



# Ready for School Connects

*Ready for School Connects is committed to offering educational programs for newcomer families that ease the transition to school and enable children and parents to fully participate in the school system with confidence.*



## Who We Are

Ready for School Connects works in partnership with schools and community agencies to support newcomer families in their transition to school in Canada.

Key Partners include:

- Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
- Crescent Town, Secord, George Webster Elementary Schools
- Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Centre
- East York East Toronto Family Resources
- Growing Up Healthy Downtown project
- Toronto Community Foundation
- United Way Toronto

## What We Do

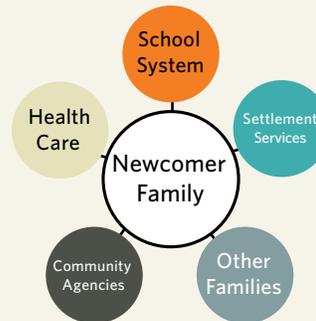
We recognize and respond to the unique challenges that newcomer children and families face with regard to school participation. Through a series of workshops, newcomer parents learn about the Canadian education system, how to get involved in their child's education and who they can turn to for support.

Through summer school readiness programs children become comfortable in the classroom environment, develop independence skills, become familiar with the routines of school and learn how to relate with other children and adults.

**Newcomer children deserve equal opportunities to achieve their full potential and increase their chances of future success in school.**

## Main Components

- Parent education
- Children's school readiness programs
- Follow up once the family has started school
- Healthy Child Screening events



Ready for School  
**Connects**  
newcomer families  
to their communities.

## Who We Help

Our target population: newcomer families who have been in Canada less than 5 years, who speak a first language that is not English and have a child starting school for the first time this September.

**It is well documented that the early years are crucial to a child's healthy growth and development. Early supports, education and intervention are key to future success.**

Since 2002, Ready for School Connects (RfSC) has delivered school readiness programs for newcomer families in downtown Toronto. Through the training model, RfSC is expanding to reach newcomers in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods.

## Cost Benefit per Participant

The cost to the program is approximately \$1,000 per family. This is inexpensive given the depth of experience for families, which, as mentioned earlier, include: the summer school readiness program, parent education component, healthy child screening, and follow up once the family starts school.



## Program Impact

Ready for School Connects takes leadership in welcoming and supporting newcomer families to Canada. This program invests in the next generation of young Canadians. Since the start of the program, over 400 newcomer families have benefitted from participating in RfSC.

### Benefits to Target Group

- The transition from home to school is eased for newcomer families
- Newcomer children are able to access clinical care and supports
- Parents are more comfortable in the school environment

### Benefits to Broader Community

- Kindergarten teachers find that children are better prepared for school
- Community partnerships are developed and strengthened resulting in integrated delivery of services and resources for newcomer families

### Statistics

Since 2002:

- 428 preschool children have graduated from RfSC
- 423 parents/caregivers participated in the workshop series
- 178 siblings participated in childcare
- 261 children were screened at the Healthy Child Screening events

## Next Steps

### Expansion

Ready for School Connects is offered at various schools across the city of Toronto. Partner schools have identified many more families that would benefit from RfSC than we are currently able to accommodate.

### Training Model

Ready for School Connects has captured its learnings and effective practices in a recently updated Staff Training toolkit. The toolkit can be used by other communities who want to offer RfSC programs to the newcomer families they serve. It can be downloaded from our website at [www.rfsc.ca](http://www.rfsc.ca).

## What We Need

We need your support. We are looking for funding to expand our programs to other newcomer communities. Funds will be used to:

- Start up new program locations in priority newcomer communities
- Build and strengthen community partnerships
- Support the first year of new program locations
- Provide resources to community agencies; i.e. toolkit staff training and workshops

**We envision a place where all newcomer families will enter the school system with confidence. With your support we can make this happen.**

## Success Story

*"Asha walked around the classroom, refusing to take part in activities that involved the large group. It was clear Asha displayed some behavioural red flags, for example, repetitive ways of playing with her hands and needing something in her hands at all times, rarely smiling, not engaging with other children or adults and demonstrating little skill in her home language. By the end of the two-week program, her mom felt more comfortable talking with staff about her concerns regarding Asha's development and subsequently brought her to the Healthy Child Screening where her family was able to find support for their daughter."*

- Program Leader, 2009



# What People Are Saying About Ready for School Connects

## Principals have said

*"Generally, in September we have lots of tears. Now, the kids are used to coming in the front door and being in a Kindergarten classroom. They know what a circle time is, they know what snack time is, they know what playtime is. They are learning the skills that are really important for their future in school. The benefits are far, far above what we expected. It's an amazing program that Ready for School Connects has brought to our school."*

- Tammy Ross,  
Principal, Crescent Town School

*"There are two things I want to mention that are really fabulous about this program. The first is that the program is designed to bring people of import to the program to speak to parents. These faces become familiar and parents start to understand the services that are available through the school. We have been able to connect with families in a whole new way. The second is that the program involves Healthy Child Screening so we can get services to them as quickly as possible because we know that when we intervene early it makes a big difference."*

- Nancy Steinhauer,  
Principal, George Webster School

## Teachers have said

*"I think Ready for School is a fabulous program and teachers are very lucky if they have kids in their class that have participated in this program before they start school."*

- Aaron Chan, Elementary School Teacher

## Parents have said

*"We have learned a lot about school. It's very different from back home. I have learned how to be involved in schools."*

*"This has been the most valuable program I have attended since coming to Canada."*

## Funders have said

*"Ready for School Connects is a terrific initiative that addresses critical quality of life issues for children and families. The Toronto Community Foundation is proud to invest in this high-impact program through a Vital Ideas grant in order to help Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Centre expand its capacity and reach. Together we are building a stronger Toronto."*

- Rahul K. Bhardwaj, LL.B. President and  
CEO, Toronto Community Foundation

*"United Way Toronto is proud to support Ready for School Connects. The success of newcomers is vital to our city and United Way is committed to helping newcomers fulfill their potential. We believe in bringing people together - to multiply effort and impact across the city - and we are pleased to support RfSC, a project that brings school readiness programs to newcomer families in Toronto."*

- Waseem Syed, Vice President,  
Community Investment, United Way Toronto



## Contact Information

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## Special Thanks To

