

# Transition to Kindergarten

## Your Child is Going to Kindergarten: Making the Move Together

### Introduction

Congratulations, your child is going to kindergarten! Going to kindergarten is a big event for every child and family. You and your child may feel excited and proud about the next big step. You may also worry about the unknown. You wonder how it will be at a new school.

Good news! You can start early to prepare for your child's move into kindergarten. Think about what would be best for your child and family as you make this transition. Think about how you can work with your Head Start program to help your child feel ready. Talk with your family service worker or child's teacher about how your program supports the transition to kindergarten.

Consider the ideas below as you and your family get ready for this big change.

### During The Year Before Kindergarten

#### Fall and Winter

- Talk with your child's current educator or your family service worker about the process — what to expect and what to do. Share your questions and make a plan to learn more about kindergarten.
- Ask about kindergarten transition activities offered by your Head Start program. Ask about when to start talking with your child about kindergarten.
- Make a list of what you want to tell the new school about your child. Think about sharing your child's strengths, interests, and favorite activities.
- Find out if the new school offers any special events or kindergarten visits for new students and their families.
- Learn as much as you can about the new school or schools in the district. Talk to parents. Attend meetings of parent-school, cultural and community groups, parent-led networks, and/or the school board.
- Ask about the opportunities for parent and family engagement. What volunteer and leadership roles does the new school offer? Examples may include helping with reading and homework, volunteering, or joining a school or community organization.



## Spring

- Arrange to visit the new school and take a tour with your child. Many Head Start programs arrange this experience for families. Use this time to ask questions and share your concerns. Make a list of questions for your child's new teacher and school. You may want to ask questions like these:
  - How do I register my child?
  - When will we meet my child's kindergarten teacher?
  - What will the teacher expect my child to know and be able to do?
  - What is the school and kindergarten schedule?
  - Is there a dress code or are uniforms required? Are school supplies provided?
  - Where are the bathrooms and the cafeteria?
  - What are visitor sign-in policies and safety precautions?
  - What are other questions you would like to ask? Make a list!
- Spend time in the kindergarten classroom and let your child explore. You can talk about what is the same and what is different from Head Start. Ask your child about any questions about starting kindergarten.
- Work with your child's current educator to express in your own words what you see as your child's strengths and needs.
- Be prepared to share your child's records with the new school. If your child receives special education or health services (such as Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan), ask how to ensure that these services will continue.
- If your child will be taking the school bus, find out if the new school offers a practice bus ride for kindergarteners.
- Work with your child's current educator to plan a "good-bye" event or special keepsake from the early learning program.

Think about what you will need for child care when your child enters kindergarten. Will you need before or after school care, or both? Read *The Transition to Kindergarten and Out-of-School Time Programs: Tips for Parents and Caregivers*.



## Summer

- Plan fun activities with your child. Spend time outside, visit the library and local museums. Take advantage of free events, like a farmer's market or summer festival.
- Find out if the new school has an Open House at the end of summer to visit the classroom again.
- Spend time having fun at the school's playground.
- Create and practice routines for morning and evening that you will follow during the school year.
- Read with your child. Include books about going to kindergarten.
- Encourage your child to speak with other children to learn what kindergarten is like.
- Gather supplies for kindergarten. Be on the lookout for free school supplies in your community.

## Week Before School

- Talk with your child about clothes and supplies for the first day of school.
- Ask if your child has any questions about the first day of kindergarten.
- Talk about the school routines — such as lunch time, recess, the bus ride, and others. Talk about the before or after school care.
- Continue reading with your child. Include books about going to kindergarten.
- Help your child learn the names of the teacher, secretary, principal, and other staff at school.
- Review the family schedule and routine. Who will take your child to school or bus stop? Who will pick up your child? What might your child have for lunch?
- Begin working toward a reasonable bedtime.



## Night Before Starting Kindergarten

- Aim for an early bedtime.
- Talk with your child about the morning routine and what to expect.
- Pack a school bag or make lunch, if your child needs to bring lunch or snacks.
- Think of ways you can offer comfort to your child while you're apart. For example:
  - Put a family photo in their school bag.
  - Leave a kiss on your child's hand to press on their cheek when they miss you.
  - Ask your child to draw a picture for you to share at the end of the day.



## First Week

- Talk with your child about the routines for bedtime, waking up, and getting ready for school in the morning, and what to expect.
- Get up in time to get ready and have breakfast unrushed (or be at the school for breakfast) each morning.
- Plan to arrive at the bus stop or school early. Do you see any of your child's friends from Head Start? Point them out!
- Give lots of hugs to start the new day.
- The first days and weeks in a new classroom can be exhausting, so spend extra time relaxing together at home afterward.
- Check in with your child about how he or she felt and what happened at school each day.



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This document was developed with funds from Grant #90HC0012 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, and the Office of Child Care by the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning.

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Winter 2020