

Kindergarten Handbook

Castor Valley Elementary School
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* Please keep this handbook at hand to
reference during the school year.

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Fundamentals

French as a Second Language

It is not important to have a Francophone or bilingual parent/guardian at home to acquire French as an additional language. In fact, most of our students do not have a bilingual parent. It is a wonderful opportunity for parents to learn along with their kindergarten child and to show an interest in their new language.

Over the summer, it would be helpful to sing well-known French songs with your child. Many can be found on YouTube, such as Tête, épaules, genoux, orteils and Frère Jacques and the alphabet song. Literacy skills are transferable from a child's first language to their second. The more you read in your first language and the more you ask your child to predict, reflect and question, the easier the transition to French will be.

Play Based Learning

Many parents are concerned that all their child will do in kindergarten is play. Yes, they will play. Play is the vehicle through which they will learn. They will be playing in an environment that has been carefully planned and organized to help engage the students in various rich learning opportunities throughout the day. Their educators are actively involved in their play, helping to deepen their learning through prompts and questioning. They may ask questions like, "How did you figure that out?" or "Why do you think that happened?". Educators may add new materials (e.g. "I added some new blocks to see if you could make the structure connect to the other building"). They may invite children to explain or show their learning to others.

"Play is a vehicle for learning and lies at the core of innovation and creativity. It provides opportunities for learning in a context in which children are at their most receptive."

"It has long been acknowledged that there is a strong link between play and learning for young children, especially in the areas of problem solving, language acquisition, literacy, numeracy, and social, physical and emotional skills." (Pg. 13, The Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program).

Inquiry and Critical Thinking

“The Full-Day Early Learning- Kindergarten program capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and their desire to make sense of their environment.” (pg. 14) The educator teams observe, prompt and help to spark initial engagement in an inquiry. Inquiries are driven by the interests of students. Inquiries develop as students are noticing, wondering and playing. The team provides materials, resources and questions to help foster individual or class inquiries.

Students begin to explore and experiment with objects and make observations. The students move into investigating, observing and reflecting on what they have discovered and learned. At the end of an inquiry, students share their findings and ideas with peers and/ or educators. Throughout the inquiry process, educators help students develop and extend their inquiry process and learning (Pg. 15, FDK Program). Through encouraging children to ask deeper questions and solve problems collaboratively and creatively, they begin to think more critically.

Self-Regulation

What is self-regulation and why is it important? In the report from Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development, Shonkoff and Phillips define self-regulation as a child’s ability to gain control of bodily functions, manage powerful emotions, and maintain focus and attention. The growth of self-regulation is a cornerstone of early childhood development and is visible in all areas of behavior (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000). “Children’s development of self-regulation and habits of mind in all areas of learning and in all developmental domains is also a fundamental aspect of the program”. (Pg. 24, FDK Program).

How educators and parents can help students learn to self-regulate:

1. Observe closely
2. Respond to needs and be aware that they may be different for each child
3. Provide structure and predictability
4. Arrange age-appropriate materials so that children can access them independently
5. Define age appropriate limits to help a child feel safe and help them know what is expected.
6. Show empathy and caring helps children better handle strong emotions.

Preparedness and Independence

Backpacks:

Each child must have a large lightweight backpack, big enough to accommodate a large picture book (library book) and lunch bag. It should have a zipper and have the child's name clearly written on it. Please ensure that the bag does not become packed with unnecessary items, such as toys from home. Toys from home can cause distractions from learning time and can cause dissent among students, especially when they get lost. The unnecessary bulk also makes it difficult to send things home in the backpack and for your child to find the items that they do need for school. Ultimately, the bag is the child's responsibility and we encourage the children to take ownership of their own belongings. This includes the contents, such as the note-tote or communication book, library books, lunches, etc.

Clothing:

Accidents can happen at school, whether it is spilled water or a bathroom mishap. Please send a complete change of clothing (top, pants, underwear and socks) for your child in a labeled Ziploc bag. This will remain at school in case your child needs to change.

Each child will need a pair of labeled, "easy to put on" rubber-soled shoes which will remain at school. No CROCS, flip flops, sandals, heels or lace-ups, please. These shoes will be worn daily in the classroom, as well as in the gym. Over the summer, please encourage your child to practice putting shoes on independently. School age children are expected to dress themselves. This includes zippers, buttons, belt buckles and shoes.

During warmer months, sunscreen should be applied at home and sun hats should be worn for outdoor play. Aerosol cans and spray bottles are not permitted at school. If you choose to send in lotion, please ensure your child can apply this independently. During colder weather, children should not wear scarves as they can pose a safety hazard. Pull-on neck warmers are strongly recommended as the kindergarten yard is very windy and it can feel bitterly cold on little cheeks.

When choosing outdoor clothing, please remember that independent dressing and undressing is going to be necessary. It is best if all garments are as simple as possible to put on and take off.

Restrooms:

Children must be fully toilet trained upon entering school. Prior to starting school, your child should practice proper bathroom etiquette such as closing the door, flushing the toilet, and proper hand washing. The classroom can be an exciting place, and even children who have not had an accident for some time can forget to go. Please talk to your child about taking the time to go while at school. We strongly recommend that you (or your child's daycare provider) have your child use the restroom shortly before coming to school, as it can be a long bus ride!

Routines and Self-Regulation

Bus:

* An adult must be present at the bus stop location for both drop-off and pick-up.

At Castor Valley, nearly all students ride the bus. Please take some time to explain expectations to your child. These rules are so important, as there may be three children assigned to a seat.

General Rules/Expectations:

- Sit down, with your back to the back of the seat (back to back, seat to seat)
- Sit quietly
- Food or drink are not permitted to be consumed on the bus
- Keep hands to yourself

Bus Arrival	All kindergarten children will be met by duty teachers at the bus loading zone at the front of the school. Children will proceed to the kindergarten playground area and then to their respective classrooms.
Bus Dismissal	All kindergarten children are brought outside for 3:30 and are led directly to their bus.

* On your child's first day of school he/she will receive a name tag which will be attached your child's backpack. This tag will contain important information for your child's safety, traveling to and from school. If the tag should become loose, please re-attach.

** Please note, for security purposes, any change of route or pick-up/drop-off, must be approved through OSTA (Ontario Student Transportation Authority). Delays and cancellations are communicated via their web-site: ottawaschoolbus.ca

Outdoor Play

Weather and schedule permitting, the children will spend some time outdoors in the kindergarten play yard, and on CVES property for explorations. Please be sure to dress your child appropriately for the day. The Castor Valley yard is quite open to the elements and the children will be exposed to wind and chills, so please take this into consideration when dressing your child on cold days.

Over the summer, you may consider addressing some of the school yard rules, which include going up the stairs on play structures and taking turns going down a slide, one at a time, on bottoms, feet first.

Library

The children usually go to the library once per week for a book exchange. They are permitted to choose a book to take home and share, and are asked to treat these books with care. We would like to suggest that you and your child choose a special place for it at home, so that it is accessible and easy to find. The children will be responsible for the care and timely return of their book. Books must be returned to school in order for a new book to be taken out. Lost books are subject to a replacement cost.

Gym

Please ensure that your child has appropriate footwear for weekly physical education, which could be held outdoors or in the school gym. There is no need for a third pair of shoes, as your child's indoor and outdoor shoes should serve this purpose.

Parental Responsibilities

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures at School

* if your child is not taking the bus ...

Drop-off Please be highly cautious, and follow signs for safe drop-off. Do not drive into, or through, the large bus parking lot. If you are arriving later than 9:15, please register at the office, then proceed to the kindergarten yard. Children must not be left unattended at any time. Please ensure that a member of the kindergarten team has greeted your child before your leave. Parents are asked to say their “good-byes” before the children enter the kindergarten yard.

Pick-up School dismissal is at 3:45. If you are picking your child up, please meet the kindergarten team at our meeting spot, located in the front of the school by the main entrance, no later than 3:30.

*ANY changes in your child’s bus/dismissal schedule routine must be sent to school in writing, or called into the school office in advance. For safety reasons, children are not free to go until directed by their teacher. Please ensure your child has said “good-bye” to his/her teacher.

Attendance

Each morning we complete an attendance check to account for the safe arrival of all students. If you know of an absence in advance, please communicate this to your child’s kindergarten team. In case of an unexpected absence, please contact the school office and leave a message at 613-821-1272. There is a voice mail available for after hours. The school will phone you if

no notification is received.

Health & Nutrition

Please provide your child with 2 healthy snacks and a lunch, daily. In keeping with our lessons about nutrition, dental hygiene and caring for the environment, we appreciate your consideration in choosing appropriate food for developing brains and bodies. Junk food and candy is a treat best enjoyed at home. Juice boxes are not recommended. A refillable bottle of water is much preferred. In an effort to have the children become more self-sufficient, please consider containers that are easy for little hands to open.

The following list may be of some help when packing the lunch bag:

Cut fruit	Cheese	Muffin	½ sandwich
Cut vegetables	Crackers	Bagel	Wrap
Apple sauce	Cottage cheese	Yogurt	Left overs in a thermos
Popcorn	Salad		

* ALL NUT AND PEANUT PRODUCTS ARE NOT PERMITTED DUE TO SEVERE ALLERGIES IN THE SCHOOL.

It is important to label all containers and their lids, water bottles, and lunch bags. It is age appropriate to expect the children to take ownership of putting their snack bags in their backpack and emptying containers when they get home.

Labels

Please ensure that all clothing your child will be removing at school is properly labeled. This includes the more obvious items, such as coats, hats, mitts, boots/shoes and snowpants/splash pants. Please also remember to label all cardigans, hoodies and sweaters, since your child may remove these items periodically throughout the day. Lunch containers and their lids are also important items that should be labeled.

Our school council fundraises through a company called "Mabel's Labels". They make great labels for many different items. You can follow the link on the council's website:

<http://castorvalley.ca/> We have also had success labeling items with a permanent marker and Nexcare white fabric medical tape.

Supplies

The OCDSB has developed a common list of recommended personal use items for students in grades JK-3 and grades 4-8. We do not require the items on this list. However, if you choose to send in these supplies, please do not label them. These materials will be made available to all students. At Castor Valley, we collect a voluntary twenty dollar kindergarten levy fee at the intake interview in September. Please make cheques payable to Castor Valley Elementary School. This levy enables the kindergarten teams to cover some of the cost for specialty classroom supplies that are not supplied by the OCDSB. For example, the levy will assist us in covering the cost of Ziploc bags, soil, specialty craft items, performances or presentations.

Throughout the year, we occasionally need supplies above and beyond our classroom materials, such as playdough, mason jars or lids. These needs will be communicated to you as they arise.

Volunteers

Castor Valley welcomes and encourages family involvement. ALL GUESTS, including familiar faces, are required to check in at the school office. It is important to remember that while this may seem inconvenient to frequent visitors, it is the goal and responsibility of the school to create a safe learning environment.

Your support of school activities makes your child feel important and sends the message that you value their education. Studies indicate that when parents dedicate time each day to express an interest in their child's learning, it fosters social, emotional and academic well-being. There are many ways that you can help out, both in the class and from home. Volunteering in the classroom will begin once routines are firmly in place. In the meantime, we encourage you to reach out and start with our school council.

Birthdays

We like to celebrate each child's special day in the classroom, however, due to varying dietary restrictions, we ask that treats are not sent to school. Please talk to your child's education team

to discuss an alternative to treats. For example, some may suggest a book to share with the class or a pencil for each child in the class.