**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Creating Developmentally Appropriate Learning Environments for**

**Young Children, Preschool to Grade 3**

September 2021

# Brief 7: Kindergarten Screening

The following early childhood brief was created as companion document for the [Elements of High Quality Kindergarten](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/resources/hq-kindergarten.docx), [Elements of High Quality Elementary Classrooms](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/resources/hq-elementary.docx) and the [joint position statement on play as an instructional strategy](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/resources/play-statement.docx). The brief contains a summary of this topic along with strategies and approaches that reflect high quality early childhood practices. Each brief is followed by a list of related resources and references that were used to develop the brief.

The full set of briefs can be found on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s ([Department’s) Early Learning webpage](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/resources/).

* **Brief 1: Collaboration with Community Based Partners**
* **Brief 2: Culturally Responsive Family Engagement**
* **Brief 3: Supporting Social-Emotional Learning and Well-Being in Culturally Responsive Ways**
* **Brief 4: Creating Antiracist Environments for Young Children**
* **Brief 5: Planning for Developmentally Appropriate Practices**
* **Brief 6: Early Childhood Vision**
* **Brief 7: Kindergarten Screening**

While the topics of these briefs are relevant to all grades, Preschool to 12th Grade, they are written with a particular focus on our youngest students, Preschool to 3rd grade.

**Kindergarten Screening**

Spring, summer and fall are typically the times to implement screening protocols for students entering kindergarten for the upcoming school year. Below are a number of reminders about kindergarten screening.

Kindergarten screening requirements in the state fall under Special Education regulations. Each school district is required to screen three- and four-year old children and all children who are of age to enter kindergarten. Note: districts do not have to conduct a **developmental screen** on all incoming kindergarten students, if they have been screened in public preschool.  For more information on preschool and kindergarten screening, view the [state regulation](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr28.html?section=03).

There are also state statute and Department of Public Health (DPH) regulations in regard to screening related to children’s physical health, vision and hearing. For more details, see the statute: [M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 57](https://malegislature.gov/laws/generallaws/parti/titlexii/chapter71/section57); and the [regulations: 105 CMR 200.100 and 105 CMR 200.400](https://www.mass.gov/doc/105-cmr-200-physical-examination-of-school-children/download).

The statute states:

*Upon entering kindergarten or within 30 days of the start of the school year, the parent or guardian of each child shall present to school health personnel certification that the child within the previous 12 months has passed a vision screening conducted by personnel approved by the department of public health and trained in vision screening techniques to be developed by the department of public health in consultation with the department of education.**For children who fail to pass the vision screening and for children diagnosed with neurodevelopmental delay, proof of a comprehensive eye examination performed by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist chosen by the child's parent or guardian indicating any pertinent diagnosis, treatment, prognosis, recommendation and evidence of follow-up treatment, if necessary, shall be provided. Any child shall be exempt on religious grounds from these examinations upon written request of parent or guardian on condition that the laws and regulations relating to communicable diseases shall not be violated.*

Additionally, the regulations state:

*The school committee or board of health shall cause the hearing of each student in the public schools to be screened in the year of school entry and annually through grade 3 (or by age nine in the case of ungraded classrooms), once in grades 6 through 8 (ages 12 through 14 in the case of ungraded classrooms), and once in grades 9 through 12 (ages 15 through 18 in the case of ungraded classrooms). The hearing of each student shall be tested by means-of some form of discrete frequency hearing test such as the Massachusetts Hearing Test or comparable method approved by the Department of Public Health.*

Vision and hearing must be screened annually, per the regulations. If the student enters a district in public PreK, this is the year of school entry which means that the child would need to be screened in preschool and again in public kindergarten, or in years public PreK through grade 3 (or by the age of 9 in the case of ungraded classrooms), if that applies.  Districts are encouraged to include school nursing staff in the kindergarten screening process, so as to streamline communications to families regarding school entry requirements.

The screening and assessment data collected by school districts are for internal (to district) use only.  There are no state data reporting requirements currently in place that require districts to submit this information to the Department. As part of kindergarten screening procedures, districts should be including the DOE050: Early Childhood Experiences Family Survey to gather information from families on the student’s preschool experience in the year prior to entering kindergarten. For more information on DOE050: Early Childhood Experience and the family survey, please visit the Department’s [Early Learning Team’s webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/resources/) under Screening, Assessment and Data.

For incoming kindergarten students who are unable to participate in screening activities in-person, districts are encouraged to begin gathering information from virtual family interviews and if the child is enrolled in a preschool program remotely, from the preschool educator with family permission.