



Kindergarten *in Kansas*

A booklet for families of young children
ages 4 to 6 years old

Special Thanks to...

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The Kindergarten Year:

*Turning School Readiness
into School Success*

Kansas Coalition for Effective Family Engagement
Kansas Parent Information Resource Center
Kansas State Department of Education

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Dear families of kindergarteners:

Congratulations! Your child soon will be old enough to enter kindergarten — an exciting time for both you and your child.

This booklet will provide an overview of the following important topics, which can assist you in preparations to be made prior to kindergarten entry:

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Your local school district can provide further information on your child’s specific kindergarten experience. Building a relationship with your child’s teacher and school can help enrich your experience and your child’s success.

Should you need further assistance, such as finding your school district, learning more about state requirements or would like additional family engagement resources, please don’t hesitate to contact us:

Kansas Coalition
for Effective
Family Engagement
www.kcefe.net

Kansas Parent
Information
Resource Center
www.kpirc.org

Early Childhood, Special
Education and Title Services
Kansas State Department
of Education
www.ksde.org



Research shows that children who enter kindergarten with higher skill levels have more success in kindergarten and continue to have success in school on into the primary grades and beyond.

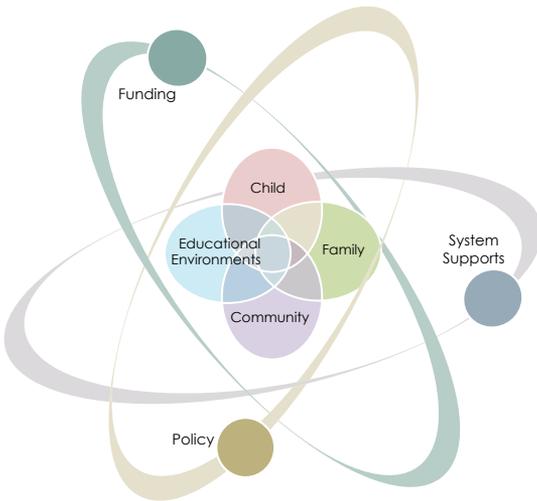
What is School Readiness?

School readiness begins at birth. Healthy children with involved families and supportive communities enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Parents are a child's first teacher. Every environment is a learning environment that can either help or hinder the skills, knowledge and abilities a child gains in his or her first five years of life. Everything a child experiences impacts lifelong learning. School Readiness is the result of the early learning years.

Entering kindergarten is a big milestone. Parents worry their child may "not be ready" but ...

All children are ready to enter kindergarten when they meet the age requirement — five on or before Aug. 31 of their kindergarten year.

The Kansas vision for school readiness is represented by the **Kansas School Readiness Framework**.



An essential building block for future achievement and academic success is school readiness. Early childhood experiences from birth to kindergarten entry that ensure health and physical well-being, and the development of cognitive, communication and social-emotional skills are necessary for school success and have a direct influence on future outcomes.

For further information on the **Kansas School Readiness Framework**, please go to: www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=527

Kansas Early Learning Standards

What should children know and be able to do?

The **Kansas Early Learning Standards** are statements describing the skills and knowledge that young children, ages birth through 5, should know and be able to do. This knowledge and ability varies greatly, and children develop at different rates. Your child may have some skills and not others, and this is okay. Parents know what their child can do and can help their child develop new skills.

One of the best activities is reading!

Reading every day helps children learn about new ideas and activities, learn new words, talk about the pictures and how they relate to the story, make up their own stories, learn front to back and on and on! Singing, chanting and storytelling are all important and fun ways to learn.

Children learn best through play.

All children want to explore, experiment and practice what they know and understand. As children develop, they experience their world through play, learning to respond thoughtfully and sensitively to their environment. Through music, movement, drama, games and visual arts, children can share themselves and their creativity while at the same time develop a deeper understanding of relationships between objects and people in their world. Learning about their world also includes participating in their family and community through social interaction. Children learn there are ways to behave and that expectations may differ according to the environment (*home vs. grocery store*).





Understanding the concepts of mathematics and science goes far beyond counting to the number 10.

Mathematics includes recognizing and using patterns to organize objects, solving problems through comparison of material and ideas and collecting information from one's environment and world to make decisions. Scientific inquiry is asking questions and learning how to find answers. Children use play to organize their learning. Children compare, notice similarities and differences and group or categorize toys and materials. This ability to organize information into categories, qualify data and solve problems helps children learn about time, space, numbers and the physical world around them. They learn to describe and explore relationships among objects, such as patterns or comparison of size (*big, little*).

The following is a list of skills typical for children entering kindergarten:

- Plays short games beginning to end.
- Can put on his/her own coat.
- Knows basic safety rules.
- Pays attention to directions.
- Recognizes numbers, colors and most letters.
- Likes to read, sing, tell stories and take turns in conversation with others.

For more detailed information, the **Kansas Early Learning Standards** are available on the Kansas State Department of Education (*KSDE*) website:

www.ksde.org/KsEarlyLearningStandards



Kindergarten Entry Information

Are children required to go to kindergarten?

The simple answer — no. Kansas law doesn't require children to attend kindergarten. However, most Kansas children do attend kindergarten when they are age eligible. The decision to send a child to kindergarten (*or not*) is made by the parents — and there are many different reasons for either decision. This booklet will hopefully provide you, as the decision-maker, with the information you need to make an informed decision that meets your and your child's needs.

Attendance once your child is in kindergarten

Once your child enters kindergarten, regular attendance is required. Statute KSA 72-1111 makes parents responsible for requiring a child who has reached the age of 7 and for whom they are responsible to attend school on a continuing basis until the child turns 18 or has received a high school diploma or a General Educational Development credential.

School districts have policies for both "excused" and "unexcused" absences. Contact your local district for specific local requirements or if you have questions regarding absences.

Age requirements

Children who are 5 years old on or before Aug. 31 of the school year and are residents of Kansas are eligible to attend public schools in Kansas. If you have moved to Kansas from another state and your child had attended kindergarten before you moved, then your child is eligible to attend kindergarten in Kansas.

NOTE: If your child attended an accredited kindergarten in another state and, as a result, is ready to attend first grade, your child may still enroll in first grade in Kansas even if he or she doesn't meet the Kansas age requirement.

The Kansas statute(s) can be accessed online at:

www.kslegislature.org/li_2012/b2011_12/statute/072_000_0000_chapter

Required documents for enrolling in kindergarten

Birth Certificate

If your child was born in Kansas, you can obtain a copy of your child's birth certificate from the Kansas Department of Vital Statistics by mail, priority mail, Internet, telephone, walk-in or fax. Call (785) 296-3253 weekdays between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. for more information. Another option is to visit their website at: www.kdheks.gov/vital/birth_howto.html

NOTE: If your child was born in another state, and you aren't sure who to contact for a copy of his/her birth certificate, the Kansas Department of Vital Statistics can provide you with that information.

Immunization Record (*Vaccination*)

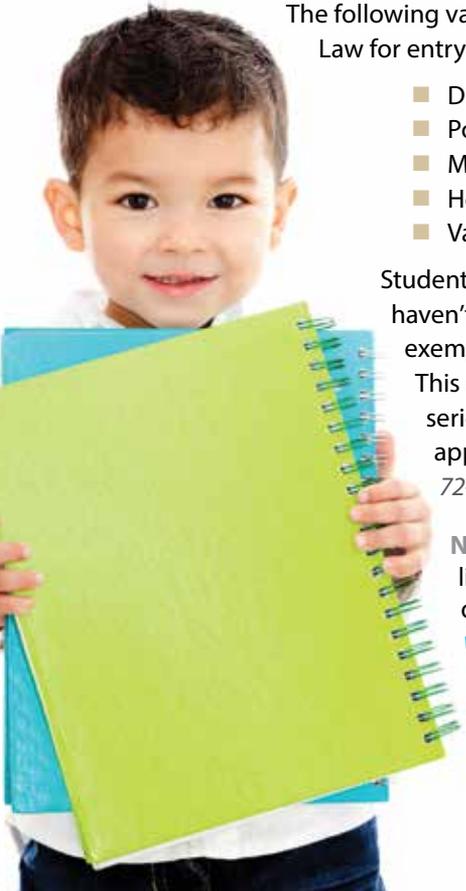
The following vaccines are required by the Kansas Immunization Law for entry into school:

- Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (*DTap/Tdap*)
- Poliomyelitis (*IPV/OPV*)
- Measles, Mumps and Rubella
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (*chickenpox*)

Students who are not completely immunized and who haven't previously claimed religious or medical exemption may be excluded from attending school.

This exclusion will exist until the child completes the series of immunizations or provides a medically approved exemption or postponement (*KSA 72-5209 b*).

NOTE: The Kansas Certificate of Immunization lists specific requirements for spacing between doses. This document can be found online at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent-shell.html. Check with your doctor or the district's health services personnel or the county public health department for current requirements.



Kansas Health Assessment (*physical*) Requirements

Kansas Law requires that ALL students under 9 years of age who are entering a Kansas school for the first time must provide the results of the child's health assessments to the school within 90 days from the time the student enrolls. The health assessments must have been conducted within the 12 months prior to the student's entering school.

NOTE: At the conclusion of the 90-day period allowed for students to comply with the health-assessment requirement, the school district may exclude students from the school until the health assessment has been completed and the results have been presented to the school. Many schools and communities provide free health screenings during summer months. Check with your local district or county health department for more information.

Consent Forms

You will be asked to sign consent forms for a variety of reasons, including giving permission for your child to attend a field trip, to be photographed or possibly for the school to obtain academic records. Your school will provide explanations for each consent form. As the parent or guardian, you will determine if you give consent for each request.





The Kindergarten Transition

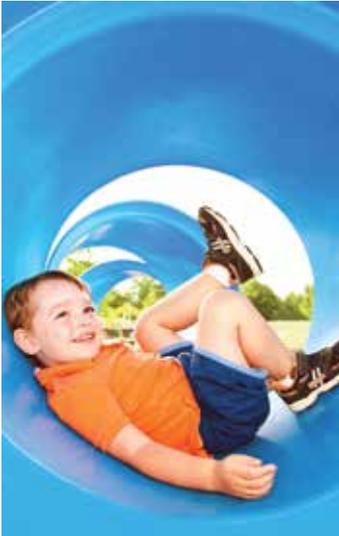
Family engagement and partnership:

Being a part of your child's education begins at birth and doesn't stop with kindergarten! Get to know your child's teachers and school staff. Have frequent conversations about what your child is doing, learning, excelling in and where they are needing more help learning a skill. As a parent, you bring important information to the discussion that will help ensure a happy and successful kindergarten year. In the following section, you will find helpful tips to become engaged in your child's education.

Helping children transition into kindergarten:

As you now know, kindergarten is a big step for any child. Transition efforts should start, if possible, the spring prior to your child's entrance into kindergarten. Most schools have a day (*kindergarten roundup*) where you can bring your child in for a visit and learn more about the school. The goal is to familiarize your child and yourself with the teacher, classroom and school; provide the teacher opportunities to get to know your child and plan more effectively before he/she becomes a member of the class; and provide opportunities to become acquainted with the new teacher, class and school policies and procedures, as well as future classmates and their parents. This will, in turn, help the classroom teacher be ready for your child.

BEFORE Your Child Begins Kindergarten:



- Many schools have home visits prior to the start of kindergarten. The teacher may contact you to set up a time to meet. Home visits give your child the chance to meet the new teacher in his/her own environment. This can reduce anxiety later, strengthen the sense of home-school connection and allow the teacher the opportunity to get a firsthand sense of your child's home environment.
- If possible, plan a visit to the new school that includes spending time with the teacher, exploring the classroom and playing on the playground.
- Some schools offer summer camps to help children transition to kindergarten. Be sure to watch for notices of such programs, and enroll your child early.
- Let the teacher know about your child's interests and strengths. Be specific. It will help the teachers know how to engage your child in the early weeks.
- Share any concerns or special considerations regarding your child, such as certain fears or food allergies.
- The teacher and other staff members may use various assessments to collect information on your child's skills, abilities and knowledge. For example, your child's vision and hearing will be screened to make sure that there are no concerns with your child's learning caused by poor hearing or vision. Assessments of knowledge of letters, numbers, understanding of stories and social skills will help teachers be prepared to meet your child's needs — leading the way to a successful kindergarten year.
- If your child has attended preschool, encourage communication between kindergarten and preschool teachers, particularly if the child has special needs.

Once Your
Child **BEGINS**
Kindergarten:



- Don't overreact if the first few days are a little rough. Young children in particular may experience separation anxiety or shyness initially, but teachers should be trained to help them adjust. If your child cries at drop off, remain calm and positive. Don't linger, but rather reassure your child that he/she will be okay and that you will be back soon. If your child has a negative reaction for a long period of time, meet with the teacher and school psychologist to develop a plan for transition time.
- During the first few weeks of school, you and your child's teacher(s) should share information about how you both think your child is adjusting to school. Be sure to let your child's teacher know the best way to communicate with you: by phone, text or email.
- If possible, volunteer in the classroom at least periodically throughout the year. Doing so helps children feel that their school and family life are linked. Being in the classroom is also a good way to develop a relationship with your child's teacher and classmates and to get firsthand exposure to his/her classroom environment and routine. Most kindergarten teachers welcome even occasional parent help.
- Check your child's backpack daily for notes and flyers. These include important information and communication from the school.

Supporting Learning **BEFORE,** **DURING** And **AFTER** Kindergarten:



- Establish a schedule at home, and stick to it. Children benefit from structure, and this can help them better adjust to the kindergarten schedule.
- Work with your child on content related to colors, numbers, letters, etc. It is important to make the experience fun and playful. Preschool and kindergarten teachers are excellent resources for ideas.
- Provide experiences with books, rhyming, singing, coloring, cutting, paying attention, sharing and sitting. Again, preschool and kindergarten teachers can provide suggestions for fun and interesting ways to provide these experiences.
- Find out what the kindergarten classroom routines are and regularly discuss them with your child. When appropriate, practice the routines by acting them out at home. For example, you can help your child practice waiting his turn, raising his hand, asking to go the bathroom and asking a classmate to play.
- Plan to spend extra quiet one-on-one time with your child during the first weeks. Keep the family schedule as simple as possible to allow for your child's adjustment needs.
- Arrange play dates with a new friend (*or friends*) from school. Strengthening social bonds with classmates helps your child build a sense of familiarity and comfort level in school.
- Limit television and video game time and increase book experiences.
- Be aware of differences in your child's development and avoid making comparisons to siblings and other children.

Additional **QUESTIONS** you may have:

Question	Answer/follow-up
What if I think my child needs extra help?	Talk first to your child's kindergarten teacher to get his/her thoughts and understandings of your child's learning style and skills.
Where do I find out about kindergarten roundup?	Call your neighborhood school and ask. If you are not sure which school is your child's school, call the District Administration Center. It should be in the phone book or online.
What if I can't afford the school supplies?	Talk to your child's teacher to see if there are community resources to help. There are many communities that provide school supplies at the beginning of the school year.
When is the first day of school?	You will get a lot of information from kindergarten roundup. If you cannot attend, call your child's school and ask.
What if I miss kindergarten roundup? What if we move to a new school during the summer?	Many children miss the spring roundup date. Call your school and see if there is a time you can take your child to school to see his/her classroom, meet the principal and the teacher. This will help you and your child feel more comfortable and ready for the kindergarten year.
What about lunch? Does my child get breakfast?	Your child may or may not be at school during lunchtime. Check with the school about the length of the kindergarten day. Full-day kindergarteners will eat lunch at school. If you need assistance, check with your school office about the food program requirements.
What do all of the acronyms mean?	There are many acronyms used in education. Don't hesitate to ask what they mean. Here are just a few examples: IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act IEP: An Individual Education Plan ELL: English Language Learners ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act

Checklist for Entering Kindergarten

Requirements for Public School Attendance	Notes
My child will be 5 years old by Aug. 31	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a copy of my child's birth certificate.	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child has had a health assessment (<i>exam</i>).	<input type="checkbox"/> Date:
I have a copy of the health assessment (<i>exam</i>) for the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child's immunizations are up to date.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a copy of my child's immunizations on the correct form for the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a copy of, and understand, the attendance policy for my child's school.	<input type="checkbox"/>

My Child's School	Notes
I know the school district phone number.	<input type="checkbox"/> Number:
I know which school my child will attend.	<input type="checkbox"/> School name: Address:
I have a list of the school's entry requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have filled out an enrollment form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I have a copy of the school calendar and know when school begins, ends and when breaks are scheduled.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I know the hours my child will be in school and where to pick him/her up.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I know about before- and after-school programs.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I know about bus transportation.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I know about the lunch program.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I know about kindergarten roundup.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I have completed forms so someone else can pick my child up in case of an emergency.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I know about the PTA/PTO or other parent organization at the school.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I have received a copy of the school's handbook.</p>

Resources



Books:

“Countdown to Kindergarten”

by Alison McGhee

“Mrs. Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten”

by Joseph Slate and Ashley Wolff

“The Night Before Kindergarten”

by Natasha Wing and Julie Durrell

“Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!”

by Nancy Carlson

“Welcome to Kindergarten”

by Anne Rockwell

Online resources:

Kansas Parent Information Resource Center: www.kpirc.org

Kansas State Department of Education: www.ksde.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children: www.naeyc.org

PTA's National Standards for Family School Partnerships:
www.pta.org/nationalstandards

