

# Making the Move from Preschool to Kindergarten

*A guide for parents of 4- and 5-year-old children who receive Preschool Special Education Services*

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When your child moves out of Early Childhood and Preschool Special Education services into kindergarten in an elementary school, it can be both challenging and exciting. Your child has been learning many skills in preschool. These skills will help your child to be successful in kindergarten. You can also help your child be prepared for kindergarten by following these tips.

## **During your child's last year of special education preschool:**

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### *Gather information about school options for your child*

- Ask your child's preschool Individualized Education Program (IEP) case manager how to find the information you will need to enroll your child in kindergarten. Each school district does things a little differently, so it is important to have the right information for your family. A person at the Student Placement Center for your school district can explain how the enrollment process works. This person will tell you about important school choice activities and will let you know what the deadlines are for making your choices. ★
- Find a special file or container, and use it to keep all the papers about kindergarten in one place.
- Learn more about parent roles, rights, and responsibilities in planning your child's education. You may call PACER Center and ask to speak with a parent advocate. Somali, Southeast Asian, and Hispanic/Latino families may ask to speak with an advocate who speaks their language.
- Attend school information nights and open houses. You may wish to visit and observe possible schools and classrooms to see if the school is a good fit for your child.
- Meet with the IEP team to decide which school and classroom your child will attend in the fall. Ask for someone from the new school to attend a meeting in the spring to help plan the transition.

### *Enroll your child and learn about kindergarten at the new school*

- Gather records and complete the forms needed to enroll your child in kindergarten at the new school. Find out what immunizations your child will need to have before school begins.
- Talk with the preschool teacher about ways to prepare your child for the transition to kindergarten.
- If English is not your first language, ask the preschool or district staff for help. They can find a person at the new school who can help you understand the information.
- Visit the new school. Attend Kindergarten Roundup.
- Ask for a student handbook, school calendar, and newsletter to help you become familiar with the school. Check for school community events that you may be able to attend with your child, such as a school carnival.
- Meet the principal and introduce your child. Ask about what other support staff are available at the school to help you and your child.

### **During the summer before kindergarten begins:**

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- Several weeks before school starts, begin bedtime, morning, and mealtime routines that will fit with the new school schedule.
- Help your child become more independent by offering acceptable choices, such as "Would you like to wear your blue shirt or your red shirt today?"

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- ❑ If possible, walk or drive to the new school building to play on the playground.
  - ❑ Practice walking to the bus stop or to school. Review safety rules.
  - ❑ Practice kindergarten skills, such as stating first and last name, standing and walking in a line, waiting for a turn, and following a direction or rule for a game.
  - ❑ Attend the school's open house and orientation with your child. Arrange for your child to meet the teachers. Take photos of the school and classroom for your child. Talk with your child about the school day schedule and activities.
  - ❑ Visit the local library and help your child get a library card. Participate in story time. Use the card to borrow a book each week. Include books about going to school. Some suggested titles are:
    - ▶ *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come*, by Nancy Carlson; Available in Spanish: *Preparate, Kindergarten! Alla voy!*
    - ▶ *Kindergarten ABC*, by Jacqueline Rogers
    - ▶ *The Kissing Hand*, by Audry Penn

#### **\*Parents Need to Know**

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- In Minnesota, each public school is part of a school district. The district you live in is called your “resident district.” Many school districts have a “Welcome Center,” “Family Information

Center,” or “New Families Center.” At the center, you can find out which schools your child may attend and how the school will provide transportation.

- You may request an interpreter and translated materials. You can also ask if there is a staff person who speaks your language.
- You may also want to learn about other school choice options, such as magnet and charter schools and open enrollment. Transportation may not be provided.
- Most children with an IEP will have the options all students have, including attending a neighborhood school within their attendance zone. Some children may have fewer school buildings to choose from because they need special programs most of the school day. The IEP team must find a school that can provide all the services and supports in the student's Individualized Education Program. Parents are part of the IEP team.

**Free materials for Minnesota families from PACER Center:** PACER.org; 952-838-9000; 1-800-537-2237

*Let's Talk and Let's Count! Activity Cards in Spanish, Somali, Hmong, and English*

*How to Prepare Your Child with Disabilities for Kindergarten: Tips for Parents* ACTION Sheet: PHP-c179

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