



MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Early Education and Care



MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

Ready
Schools

Welcome to Kindergarten!

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



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Ready Schools Guide Introduction

The **Ready Schools Guide** provides information and strategies for school administrators, educators, and program leaders to work with families and community partners to plan and implement a successful transition to kindergarten for all children and families in Massachusetts. Successful transitions:

- help children move smoothly from one learning setting to another;
- support children to develop and strengthen their academic and social skills; and
- help families feel supported.


Often, when people talk about school readiness, they mean preparing children to start kindergarten. But in this toolkit, school readiness is about making sure the schools are set up to welcome and support **all** children and families as they enter kindergarten.

Here are some commonly used terms you'll encounter in the Ready Schools Guide:

Term	Definition
Schools	Local school districts, charter public schools, regional school districts, including kindergarten and elementary schools as well as programs in school-based and community-based after-school and out-of-school time, pre-kindergarten (pre-K), Head Start, public and center-based early childhood education (ECE), and family child care
Educators	Classroom teachers and practitioners in kindergarten, pre-k, Head Start, center-based, and family child care programs
Pre-K educators	Classroom teachers and practitioners in public pre-k, Head Start, center-based, and family child care programs
Administrators and leaders	School and district superintendents, principals, center-based and Head Start program directors, ECE coordinators, family engagement specialists, and others in positions of leadership
Family leaders	Parent or caregiver who actively guides and supports their family, advocating for their children's needs and connecting with resources and often bridging gaps between families and available services, ensuring their voices are heard in the community
Cultural broker	Person who helps people from different cultural backgrounds understand each other better, bridging communication between families and institutions, ensuring services respect diverse cultural perspectives

Starting kindergarten is a big step for children and families. Getting used to new settings, routines, ways to learn, rules, and making new friends can be exciting but also a bit stressful.

This guide supports educators and school leaders with culturally sustaining practices to be responsive to children and families in historically underserved communities. It focuses on the needs of people from different races, cultures, languages, abilities, genders, family backgrounds, religions, and income levels.



The role of pre-K and kindergarten administrators and educators is to help families and children understand what to expect and ensure each child gets the support they need to succeed in kindergarten.

Understanding How Children Develop and Learn

Massachusetts values each child as a unique learner. Every child deserves a safe and supportive learning environment where they feel like they belong.

Children learn through their relationships with adults and other children. Through play and interaction, they develop language skills, explore books and other print, think critically, solve problems, try new things, improve physical coordination, and build self-awareness and confidence in their abilities.

Because learning is happening all the time and is influenced by various environments, schools, families, and communities should adopt a whole child approach. This approach recognizes each child's unique qualities and provides the support they need to reach their full potential.



Schools, families, and communities who use the **whole child approach** believe in the following core ideas:

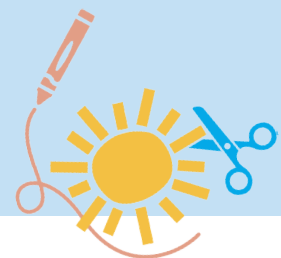
- A child’s family is their first and best advocate, and educator.
- Learning happens in relationships at different places and times—in the school, home, and community.
- Physical health, mental health, and social–emotional and cognitive development are important to a child’s learning and overall well-being.
- Each child experiences a unique combination of family life, cultures, and values that shapes who they are (their identity).
- Each child has a unique identity that contributes to the diversity of a learning environment.
- Children need to be in safe and supportive learning environments where they feel that they belong and are valued by everyone.
- Children thrive in culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining learning environments that are playful and fun.
- Inclusive learning environments benefit all children—all their languages, backgrounds, and abilities.
- Play-based learning that supports all children’s abilities helps children learn and build new skills.
- Educator practices must be grounded in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), be culturally responsive, and promote fairness to help children feel proud of who they are.

“Human relationships are the essential ingredient that catalyzes healthy development and learning.”

—Linda Darling-Hammond
and Channa Cook-Harvey,
Learning Policy Institute

Explore these Massachusetts resources about how children learn and develop:

- [Preschool and Kindergarten Standards in Social-Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning](#)
- [Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Learning Experiences](#)
- [Pre-K Science, Technology and Engineering Standards](#)
- [The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for PreK-12](#)



Creating a Local Transition to Kindergarten Planning Team

Creating a plan to support the transition to kindergarten begins well before children enter kindergarten. It takes community-wide effort and collaboration.

A balanced partnership in which schools, families, and community partners come together as equals is essential to develop a comprehensive transition plan that reflects diverse perspectives and voices. All partners should have a shared understanding of the importance of early learning and motivation to learn what it takes for a successful start to kindergarten for all children.



The first step is to build a core local TTK planning team. School or district leaders will guide the effort. Collaborative partners making up the core team may include:

- family and family advocates (friends, spiritual leaders, neighbors, family advocacy organizations, etc.);
- a cultural broker representing different cultural systems;
- a family engagement specialist;
- school principals and administrators;
- kindergarten educators;
- out of school time or afterschool program staff;
- ECE program directors and administrative staff (including family child care);
- pre-K educators;
- special education providers; and
- partners from community organizations such as libraries, museums, and cultural organizations serving children and families.

Creating a local transition to kindergarten (TTK) plan involves bringing together key partners, establishing a clear process, and consistently using effective practices. Additional stakeholders may join the planning efforts as new priorities emerge. However, maintaining a core team is essential to sustain momentum and progress throughout the year.

The guiding principles of a local TTK planning team may include developing a mutual understanding of the role of early education in children’s development, welcoming diverse perspectives to shape the TTK process, understanding the differences and similarities in expectations across pre-K and kindergarten programs, striving for consensus to develop a successful TTK plan, and working collaboratively to implement the plan and process.

School administrators who are leading the local TTK planning team will be a bridge between all partners to ensure open communication and collaboration. Team leaders:

- maintain current contact lists and roles for all team members;
- collaborate with team members to determine the most accessible platform to organize and share team documents;
- communicate regularly through emails, social media, or other agreed-upon methods;
- schedule meeting times and develop agendas provide translated materials in user-friendly plain language;
- summarizing and communicating the impact and importance of transition planning on children’s social, emotional, and academic growth in a clear and accessible way for all team members; and
- work together with all team members to draft a memorandum of understanding (MOU) defining roles and the purpose of the group.



Supporting the Logistics of the Local Transition to Kindergarten Planning Team

Once the local TTK planning team is in place, having a well-organized process is key to ensuring efficiency.

Use the Transition Planning Tools to support your planning process. The Transition Planning Tools are designed to support ECE directors, school administrators, family engagement specialists, families, and community partners to collaborate and plan. The templates include examples of meeting agendas, sample timelines, meeting topics and outcomes, and templates for organizing team goals, roles, and responsibilities.

Keep in mind the following considerations or steps as your local TTK planning team gets started.

Engage the TTK planning team in discussing the vision for TTK:

- identify shared goals and objectives;
- define clear, measurable, and attainable outcomes for each objective; and
- focus on actionable steps.

Ensure all members understand their role and responsibilities, including:

- what is being asked of them as members of the local TTK planning team;
- the expected time commitment and workload; and
- the intended goal or outcomes of the local TTK planning team time.



Map out the local TTK planning team timeline:

- Allocate time for transition planning and meetings.
- Provide classroom coverage for kindergarten and pre-K educators to attend transition planning meetings.
- Create a timeline for implementation of transition activities.
- Consider creating a customized timeline for families in preparation for the kindergarten transition.

Plan productive meetings with clear objectives and norms:

- Consider ways to make the meetings, discussions, and decisions accessible to all members by defining all acronyms, translating materials, and offering interpreting services during meetings.
- Ensure administrative staff have the time to support TTK planning team needs.
- Use the Transition Planning Tools to support the administrative needs and coordination of meetings.
- Respect members' time by starting and ending on time.
- Clearly communicate and share information with all members and consider using a digital platform like Google Drive, Padlet, or other space as a hub for meeting information.

Make meetings and materials accessible for all members of the local TTK planning team:

- Use an accessibility checker for print materials and ensure your website is accessible.
- Use local service providers to translate materials and offer interpreters to support members in their preferred languages.
- Support attendance by offering free child care and scheduling meetings at times that work best for all members.
- Consider stipends to compensate planning members for their time.

Assessing the Local TTK Planning Team Capacity

Knowing the strengths of your planning team is important. The **Transition to Kindergarten Planning Team: Self-Assessment** can be used to evaluate the current capacity and resources of early childhood education programs, schools, districts, or community organizations to support a successful transition to kindergarten. Responses may be gathered individually or in groups working together on the local transition to kindergarten (TTK) planning team. TTK team leaders may also ask families, area schools, pre-K programs, and community organizations who are not part of the planning team to provide input on the assessment. Results from this self-assessment will show current efforts as well as areas where more work is needed.

In addition, the self-assessment should include listening to families, prioritizing children and families who have the least access to resources and opportunities, and making sure that the support provided is designed to meet their specific needs. Questions marked with an asterisk (*) on the self-assessment indicate where family feedback is desired. Families are encouraged to provide their feedback even if they are not part of the collaborative partnership with schools and community partners on the planning team.

The Transition to Kindergarten Planning Team: Self-Assessment asks questions about:

- school transition activities;
- collaboration across the community;
- family partnerships;
- professional development; and
- using data for continuous improvement.

The Transition to Kindergarten Planning Team: Self-Assessment will help identify:

- strengths of the local TTK planning team, schools, family, and community partners;
- areas that need improvement; and
- where support from consultants or other district planning groups is needed.

The local TTK planning team can organize information gathered from the self-assessment into categories to identify what is already being done and where more continuity or innovation is needed. The responses from the self-assessment will help identify issues of equity or barriers for families. The results will inform developing a more detailed plan that includes what the local community is already doing and identify improvement goals and next steps to creating a seamless path to kindergarten for families and their children.

Partnerships Between Educators

Kindergarten educators and pre-K educators can work together to plan for children moving to kindergarten. Getting to know what experiences a child had before entering kindergarten and what will be expected of them once they arrive is important information. Early information exchange is essential to provide timely support for a successful kindergarten transition. This process should be reciprocal, involving meaningful collaboration between kindergarten teachers, preschool teachers, and families. Educators can use this information to build continuity across educational systems.

Kindergarten and pre-K educators can work together to:

- share information about teaching practices, curriculum, and information about children and families;
- coordinate program observations;
- schedule meetings to discuss individual child supports;
- participate in joint learning or workshops;
- coordinate assessment tools;
- implement teaching methods that are age appropriate, respect a child's culture and linguistic needs, and are responsive to the unique needs of each child;



- ensure the classroom or program is a space where everyone feels welcome and included; and
- use the **Educator Transition Planning Form** to support individualized planning for all children moving to kindergarten, especially children who have **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)** or **504 accommodation plans**.

In addition to working together, kindergarten and pre-K educators can support local TTK planning efforts by:

- joining their community local TTK planning team in a school or district to help inform planning and coordination of TTK processes;
- planning for and participating in joint professional learning on state standards for development and learning, alignment of curriculum and instruction practices, assessment methods to track progress and inform instruction, and using developmentally appropriate practices within the transition to kindergarten process;
- working with administrators to share information across systems, including length of time child was at the ECE program, frequency of attendance, developmental assessments, child portfolios, and other evidence of strengths, preferences, and learning; and
- working with school leaders to align family engagement initiatives that support the transition to kindergarten process.

Administrators and school leaders can provide time for educators to meet in person to discuss a variety of topics, including approaches to curriculum planning, techniques for engaging families, and individualized planning considerations. School leaders may want to discuss with educators policies and practices for building continuity in how educators communicate with families including frequency, format, and what type of information is being shared.

Coordinating Transitions for Children Receiving Preschool Special Education Services

Transitions out of preschool special education services vary based on each child's needs. Some children may move into a general education kindergarten classroom, with or without continued special education services, while others may transition to a different setting as outlined in the child's IEP. These transitions should be guided by the child's individualized needs and collaborative team decisions, emphasizing the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). To ensure a positive experience for children and families, intentional, well-planned transition practices are essential.

For children currently receiving preschool special education services, it's important to coordinate a personalized transition plan to ensure the child's unique needs are met and to provide the appropriate support for changes to come including but not limited to environment, schedule, and group size.

Pre-k and kindergarten educators can support these transitions by using some specific strategies:

- Get family consent for program practitioners to communicate during the transition.
- Designate a transition coordinator to oversee the process, ensuring the transition plan is implemented and that families, educators, and service providers collaborate to support the child.

- Facilitate the transfer of essential documents, such as the Individualized Education Program (IEP), recent assessments, and progress reports, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the child's needs.
- Develop a phase-in transition plan to help the child gradually adjust to the new program or setting.
- Organize visits for families and children to the new classroom or program and arrange introductions to the staff, helping to ease anxiety for both the child and their family.

Using the Educator Transition Planning Form

The **Educator Transition Planning Form** is used jointly by pre-K and kindergarten educators to plan for the individual and unique needs of each child. The form tracks key considerations and accommodations for all children, including those who have had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 accommodation plans.

When pre-K educators and kindergarten educators have planning conversations, they should bring educational records, work samples, past IEPs, past Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), and 504 plans. This information is essential and provides insight on the child's interests, learning style, and preferences gained from families.

Kindergarten educators contribute to planning conversations by sharing about the school culture, school values, required information, expected social and behavioral skills, and current curriculum.

Educators and school administrators are encouraged to build a team that supports individualized planning for each child and includes:

- family members and invited guests such as a cultural broker;
- current pre-K educators, including community-based and family child care providers;
- future kindergarten educators;
- program or school administrators or leaders;
- special education educators (as applicable); and
- interpreters (as applicable).

Educators can use their knowledge of how children learn and develop to support families in the many transitions that happen throughout a child's life.

Information sharing between educators supports individualized curriculum planning. Here are some questions about information sharing:

- What types of assessment and screening tools are used in the pre-K programs in the community?
- What is the district using as its kindergarten screening tool?
- How and where is the information stored?
- How can the information be made accessible to educators, families, and community partners?

- Have confidentiality issues been considered for a district-wide information-sharing agreement?
- What will be the process for families to give consent to share their child's information?

A streamlined process for sharing information across systems—including schools, pre-K programs, community organizations, and other local and state agencies—helps maintain consistent knowledge and practices that support the transition to kindergarten.

Building Relationships with Families to Support Engagement in the TTK Planning Process

Relationships with families are central in the transition to kindergarten. Schools, educators, and community partners can build strong partnerships with families through respectful communication and meetings. Inviting interested family members to join the local TTK planning team is great, but not all families will be able to participate. To build trusting relationships with families, offer multiple ways for families to be involved with the local TTK planning team. When families are invited to collaborate and their ideas are respected and heard, partnerships grow stronger.

Here are some additional ways to engage families in the transition process beyond the planning team:

- Work with family leaders and community partners to offer focus groups throughout the community, such as in churches, cultural organizations, and libraries, to collect feedback about activities and events related to the transition to kindergarten.
- Ask families about how they engage with their child at home and in other contexts to learn about their cultural values and expectations around interactions with their child.
- Schedule open houses for children and families to visit the kindergarten classroom.
- Plan family-friendly events, such as organized spring or summer play groups, where families can meet other families, talk with their child's educator, practice school routines, and connect with community resources.
- Send out family-focused newsletters in multiple languages. Include links to school and community events that support the transition to kindergarten.
- Mail a letter addressed to each child from their kindergarten teacher welcoming them with information about their teacher.



- Create a kindergarten families tab on your program, school, or district website and provide opportunities for direct communication through email, chat or a social media platform. Post information about kindergarten registration, school and community events, and tips on getting ready for kindergarten. Include contact information for direct support.
- Translate materials into multiple languages to learn about various aspects of the transition to kindergarten planning process.
- Share a contact sheet listing the kindergarten families' phone numbers and email addresses; be sure to follow your school's confidentiality policy.

Engaging Families in Transition

Families whose child is enrolled within an early learning or pre-K program, including family child care, may have a close relationship with their child's educator. They may trust the educator to talk with them about the transition, what to expect, and how to support their child.

Pre-K educators have opportunities to talk with families at drop-off and pick-up times. They also may invite families to join activities at their child's pre-K program or have events where families can talk with their child's educator and program staff. Pre-K programs may host open houses when children are changing classrooms. Educators may help families feel comfortable with the transition and be able to ask questions.

A visit to their child's kindergarten classroom is one way to make it easier for families to get ready for their child's move to kindergarten. They can see what kindergarten is like and what children are learning. Families can observe how kindergarten educators use play and other teaching methods to be responsive and respect children's cultures and languages. Families can better understand the routines, curriculum, and expectations of kindergarten.

Educators and leaders in kindergarten and pre-K can create a list of common questions and responses about the transition to kindergarten.

Families need to know:

- where and how to register for kindergarten;
- what type of requirements (medical, developmental, academic) need to be met before their child starts kindergarten;
- what the kindergarten screening process is and how they sign up for it;
- where they can go for support with translation and interpreter services;
- what the referral process is for special education;
- the roles and contact information for staff at the school, who to contact with concerns, and how they can schedule a meeting with leaders or educators; and
- what events or opportunities the school has for families to visit and ask questions about the kindergarten transition process.

Encourage families to make their own plan for the transition to kindergarten. **Our Family's Plan for Beginning Kindergarten** is a tool that families can use to create their own plan for supporting their child's success in kindergarten. To further support planning and preparation for the kindergarten transition, share a customized timeline for families with information about registration, kindergarten orientation, and school programs or events for children and their families entering kindergarten.

Create time and opportunities to build trusting relationships among families, educators, and administrators. Include time for the educators and administrators to get to know the family and the family to get to know them. Taking time to create trusting relationships will support engagement between families, educators, and administrators as they collaborate as a team in the transition process. Review this list of strategies for ways your school can build and sustain trusting relationships with families:

- Share information in multiple languages and multiple formats—such as paper flyers, websites, postcard reminders, recordings, phone calls— that reflect families' preferences for communication.
- Ask families, to the extent they feel comfortable, to share who the important people in their child's life are.
- Discuss with families the results of their child's developmental assessment and share what families can do at home to support development and learning.
- Provide information on what children should know and be able to do before kindergarten and what families can do to support. Share with families the **How Families Can Support Children's Learning and Development** resource.
- Include information about **social-emotional learning and approaches to play and learning** in materials you give to families. Explain about the social and emotional transition to kindergarten, supports the school has, and what families can do.
- Schedule family engagement activities when working families can attend. An example may be a literacy night where families and their child complete fun activities that support different reading strategies. You might offer a science-based investigation activity that families can do together outside and then share their findings with other families through photos, stories, or other ways. Or you can coordinate play groups to meet up at local parks or community centers on the weekends or evenings.
- Have pre-K and kindergarten educators schedule home visits with families to better understand their cultural expectations regarding learning and development.
- Appoint a family liaison or direct contact for families who call the school regarding kindergarten questions.
- Give families books that are in their primary language and bridge the home-to-school transition.
- Provide other resources like a picture story of a family's transition to kindergarten. Or provide a simple flowchart depicting the basic steps families will need to enroll their child in kindergarten.
- Use the **Recommended Transition to Kindergarten Team Folder Materials** to create a folder with information and recommendations on activities and supports specific to the local area to help prepare families for a successful transition to kindergarten.

- With feedback from and in collaboration with family leaders, co-host a kindergarten orientation session for families to learn about the process and requirements for enrolling, tour classrooms, and ask school leaders questions.
- Invite someone from your local **Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE)** program to support kindergarten events by sharing resources and engaging with families about transitions.
- Maintain ongoing two-way communication and transparency with families and include them in the decision-making process for their child's kindergarten transition.
- Respect and honor families' preferences and values for communication and participation. Welcome families to invite others to join the transition conversations.

Supporting families who are migrant, homeless, and/or newcomers in the transition from early childhood to kindergarten requires stability, access to resources, and intentional family engagement. Here are some key strategies:

- Streamline enrollment by reducing barriers, (e.g., looking at policies and processes related to immunization documentation under the McKinney-Vento Act).
- Provide multilingual support through enrollment assistance, mobile registration sites, and coordination with shelters or community centers.
- Partner with local organizations to supply essential items, including school supplies, comfort items, and hygiene kits.
- Host kindergarten readiness events in accessible locations like community service providers, community events, local libraries, or faith-based organizations to help families prepare.
- Include transportation assistance, as needed.
- Collaborate with community services such as housing agencies, food banks, and nonprofits to connect families with comprehensive support.

These strategies help ensure a smoother transition and promote success for young learners facing housing instability.

Partnering with Families of Children Receiving Preschool Special Education Services

Building strong partnerships with families is essential for facilitating a smooth and supportive transition for children. Effectively implementing the strategies below can lead to positive family feedback, increased family engagement, and successful child adjustment to their new settings.

- Create opportunities for families to express their hopes, concerns, and questions about programming and services.
- Foster authentic relationships with families to support open discussions about the services and supports they believe their child will need in the new setting.
- Offer clear and accessible information to help families make informed decisions about their child's transition, avoiding technical jargon.
- Work collaboratively with families to determine and respect their preferred level of involvement in evaluations, assessments, and observations of their child.

Enhance your interactions and conversations with families with this Massachusetts Family Engagement Framework, **Strengthening Partnerships: A Framework for Prenatal Through Young Adulthood Family Engagement in Massachusetts**. Use the five guiding principles that reflect the system's culture and values toward family engagement and the four elements of practice.

Massachusetts has developed companion materials to the Family Engagement Framework that support partnerships between families, schools, and communities. Explore the fundamentals of partnerships in the Massachusetts Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals **downloadable document** and the **online module series**.



Collaborating with Community Partners

It is important for schools and ECE programs to know about local community organizations that serve young children and families, such as children’s museums, local libraries, recreation centers, faith-based organizations, and cultural organizations. Families may already be involved in such organizations, and they likely have trusted relationships with ongoing communication.

Collaboration with community partners can help these organizations become greater partners in equitably supporting families in the transition to kindergarten. Building partnerships with these agencies can help get information and resources to families about how to sign their children up for kindergarten and prepare to start school.

Schools can build community connections by:

- inviting key community partners to join the local TTK planning team;
- exploring the ways their organizations can support families and children in the transition to kindergarten;
- encouraging a sense of responsibility around how children learn and grow;
- reaching out to community organizations to find ways to share information about their supports and services with families as well as to seek opportunities to participate in their scheduled events with families to share information about the transition to kindergarten;
- collaborating with community organizations to identify ways that they can embed information, supports, strategies, and activities into their organizational work that will help families prepare for the transition to kindergarten;
- creating opportunities for schools to learn from community partners what they know about families, including cultural traditions, that will be important to understand and incorporate into transition planning;
- planning a family education community event at the school where organizations and agencies set up tables with information for families about their services; and
- ensuring the kindergarten website and media platforms link seamlessly with community agency and organization sites to provide families with easy access to resources and support;
- connecting with agencies that provide services for families, including families who move around a lot, such as military families, families experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness, children in foster care, and families new to our country.

A strong school-family-community relationship creates a sense of belonging among children, families, educators, school administrators, and community partners. Working with community partners gives families a stronger support system. This collaboration creates a safe and supportive environment where families can experience trusted relationships with organizations they are already connected with.

Creating Inclusive and Welcoming Spaces

Whether the setting is a classroom, conference room, or auditorium, it is important for schools and ECE programs to create welcoming environments for children and their families. Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment helps everyone feel like they belong.

Children who feel like they belong in a learning environment are more likely to engage with materials, play with peers, and understand what is expected of them. Families who feel welcomed in their child's school may be more comfortable with sharing information about their child and asking questions. Community partners are likely to stay engaged and participate when they feel included.



Cultivate an inclusive and welcoming environment for children and adults by:

- fostering feelings of safety and comfort through respectful interactions;
- creating an atmosphere of emotional well-being and learning;
- encouraging positive interactions;
- supporting cooperative learning and working together;
- organizing the environment for ease of movement and access; and
- modeling reflective and active listening.

School and Community Partner Visits

When program staff, educators, administrators, and community partners visit early learning settings, they gain valuable knowledge. They learn about developmental practices, expectations, and approaches to learning that may differ from what they do in their own settings.

Educators may model specific strategies for supporting children in culturally sustaining and responsive ways. Administrators may discuss responsive early learning environments, specific curriculum methods, and how to assess children's development and learning. Community partners may ask questions or share how their services might support the practices and expectations of early learning environments.

In addition, school principals and program leaders might share:

- how they support children moving into kindergarten;
- the ways they engage families;
- the kinds of information they give to families;
- the special events or meetings they plan that make the kindergarten transition a positive experience for children and their families; and
- how the enrollment process works and how many seats are available for incoming kindergartners, ensuring space for all interested families.

Specifically, pre-K educators might explain to kindergarten educators:

- how they engage families when it is time for their child to move to a new educator, classroom, or school;
- what kind of information they give families to help them prepare for the transition to kindergarten; and
- how they observe young children in their learning and development and what they find out.

Kindergarten educators might discuss with pre-K educators:

- the lessons they teach;
- how a typical day looks and what the children do;
- teaching methods they use; and
- the kinds of behavior they hope to see in kindergarten, such as how children interact with others and take care of themselves.

Family School Visits

When families are invited to a school visit either at their child's pre-K program or at their child's kindergarten program, staff should have:

- activities for children and families to engage in;
- opportunities for one-on-one conversations with family members and educators; and
- materials translated into the primary languages of the families attending.



Schools can have activities available for children to do with their families as well as with other children. Having extra staff available to supervise children will allow families to have conversations with educators and school leaders. In this way, children and families can experience the transition of learning about kindergarten together.

To further connect families to what their child is or will be learning, educators and school staff can:

- share practices and fun activities they use to support young children’s learning and interests to help families understand the differences between pre-k and kindergarten;
- display what children are working on through photos, portfolios, or documentation to see practices that support young children in kindergarten classrooms;
- provide fun activities families can do at home with their child translated into the family’s primary language to support families with ways to support their child in transition to kindergarten;
- have interpreters available to support conversations between families, educators, and school administrators; and
- create summer programs that help build skills and learning important for kindergarten.

Creating opportunities for families, educators, school administrators, and community members to visit children’s learning environments emphasizes the importance of early learning and the need for a successful transition plan.

Creating a Clear Path for Kindergarten— A Success Story

Somerville Public Schools has a framework for transitioning preschoolers to kindergarten that ensures the child, family, and educators have the tools for a successful transition.

In the fall, families are invited to multilingual virtual and in-person information sessions to learn how to register for pre-K and kindergarten for the next academic year. In the winter, schools host open houses so families can tour and meet family and community liaisons and school administrators. In late spring, families receive a welcome folder with key information about the school district routines and curriculum, ideas to support children’s learning over the summer, and a link to an online school-specific story to help children prepare for the transition. During the summer, families and rising kindergartners can socialize with each other through school-organized ice pop parties.

The week before school starts, families attend an orientation meeting with their child’s new educator and children receive a welcome bag with learning materials, school supplies, and a book. All materials are translated into Somerville’s four target languages—English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole—and interpreters are available for all meetings.

Another opportunity for transitioning children is the Summer Explore Kindergarten Transition program. This free program is designed for children who have little to no preschool experience or would benefit from an extended year to enhance school readiness. During Summer Explore, children learn readiness

skills and make friends to support a smooth entry into kindergarten. They have a daily routine that includes free breakfast and lunch, learning in literacy and math, time to play, and extra fun activities.

Parents can also participate in activities to help connect what children learn at home with what they learn at school. In addition to supports for families and children, Somerville provides opportunities for pre-K and kindergarten educators to share information through transition forms and Teacher Talks meetings.

Somerville also developed the Kindergarten Entry Skills Inventory, which houses data on baseline skills assessments and how children are growing in relation to their baselines. The district continues to assess transition activities to adjust them. The district is also currently developing new activities, such as a new workshop for families to prepare for the transition over the summer.

Successful transitions to kindergarten can and do happen. To achieve success, community teams, including schools, early childhood programs, families, and community partners must lead this process collaboratively to promote an equitable and smooth transition to kindergarten for **all** children and families in Massachusetts.



For additional information and/or resources on the transition to kindergarten, please reach out to the Early Learning Team at achievement@mass.gov.

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





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