
COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN



Practitioner Engagement Calendar

At every meeting with a family, you can provide support. Many families need help with rent, food, physical and mental health, and child care. However, families also benefit from support with child development and school. The transition to kindergarten can be overwhelming. YOU and your organization can help! Be ready to use your touchpoints with families to provide guidance and support.

People often talk about “Kindergarten Readiness.” Many families think this phrase means schools will not accept children who are “not ready” for kindergarten. That’s not true! Public schools will welcome all 5-year-olds. You can reassure families that their child is ready to grow and learn in kindergarten.

Remind families children learn and grow at their own pace. Children will meet child development benchmarks at their own speed. Help families to understand that they impact their child’s growth and learning by creating loving relationships, having conversations, and engaging in play. Regardless of where children are developmentally, kindergarten teachers will meet students where they are.

You can use the talking points and activities in this calendar when you meet families preparing for kindergarten. The first part includes activities for any time of the year. The second part has activities for each calendar month. The goal is for families to hear similar messages on the same timeline throughout the community.

Child development tips in this calendar apply to all families. Some are developmentally appropriate for **3 to 5 year olds**. Others may



be too difficult for younger children and are best for the **year prior to kindergarten**. Color coding is used to suggest appropriate age levels. It is also used to highlight the **kindergarten transition process**.

Further, enrollment information focuses on JCPS. **If you or families have questions that cannot be easily answered with this calendar, contact the JCPS Call Center at 502-313-HELP (4357). Team members will connect you to the appropriate JCPS department or staff member. You can also email jcps.help@jefferson.kyschools.us.**

Finally, if families are interested in additional kindergarten options, this [resource](#) has information about other programs in the community. Many private and parochial schools have timelines and procedures that are similar to JCPS.

ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT TRANSITION AT ANYTIME

3 to 5 Years

- Encourage families to enroll their children in Metro United Way's [Ages and Stages Questionnaire Hub](#). Families can use this free developmental screening program anytime between birth and when their child enters kindergarten. They will learn more about their child's strengths as well as activities to help them continue to learn. They will receive questionnaires, resources, and a free book every 3 to 6 months.
- Have conversations with children when their adults are present. Model responsive interaction. Tell families that back-and-forth interaction builds young children's brains. Talking to children in any language helps their brains make important connections. Encourage families to talk with their children using the languages that are most comfortable.
- Encourage families to read with their child. Reading can happen anytime, anywhere. Consider having a reading spot in your space with books for families when they are visiting. Model reading with children and pause so they can ask questions or tell you what they see on each page.
- Encourage families to share nursery rhymes, poems, and songs with their children. Be sensitive to families' varying literacy levels; adults who have limited reading skills can share rhymes and sing songs with their children.
- Model for families how to talk with their children about books. Ask questions such as "What are they doing?" or "Where are they?" to encourage children to not just listen to the story, but to talk about it. Be sensitive to families' varying literacy levels; adults who have limited reading skills can interact with their children around the pictures in books.
- Connect families with community resources focused on reading and literacy.
 - The Louisville Free Public Library sponsors a [1000 Books Before Kindergarten Challenge](#).
 - Families with children age 0 to 5 in eligible zip codes can sign up for [Imagination Library of Louisville](#).
 - Additionally, all families can access the [Louisville Growing Readers digital library](#) including special Louisville books.



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ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT TRANSITION AT ANYTIME

Year Prior to Kindergarten

- Find out children's ages and help families determine when their children will be eligible for kindergarten. In Kentucky, children must turn five by August 1 to enroll for that school year. If children turn five between August 2 and October 1, JCPS families can apply for [early kindergarten admission](#) and screening between December 1 and March 1. Children must begin kindergarten by the time they are six.
- Make it a practice to learn families' preferred languages. Encourage families to ask for an interpreter when they are talking with JCPS school staff. JCPS has created [I Speak Cards](#) to support families in requesting interpreters.
- Encourage families to explore JCPS Ready4K resources. The [JCPS Checklist](#) is another resource which both practitioners and families can review to understand how all children are ready to grow and learn in kindergarten.

Kindergarten Transition Process

- If families have concerns about their child's development and are not receiving services, through programs such as [First Steps](#) or [JCPS Early Childhood](#), they may need assistance in accessing support. Additionally, families may need help in connecting with [JCPS Exceptional Child Education \(ECE\) Services](#). Families will follow the regular process for application but can contact ECE services if they believe their child may need additional support.
- If you are an early childhood provider, your Child Care Aware Quality Coach can provide additional information and support for your program on high-quality kindergarten transition plans.



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The following topics have been divided into an easy-to-implement calendar that you can use when you interact with families. There are suggestions related to the process of choosing a school, registering with JCPS, and applying for admission at families' preferred schools. Additionally, there are suggestions for activities that families can do to help their children grow and learn.

SEPTEMBER

11 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN



3 to 5 Years

- Routines are important! In classrooms, circle time, lunch, and recess are all routines that children will experience every day! These routines help children know what to expect and give them a sense of control. Families can set routines for meal times or bedtime to help children learn about routines.

Kindergarten Transition Process

- Talk to adults about school choice and encourage them to explore school options. The [JCPS School Finder website](#) is a good place to start. JCPS also offers [School Choice guides](#) for elementary, middle, and high school. These documents have been translated into Spanish, Arabic, Swahili, Nepali, and Somali. Families can also visit school websites and talk to friends and co-workers.
- The [JCPS Office of School Choice](#) has team members at events throughout the community to support families with school choice, registration, and application. (Registration involves setting up an online account with JCPS and verifying proof of address. Application is the process of requesting school choices.) Reach out if you are interested in having them attend an event that your organization or program is sponsoring.



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OCTOBER

10 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN



3 to 5 Years

- Encourage families to practice counting and talking about numbers. They can point out numbers in the environment or practice counting familiar objects. If possible, model for adults by counting the child's fingers.

Kindergarten Transition Process

- Encourage families to attend the [JCPS Showcase of Schools](#). They can talk to staff from different elementary schools and learn more about school choices available to their families. They can also learn about the processes for registering and applying to JCPS. Multilingual staff and interpreters are available to assist families at the Showcase of Schools.
- Talk to families about [registering with JCPS](#). All families with new kindergarteners must register online—even if the family already has older students attending school. If possible, offer to help families complete the online registration. Registration requires two steps:
 - 1) complete the online form: For Parent/Guardian and Child—name, date of birth, gender, phone number, and email address.
 - 2) submit proof of address: LGE or water bill, paycheck stub, signed lease or deed, or government agency correspondence. If families do not have a fixed address, they can contact the Office of Access and Opportunity at 502-485-3650. They may be eligible to have address verification waived.
- Once families register, they will have an account which they will use to submit their application in November. Remember, registration involves setting up an online account with JCPS and verifying proof of address. JCPS requests 24 to 48 hours to process registrations before families can submit an application - the process of requesting school choices.



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NOVEMBER

9 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN



Year Prior to Kindergarten

- Encourage families to talk to children about words and letters they see around them. Families can start with the letters in their child's name and add new letters once they have learned those. Talking about letters and words helps children learn that these symbols carry messages.

Kindergarten Transition Process

- Encourage families to learn more about schools that interest them. Most schools offer opportunities for prospective families to learn more including open houses and tours. The procedures for scheduling and types of offerings are different for each school. JCPS has created a [list of events](#) by level. Families may need to call the school office to schedule an individual appointment. Families can request an interpreter to assist them at JCPS events.
- Talk to families about the difference between registration and application. Registration involves setting up an online account with JCPS and verifying proof of address. Application is the process of identifying school choices and requesting those schools. During November, families can apply for their child's school. Encourage families to do this by the December deadline so that they have access to the schools that are the best fit for their child. If possible, offer to help families complete the online application or help them [schedule an application appointment with JCPS](#). Families can request an interpreter for their application appointment. If families have not registered online when they go to their appointment, they will have to schedule a second appointment for application.



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DECEMBER

8 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN



3 to 5 Years

- Homemade art makes treasured gifts. Children can work on drawing and signing their name. Model how to grip a pencil or marker. Encourage families to give their children chances to draw or write. Explain that what looks like scribbling to adults is an important learning opportunity for children.

Kindergarten Transition Process

- The application deadline for JCPS is in December. Ask families if they have applied. If they have not, encourage them to do so. If possible, provide a computer and assistance to help families complete their [application](#).



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JANUARY

7 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN



3 to 5 Years

- Winter means coats and hats! Talk to families about the importance of allowing their children to dress themselves. It may take a little longer, but it encourages their child to be more independent. Knowing how to button, zip, and put on clothing are helpful life skills.
- Model for families how they might talk with their children about colors and basic shapes. Simply asking and answering questions about colors and shapes in the world around them helps children build language and math skills. Games, like “I Spy” are another way to talk about colors and shapes.



FEBRUARY

6 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN

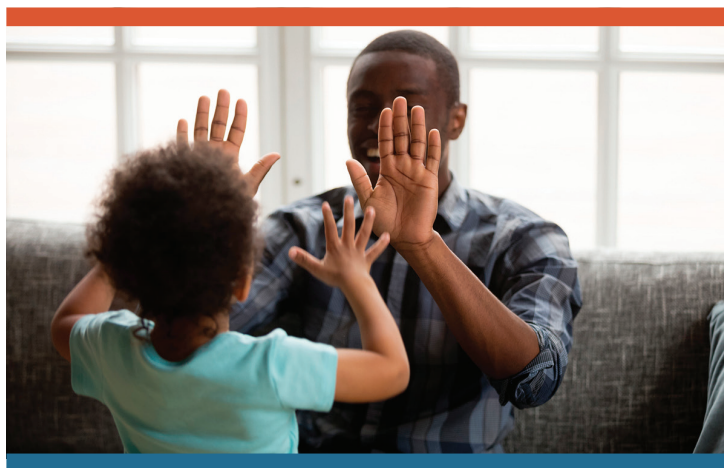


Year Prior to Kindergarten

- Encourage families to talk to their children about sounds. Tune in to everything from music to the sounds of birds or insects and from clapping to laughter. If possible, model talking about the sounds in your setting. Helping children distinguish between same and different sounds is an important early literacy skill.

Kindergarten Transition Process

- Talk to families about the importance of using feeling words. Children need words to talk about how they are feeling. Using words, such as mad, scared, excited, and nervous, can help children to understand their own feelings. Model using these words by sharing your own emotions as you interact with families. You may be excited or happy to see them!
- Encourage families to visit the library regularly. Storytime and other library activities are a great place to meet and talk to other children and families. All families can enjoy library programming. Families may be eligible for a library card with the [Louisville Free Public Library](#).



MARCH

5 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN



3 to 5 Years

- As spring begins, talk to families about movement and gross motor skills. Encourage families to get outside and hop, skip, and jump. Trips to the playground provide opportunities to climb steps and play on balance beams. These activities build children's muscles while improving their coordination and balance.

Kindergarten Transition Process

- Talk to families about the [health requirements for children entering kindergarten](#). Children need to have current immunizations, physical examinations, dental checkups, and eye examinations. Encourage families to make appointments early.
- JCPS screens incoming students who may qualify for English Learner services. Families can request screening up to six months before school starts. Encourage families to reach out to the [English as a Second Language \(ESL\)](#) department to schedule their child's screening.



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APRIL

4 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN



3 to 5 Years

- Talk to families about building independence at meal times. Children should be encouraged to feed themselves using a fork or spoon. Families can also teach their children to open packages. Real life motor work builds hand strength and helps children grow stronger.

Kindergarten Transition Process

- In April, families will learn their school assignment. Encourage adults to visit the school website and follow social media accounts to learn more about their child's school community. Families should watch for information from their individual schools about registration and welcome activities throughout the summer and early fall.
- Many schools host spring family engagement activities and will welcome their incoming kindergarten families. Encourage families to find out what is happening at their child's school and to attend events if possible. The more time children and families can spend in their new school, the more welcome they will feel.



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MAY

**3 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN**



Year Prior to Kindergarten

- When interacting with children, ask questions such as, “Where do you live?” and “What is your phone number?” Explain to families that in case of an emergency, their child is old enough to know this important information.
- Encourage families to read books about school. They can talk about how the characters are making friends and learning at school. Be sensitive to families’ varying literacy levels. If adults have limited reading and writing skills, they can still talk with their children about the pictures in books.

Kindergarten Transition Process

- Share information with families about JCPS Camp Ready4K—a summer camp to help welcome children into kindergarten. Registration typically occurs in early May. This program fills up quickly, so encourage families to register early.
- Encourage families to watch for information from their school about welcome events during the summer and early fall. Many schools will send mail or email to each family.



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SUMMER

2 MONTHS 'TIL
KINDERGARTEN



3 to 5 Years

- Many community organizations offer summer programming for families. Encourage families to engage in [LFPL's Summer Reading Program](#) or the [Louisville Cultural Pass](#).

Kindergarten Transition Process

- Encourage families to plan for back-to-school supplies such as backpacks and clothing. Many community partners host supply give-aways. Share information about events happening in your area.
- Encourage families to reach out to the [Family Resource Center \(FRC\) coordinator](#) at their school. The FRC can refer families to the JCPs Clothing Assistance Program (CAP) which can provide free uniforms, other clothing, and vision screening vouchers. If possible, call the school together and connect the family with their FRC coordinator.
- Encourage families to walk, ride, or drive by their child's school if possible. Point the building out to their child and talk about how much they are going to learn at school. These positive conversations can set the expectation that school and learning are important.



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AUGUST

**KINDERGARTEN
IS HERE!**



Kindergarten Transition Process

- Talk to families about the first day of school. Help them make a plan for routines such as laying out clothes the night before, packing backpacks, and how their child will be transported to school.
- Encourage families to participate in school events such as kindergarten camp, open house, meet the teacher, and other opportunities that will allow their family to visit the school.
- Many families qualify for free or reduced price meals at school. Talk to families about completing these [forms](#), so that their child can access these services at school. If possible, offer to help families complete and submit these online forms.



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SEPTEMBER

KINDERGARTEN IS HERE!



Kindergarten Transition Process

- Check in with families of new kindergarten students to see how school is going. Remember, transition does not end when school starts. It may take kindergarteners and their families several weeks to adjust to their new school and new routines.
- Encourage families to connect with their child's teacher early and often. Ask if they know how to contact their child's teacher and school office. Many schools use Google Classroom or apps such as Class Dojo(R) or School Messenger(R).



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