



September 14, 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

It's time to start thinking about kindergarten! The process for transition into kindergarten may look different for each family. Starting this process now can help ensure you have the information you need to make informed choices, and your child is set up for the most successful transition possible. Specialized group education opportunities such as the **PEER program at BC Family Hearing Resource Centre** can provide valuable information and support throughout this process. Note: **Deaf Children's Society (DCS)** also offers a *kindergarten transition program, called TREK (Transition Resources for Entry to Kindergarten).* You are welcome to attend PEER, TREK, or both programs. Your Early Interventionist can give you more detailed information and help you decide which program is the best match for your child and family. Please contact DCS directly if you have specific questions about the TREK program.

The information presented in PEER is designed for families of deaf and hard of hearing children who will be starting Kindergarten in September 2021. Over the past four years you have likely had many conversations with your early intervention team and others about educational options for your child, including specialized programs (such as BC School for the Deaf), public schools, independent schools, and home schooling. During the PEER program we will discuss these various options.

The PEER program is designed to educate parents about how to effectively advocate for their child's specific communication and access needs in school settings. PEER teaches parents about the potential challenges deaf and hard of hearing children face in school settings. These challenges present themselves in many ways and research shows that deaf and hard of hearing children are at risk for social, emotional and academic difficulties. PEER can help families recognize some of these issues, so they know when to take action. PEER also provides an opportunity for parents to ask questions and engage in discussion with staff and other parents who are also experiencing this journey.

PEER consists of two components - a parent component and a children's classroom component. **PEER is available to both local & outreach families.** The parent component of PEER (**Parent Empowerment and Educational Readiness**) consists of:

- **Nine evening online parent sessions** that are 2 hours in length. Sessions are accessible to all. They run from October 2020 to April 2021, with a final session in October 2021 after your child has started Kindergarten. Attendance is expected at all sessions, with the exceptions of #3, which will be specific to children with additional needs. Sessions will be recorded, to allow for catch up on any that are missed.
- **An Education Fair on Saturday October 17th, 2020, 1-3pm**
- **A three-day workshop on April 22nd, 23rd, & 24th, 2021**

The topics for parent evenings are attached. You will have an opportunity to meet directly with representatives from different educational settings at the Education Fair in October, 2020. The agenda and format for the 3-day workshop in April will be provided closer to the date. Across those three days, we aim to have speakers and panels

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address topics which include: program options, equipment, parent support and advocacy, personal experiences of deaf and hard of hearing young adults, and self-esteem in deaf and hard of hearing children.

The children's component of PEER (**Preschoolers' Esteem & Emotional Readiness**) occurs in conjunction with the 3-day workshop in April. The classroom focuses on:

- identity, while building self-esteem and confidence
- self-advocacy skills
- making social connections
- responsibility and independence with hearing equipment (if applicable)

Please note - parents may participate in the parent component even if their child does not participate in the children's component.

The monthly evening sessions and the April three-day workshop are filled with information and ideas that are designed to support you as your child begins their journey into school. Your child's formal educational is about to start, which means your job as their first and foremost teacher and advocate is more important than ever!

If you require further information, please contact Jen Gow at 604-584-2827 or jgow@bcfamilyhearing.com. The toll free number for out-of-town families is 1-877-584-2827.

The **registration deadline** for the PEER evening sessions is **September 30th, 2020**; however, we strongly urge you to register as soon as possible. Please complete the registration by clicking on this link: <http://bit.ly/2JnUqqa>

There is no program fee for our BCFHRC clients, but registration is required in order to access the course materials and online sessions.

We are looking forward to working with you and your child during this extraordinary time in your family's life.

Sincerely,

Jen Gow
Family Support Parent

Zara Gauthier
Speech & Language Pathologist

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