



MASSACHUSETTS  
Department of Early Education and Care



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Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education

**Toolkit  
Introduction**

# Welcome to Kindergarten!

## A Planning Toolkit for Massachusetts' Schools, Families, and Communities





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# What Is the Purpose of a Transition to Kindergarten Toolkit?

Transitioning to kindergarten is an exciting milestone! All children in Massachusetts deserve a friendly and fair start in kindergarten. Transitions happen throughout a child's life. Whether or not a child is enrolled in a pre-kindergarten (pre-K) program, the transition to kindergarten is an important one. For a smooth transition to kindergarten, everyone needs to work together to support each child's needs.

Setting up Massachusetts' children for success in school and life includes prepared schools, involved and informed families, and supportive communities. The toolkit has two main purposes around the transition to kindergarten:

1. support local communities to develop a collaborative planning process between schools, families, and community partners; and
2. spark creative and innovative ideas to improve the experiences of families and children.

The toolkit provides practical strategies and processes to guide a successful planning process for the transition to kindergarten. The toolkit materials emphasize the use of culturally sustaining practices responsive to the needs of children and families across historically underserved communities, including those defined by race, culture, language, ability, gender, family structure, religion, and income. An intentional pathway to kindergarten requires ready schools, ready families, and ready communities.



## Who Is the Toolkit For?

Supporting a successful transition to kindergarten for all children is a statewide responsibility. Within this toolkit, you will find three guides on the following topics: ready schools, ready families, and ready communities. Each guide is written for a specific audience.



The **Ready Schools Guide** is for administrators and educators within elementary schools, local school districts (including charter public schools and regional school districts), and early childhood education programs, as well as family engagement specialists, staff from after-school and out-of-school time, pre-K, Head Start, center-based, and family child care programs.



The **Ready Families Guide** is for families with children preparing to transition to kindergarten. The term “family” broadly includes parents, older siblings, guardians, in-home primary caregivers, relatives, cultural brokers, translators, and other important people in a child’s life.



The **Ready Communities Guide** is for partners at community organizations that serve children and their families. Community organizations include but are not limited to museums, libraries, recreational centers, health service agencies, and cultural organizations.

This toolkit is intended to help all children have a smooth and successful transition to kindergarten. The term “**all children**” means every single child, including but not limited to children with disabilities, children who have just moved to this country, children from families with who lack access to adequate resources related to financial or other needs, children who experience homelessness, children who speak multiple languages, children in foster care, and children from military families.

## What Is Included in the Toolkit?

In addition to the three guides (**Ready Schools**, **Ready Families**, and **Ready Communities**), the toolkit includes:

- transition tools to support implementation of the practices outlined in the guides;
- a glossary of common terms;
- resources to support the transition to kindergarten; and
- a list of references.



The entire toolkit may be downloaded in sections:

- Toolkit Introduction
- Ready Schools Guide
- Ready Families Guide
- Ready Communities Guide
- Transition Tools

Each guide highlights the importance of thoughtful planning for starting kindergarten, provides tips for effective communication and collaboration, and suggests actions to ensure every child feels included and supported, regardless of their background or language.

The guides include the following tools to support practices, more information can be found within the transition tools:

- **Transition to Kindergarten Planning Team: Self-Assessment**
- **Our Family’s Plan for Beginning Kindergarten**
- **How Families Can Support Children’s Learning and Development Educator Transition Planning Form**
- **Recommended Transition to Kindergarten Team Folder Materials**

## Where Do I Start?

Here are some tips for getting started using the toolkit to plan for a successful transition to kindergarten for all children:

- Review the materials and guides included in the toolkit.
- Select a guide that connects with your role in supporting children’s transitions.
- Share the toolkit links with colleagues, families, and community partners.
- Reach out to the Early Learning Team at [achievement@mass.gov](mailto:achievement@mass.gov) for additional support, including networking and professional development opportunities as well as online resources on the transition to kindergarten.



If you are just starting to learn about the transition to kindergarten, review the glossary to understand the common phrases, acronyms, and words that are used in the toolkit. Set aside time to explore specific tools.

Wherever you begin, the **Welcome to Kindergarten! A Planning Toolkit for Massachusetts' Schools, Families, and Communities** will support ready schools, ready families, and ready communities! Let's get started.

For access to the complete set of guides and tools, go to <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/resources/>.







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