the parent to always have the magic fix, but we won't always be there to swoop in and rescue our children. They need to be able to have solutions in their own 'tool boxes' that they can draw upon when needed. They can practice these skills from a young age with you, with siblings, and with other children. You can help talk them through the problem and ask open ended questions about the situation like "what if" and "what now". Remember - your children are always watching you so be aware what you are role modelling to them!

### **Do they have the independence?**

There will always be more children than teachers in the classroom, which makes it that much more important that your child has some independent skills. You can arrange for those opportunities by:

- Letting them make their own decisions, even if they may fail, and remember that that's how they learn.
- Let them dress themselves, even if that means a shirt may be backwards.
- Let them learn from natural consequences when it is safe to do so. Like wearing no mittens on a cold day means cold fingers.
- Encourage own toileting skills - wiping, flushing and hand washing.
- Allowing them extra time to dress themselves - putting on coats and shoes (or boots) and zipping coat



# SCISSOR SKILLS

Of all of the things that you can find in any EarlyON Centre, scissors are probably one of the most underappreciated and underused items we have! Often, scissors will be put up where children can't reach them out of fear of a child getting hurt. But wait!! Learning to use scissors is an important skill for young children to learn! Toddlers and preschoolers should be given opportunities to learn and develop scissor skills under supervision. Cutting builds up the tiny muscles in their hands - the same ones used for writing, painting, and gripping things like a toothbrush or fork, zippers or buttons. Using scissors will build fine motor strength, develop eye-hand coordination and will even improve focus and attention!

Encourage your child to open and close their hand, then their pointer finger and thumb together and introduce scissors. Practice using other instruments - tongs, tweezers and hole punches - as they require the same open close movement needed for scissors.



Make it fun and offer lots of different options to cut, such as:

- Playdough snakes
- Paper bag haircuts
- Nature cutting - leaves, weeds or grass
- Draw straight lines, wavy lines, zig zag lines, circles or squares on a piece of paper and get the child to follow the lines.

You can even say this little rhyme to help them remember:

Open, shut, open, shut  
That is how we cut, cut, cut  
Fingers on the bottom, thumb on the top  
Do not let that paper drop!  
Open, shut, open, shut  
That is the way we cut, cut, cut!



# PREPARING TO EAT AT SCHOOL



School snack and lunch time is always a challenge, especially for the younger children as they learn to manage their time 'to eat and not talk', open their containers and make choices of what to eat from their lunch bags.

Most schools now have two nutrition breaks throughout the school day. To ensure our youngest scholars get the nourishment they need at each break, parents can:

- Indicate what foods should be eaten at each break by labelling each item with either a #1 for the first nutrition break, or #2 for the second nutrition break
- Purchase a lunch bag with 2 separate compartments to divide the foods for each break.
- Discuss with your child what they would like to eat when and make a plan
- Practice picnics eating with your child in 20 minute sessions, giving them time to open their own bag and containers.

Remember - there is usually lots going on in school, and young children get easily distracted. Expect left-over food to come home. Don't let it go to waste though - have it for afternoon snack!

## What to pack for nutrition breaks?

You know your child and what they like to eat - plan to offer foods that they enjoy and are able to eat without too much difficulty. Many parents find it hard to pack a balanced healthy lunch, so don't despair. There are lots of resources that can help. And - remember to check with the school for specific allergy advice.

For some great ideas, check out: <https://www.pinterest.ca/guelphmomsandco/back-to-school/>

# RECIPE OF THE WEEK

When school starts, you'll want to be ready with easy recipes for their lunches. This one is even simple enough that the kids can help make it!

## Frozen Smoothies

1 cup of their favourite fruits/berries  
1 cup of plain yogurt (use Greek for added protein!)

1. Put ingredients in a blender and blend away.
2. Divide into small containers with lids and freeze.
3. Before you leave for school, put one of the frozen smoothies into a lunch bag, and by the first nutrition break it will be ready to enjoy!!



For more nutritious lunch ideas, check out <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/School-Health/Articles/Healthy-lunch-ideas-for-the-new-school-year.aspx>

The **MORE** that you  
**READ**, the more things  
you will **KNOW**.  
The **MORE** that you  
**Learn**, the more places  
you'll **GO**.



*Frederick Remond*



## The Lunch Bunch

Lunchtime is a valuable time at school - are you ready? Want to practice valuable self-help skills like opening your lunch items? Join Miss Julie for an online Lunch Bunch meeting every Thursday at 12:00 pm! Email us at [earlyon@hnreach.on.ca](mailto:earlyon@hnreach.on.ca) for more details!!



## WE ARE STILL HERE FOR YOU!

Yes, things have changed a lot over the past month, but we are still here to help! Haldimand-Norfolk REACH is considered an essential service, and even though our sites are closed, we are working at home to stay connected with everyone, and to help those in need during these turbulent times.

**If you or your child are in crisis, our Child and Youth Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1-866-327-3224**

Feel free to find us on Facebook - we are the Haldimand-Norfolk REACH EarlyON Child and Family Centre! We're always posting activity ideas, circle time videos and stories, and tips to stay healthy at home.

Have an idea you'd like to see us try? Email us at [earlyon@hnreach.on.ca](mailto:earlyon@hnreach.on.ca)