



# COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN

## Communication Toolkit



# INTRODUCTION

This toolkit has been co-designed in partnership with the **Ready for K Family and Caregiver Engagement Action Network**. The purpose of this document is to provide community partners with tools for different types of communication and social media engagement as it relates to the **Countdown to Kindergarten Practitioner and Family Calendars**.

All children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. The practitioner and family calendars consciously use inclusive language and move away from “kindergarten readiness” as a phrase. **Every child will learn at their own pace.** Local programs will meet children and their families where they are and create lessons that encourage growth and development. Instead of using the phrase, “Help your child get ready for kindergarten,” consider saying, “Use this information as you transition your child to kindergarten.” The change is subtle but switches from a sense that a child is not ready for kindergarten to the idea that they are going to kindergarten.



# OBJECTIVES

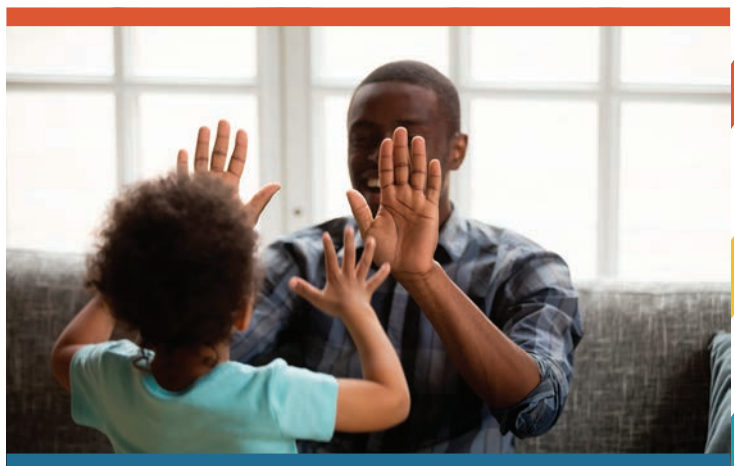
- Encourage families with children entering kindergarten to explore local resources and school choices.
- Support families as they navigate the kindergarten transition process: registration, application, and enrollment.
- Provide information about kindergarten transition to community practitioners, including childcare providers, who serve families.
- Create consistent messaging across the community related to kindergarten transition.

## Available Resources

- [Countdown to Kindergarten: Practitioner Engagement Calendar](#)
- [Countdown to Kindergarten: Family Engagement Calendar](#)
- Countdown to Kindergarten: Communication Toolkit
- [Ready for K Alliance web page with additional resources](#)
- [Metro United Way YouTube channel with Ready 4 K Alliance playlist](#)

## Communication Toolkit Assets

- Tips for Posting on social media
  - Sample Social Media Posts
  - Countdown to Kindergarten Hashtags
  - Tagging Partners
- Tips for Other Types Communication
  - Sample Blurbs for Newsletters and Emails
  - Graphics



TIPS FOR

# POSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is one way to reach families in places where they might already be engaged. Your organization can support consistent messaging around kindergarten transition using social media. Organizations will utilize social media differently. The following information is meant to help you determine the best use of social media for your needs.

## Think through the types of social media:

- Find out which social media accounts your organization has and who manages them.
- Find out which social media platforms your families and partners use. Do your families prefer text, photos, or video? Different platforms focus on different types of media.
- Be open to creating new social media accounts based on family preferences including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok.

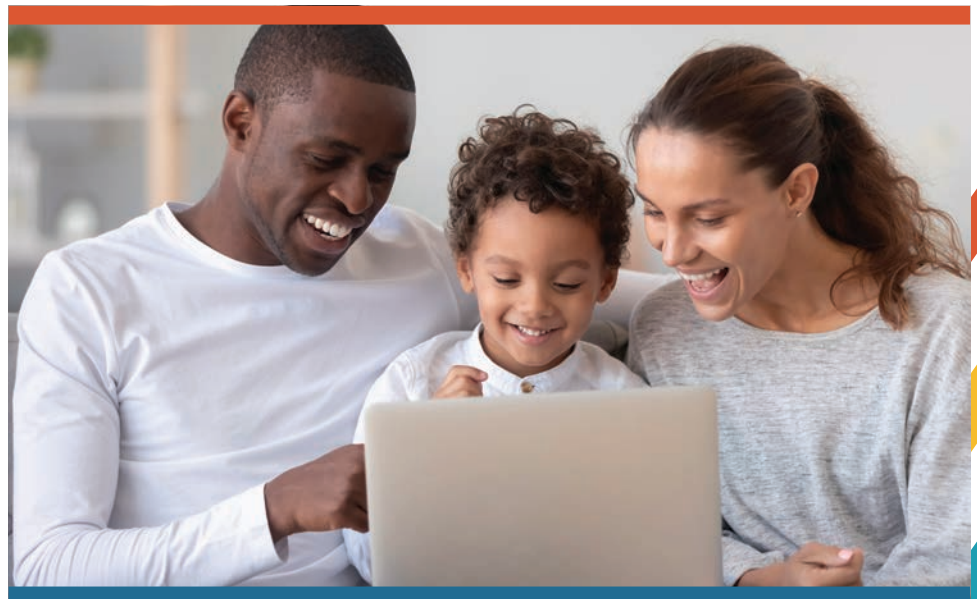
## Plan Posts:

- Social media visibility is dependent on how interesting each platform thinks your content is. Planning regular posts will keep your account visible on social media feeds.
- Determine your organization's capacity to post and share information. Is it hourly, daily, weekly, or biweekly? Will you post on a consistent day and at a consistent time?
- Planning regular posts will encourage families to look forward to new content.
  - "Talk About It Tuesday" could be used to share upcoming events and information on the kindergarten transition process.
  - On "Family Friday," you can share the family activities from the Countdown to Kindergarten: Family Engagement Calendar.



### Encourage Engagement:

- Accounts and groups with regular activity will have more interaction.
- It is important that you find ways to get likes, comments, and shares on your posts. This increases your original post's visibility to other users on the platform.
- Consider asking families to share videos, photos, or comments on social media posts:
  - "We Can Wednesday" posts might invite families to share photos or videos celebrating their child's learning.
  - "Sunday Fun-Day" posts can encourage families to share photos and videos of an activity they did from this month's calendar.



TIPS FOR

# POSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

## Sample Social Media Posts:

Consider the month and general time of year that your post will occur. You may want to create communication blurbs that remind families of general upcoming events, like the application process, or you may want to encourage families to remember that every child is ready for kindergarten.

Simply copy and paste from the Countdown to Kindergarten: Family Engagement Calendar for social media posts. Make sure that links still work when you copy content. You can also personalize by adding text before or after the calendar content that would catch the attention of families with which you work. In the samples below, original calendar content is in **boldtype**.

- Anytime to Introduce the Calendar: **Did you know your child is ready to learn anytime, anywhere? It's true. There are suggestions in this calendar for ways to help your child learn during the year. It also has information about how to register your child for kindergarten.**
- Anytime: In the car, on the bus, at the store, **say nursery rhymes or sing songs with your children: [Sing Simple Songs Family Activity](#). #WeAreReady4K #ListosParaKinder**
- November: Do you know what school you might like your child to attend for kindergarten? **Most schools have open houses or offer tours. You can see the school and meet staff. This is a great way to learn more about your school choices. Call the school to ask about open houses and tours. JCPS has a [list of events](#) for families interested in their schools. Families can request interpreters for JCPS events. #CountdownToK**



- February: This month, **use feeling words like happy, sad, mad, scared, and excited with your child. Children need words to talk about how they are feeling. You can also use feeling words for yourself when you are with your child. You might be excited to go somewhere or sad when it rains: [Expresses Own Needs and Wants Family Activity](#). #WeAreReady4K #ListosParaKinder**
- Summer: Countdown to Kindergarten, two months to go! **Your child will need back-to-school supplies such as a backpack and clothing. Find out what your child needs for their school. Look for the list on the school's website. Make a plan to get as much of it ready as possible. Many community partners host supply giveaways. #CountdownToK**



# TIPS FOR POSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

## Countdown to Kindergarten Hashtags

Hashtags in social media allow people to search and find related posts easily. When you use hashtags, it is important to capitalize the first letter in each new word for accessibility. The Family and Caregiver Engagement Action Network has selected these hashtags for the Countdown to Kindergarten initiative based on feedback from community partners:

- #WeAreReady4K
- #CountdownToK
- #ListosParaKinder (Spanish)

## Tagging Partners

One way to increase your audience is by tagging partners. Then your followers and their followers will also see the posts in their timeline. The table on the next page contains some partners and their social handles. Decide which ones are most appropriate for your post, audience, and platform.







Organization / Website	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	TikTok
<a href="#">MetroUnited Way</a>	@Metro United Way	@Metro United Way	@MetroUnited Way	@MetroUnited Way
<a href="#">National Center for Families Learning</a>	@FamiliesLearning	@NCFL	@FamiliesLearning	
<a href="#">La Casita Center</a>	@LaCasitaCenter	@LaCasitaCenter		
<a href="#">JCPS</a>	@JCPSKY	@JCPSKY	@JCPSKY	
<a href="#">JCPS Early Childhood</a>		@JCPSEARLY		
<a href="#">Play Cousins Collective</a>	@PlayCousinsCollective	@PlayCousins502	@PlayCousins_Collective	

# TIPS FOR OTHER TYPES OF COMMUNICATIONS

In addition to social media, there are many other ways that childcare providers, community practitioners, and organizations communicate with families. Your organization can support consistent messaging around kindergarten transition through your regular communication channels. The following information is meant to help you determine the best communication practices for your needs.

Think Through Types of Communication:

- What are your organization's established methods for regularly communicating with families?
- What communication method(s) do your families prefer using?
  - Email
  - Newsletters—paper or electronic
  - Flyers
  - Bulletin Boards
  - Videos
  - Phone Calls
  - Text Messaging Apps—such as WhatsApp and Remind.
- Be willing to explore new methods of communication to meet the changing needs of families with which you engage.





## Plan Communication:

- Plan communication that is clear and consistently scheduled, so families can access information at times that work for them.
- If your organization does not already have a communication plan, consider creating a daily, weekly, and monthly schedule for communicating about kindergarten transition with families.
- Remember when sharing information on upcoming events and kindergarten deadlines, families may need multiple reminders. Your organization may need to share similar information two or three times.
- Internal communication is also important. How will you share information with your organization's staff and volunteers? All team members should be prepared to talk to families with preschool-age children about the transition to kindergarten.
- Consider readability. Many documents are written at a high school reading level making them difficult for the average adult to read. There are a variety of computer tools and apps that can help you determine the reading level of documents. These tips can help reduce reading level:
  - Write in shorter sentences.
  - Use simpler words with fewer syllables.
  - Be repetitive. Use the same word instead of synonyms.
  - Avoid jargon or words from a specific field.
  - Avoid figurative language or expressions.
- Consider the languages spoken by the people you are trying to reach. Have documents translated into the top languages for your audience. Record videos in those languages as well. Remember that the Countdown to Kindergarten Calendars will be available in the following languages: Arabic, French, Kinyarwanda, Nepali, Somali, Spanish, and Swahili.

TIPS FOR

# OTHER TYPES OF COMMUNICATIONS

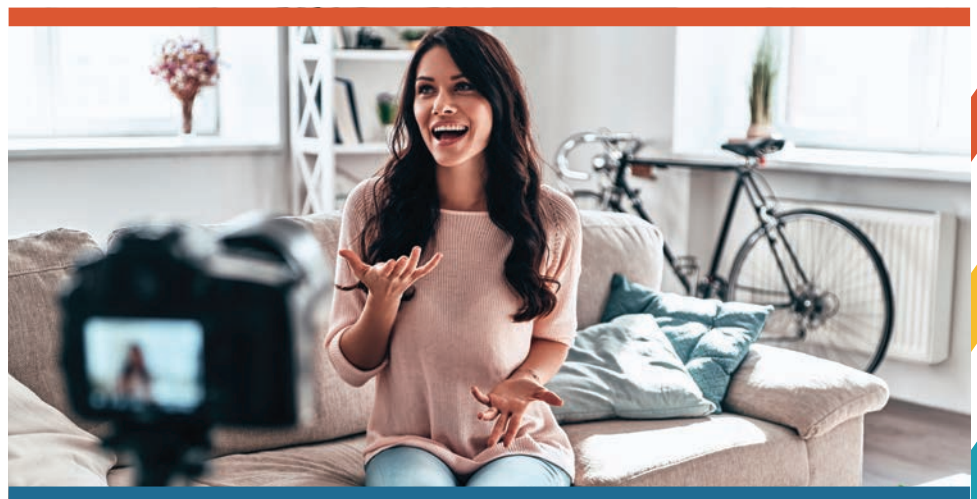
## Encourage Engagement:

- The most effective communication is two-way communication—a back-and-forth exchange. Two-way communication is easier with an in-person conversation, telephone call, or email because the other person can respond to you. However, you can encourage engagement with other types of communication.
- Quick response (QR) codes offer families the opportunity to use their mobile devices to scan and interact with different types of information. You may consider using a QR code on a bulletin board or flyer to encourage families to complete a form, sign up for an upcoming event, or to send an email to your organization. There are many free QR code generators available online.
- Surveys offer a way to get information and feedback from families. You might add a survey to your website or put a survey link in an email or e-newsletter. Consider using a survey to determine how many families have applied to kindergarten or are in need of back-to-school supplies.
- Embedded links can direct families to needed resources and information. The Countdown to Kindergarten Calendar is filled with links that you can include in your digital communication with families. Be sure to embed the links, rather than pasting the entire link, so that you are adding information without adding length to your message. You can use this [resource](#) to learn more about how to create embedded links in your communications.



## Create Videos:

- Short videos have become a popular way for people to share information. They eliminate literacy barriers. Additionally, they offer an authentic way to connect with families.
- There are a variety of apps that allow you to record and share video messages including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Flip (Flipgrid), and TikTok. Each app will provide a different way for families to engage with your initial message either by likes, comments, or through recorded videos.
- Tips for creating video content:
  - Outline or write what you want to say before recording.
  - Videos should be less than three minutes in length.
  - Look directly at the screen so that viewers can see your face and lips.
  - Use bright lighting that is in front of you rather than behind you.
  - Make sure there are few distractions in the space where you will be recording.
  - Use your mobile device or computer. Most have built-in microphones and cameras for recording.
  - Consider using hashtags and embedded links in your video descriptions.



## TIPS FOR

# OTHER TYPES OF COMMUNICATIONS

### Sample Blurbs for Newsletters and Emails

Consider the month and general time of year that your communication will occur. You may want to create communication blurbs that remind families of general upcoming events, like the application process, or you may want to encourage families to remember that every child is ready for kindergarten.

Simply copy and paste from the [Countdown to Kindergarten: Family Engagement Calendar](#) for communication. If you are using digital communication, make sure that links still work when you copy content. If you are using print communication, consider creating and adding QR codes so families can access the links. You can also personalize your messages by adding text before or after the calendar content that would catch the attention of families with which you work. In the samples below, original calendar content is in **bold type**.

If your organization has resources, such as access to computers and the Internet, you may consider adding a few sentences at the end of each email or newsletter letting families know how they might access the resources you have available to them.

- Sample December Blurb
  - Calling all families! Did you know that the application process for JCPS schools is closes soon? **Applying is when you select your top school choices for your child. Make sure to do this by December, so your child has the best chance to attend schools that are a good fit for them. The application deadline for JCPS is in December. Make sure your family has applied for the schools that best fit your child's needs!**
- Sample Spring Blurb
  - Ready for some spring flings? **Did you know that many schools host spring family activities and will welcome their incoming kindergarten families? Check the school's website for events and dates. The more time your child and family can spend in your new school, the more comfortable you will feel.**
- Sample August/September Blurb
  - Did your child start kindergarten this month? Way to go, you did it! **Remember, the first month of kindergarten may be fun and exciting. Celebrate your child as they do and learn new things. Don't worry if your child takes a few weeks to get used to waking up, getting ready for school, and going to school. You can help them by having set routines, getting plenty of sleep, and spending time together reading or playing.**



## Graphics

- Graphics make your communication more eye-catching and interesting for families. Graphics include photographs, drawings, and icons.
- Remember that families will need a variety of communication types including written text, videos, pictures, and graphics.
- A [graphics bundle](#) has been created as an additional resource for sharing specific information about the Countdown to Kindergarten Calendars. It includes the monthly banners and some icons that are used in the calendar.
  - By using these graphics on materials related to Countdown to Kindergarten, you help families make connections to information that they are seeing and hearing across the community.
  - Banners can be used to break up information on a digital or physical page. They help families see important information.
  - Icons can be used to fill in negative or white space in a document. Use icons that are related to the topic in your document. For example, you may use the snowflake when discussing winter month activities or the backpack when discussing back-to-school events.
- If you include additional images, consider the families that your organization engages. Choose images that reflect them. You can find diverse stock images for free online. You can also consider asking permission to use photos of the families you serve.



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