



Help your child make an easy, successful entry into kindergarten

I imagine spending months knowing that something was about to change your daily routine dramatically, but having only the vaguest sense of what that change would entail or where it would occur. Then one day you're put on a bus (one you've never been on), taken from your home, and dropped off at a cavernous building – a building you've never before entered, filled with people you've never met, and possibly in a neighborhood you've never seen.

Sadly, this is the way some youngsters experience their entry into kindergarten. Happily, it's an experience that can be easily avoided. Ready To Learn Providence and the Providence School Department have come together to form a unique partnership that we hope will increase the number of families who become better informed about where their children will attend kindergarten next year.

During the week of March 5, the Providence Public School Department will host its *Open Schools Week*. This annual program gives parents and upcoming kindergartners a great opportunity to see the schools in the city, meet teachers and administrators, and visit classrooms. By opening the schools to parents and children, the School Department hopes to ease the fears of incoming students and to help parents make informed choices. On Wednesday, March 7, schools will remain open until 6 p.m. for visits. Families are also welcome to visit schools during regular operating hours on other days that week.

For most students, kindergarten is an entry experience into the public school system and we would like families to become better informed about schools in Providence so they can select the best learning environment for their child. Many parents ultimately choose neighborhood schools for their children, but some have good reasons for choosing another. Only by visiting the schools – and talking with the principals at those schools – can you really know that your choice is the best fit for your child.

Kindergarten registration will be held from February 28 to April 14. Be sure to look at the enclosed insert for the dates and times reserved for you. We urge you to register as early as possible. Parents who don't register their children during this registration period find themselves with far fewer choices and often don't receive assignments until late in the summer. Children are far less likely to fear the move into kindergarten if they know where they will be going. They have a right to be fully prepared for this big step in their lives. Let's increase the number of children whose parents are making informed choices when selecting kindergarten programs. If you are a parent, please take a look at the enclosed flyer explaining *Open Schools Week* and plan a time when you and your youngster can visit one or more schools.

If you are an early-care provider or librarian, please share this information with parents in your programs and encourage them to take advantage of it. Registering a child for school is something a parent needs to do only once in a child's lifetime. By doing it in a timely and informed manner, parents help ensure that the child's transition into kindergarten is a happy and successful experience.

Joyce Butler and Gary Moroch