

Transition from Special Education Preschool Services to Kindergarten

The transition from Preschool Special Education Services to kindergarten can bring about many emotions for families and students. Feelings of excitement for the next step in your child's education as well as worry for what lies ahead are common. The information below will help you understand how to prepare for the upcoming transition to kindergarten.

Preparing and Planning

Contact your local school district or IEP case manager to ask about the kindergarten registration process. Some questions you could ask are: When is the registration deadline? What documentation do I need to register my child? What is my child's base school? (School placement could be different based on needs.) What types of specialized Special Education programs are available in my child's base school?

Gather information about your child that you may want to share with the IEP team and any other teachers, related service providers or support staff that will work with your child. You may want to consider sharing:

- Information on your child's strengths, challenges, what works, what doesn't, assistive technology, medical equipment, languages they use, etc.
- Evaluation reports, assessment information, IEP documents, progress reports, teacher notes, etc.
- Medical/therapy documentation such as diagnosis paperwork, private evaluations, therapy progress reports, medications, etc.
- You could organize your documents in a notebook. ECAC offers the CARE NOTEBOOK in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).



During the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Annual Review meeting that will be held prior to your child starting kindergarten, the team will discuss your child's needs for kindergarten, which could include reviewing evaluation data and family or teacher observations. The IEP Team, including you, will use this data to determine:

- Educational, functional, and social goals for your child.
- The type and amount, if any, of related services that are needed to reach those goals. Related services can include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychological services, parent counseling and training and more! You can see more information on related services [here](#).
- Additional supports may be needed to reach those goals, including assistive technology or other equipment.
- The type and amount of specially designed instruction that your child will need to achieve their goals.
- The learning environment that would best support your child. This is called the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Find more on Least Restrictive Environment [here](#).
- Your child's "placement." Placement refers to the amount of time in each school day that a student spends in the special education/resource or in a general education classroom.

Questions to ask yourself and the rest of the IEP team regarding your child's transition:

1. What might go well? (Ex. Is your child excited? Do they like to be around other kids?)
2. What might be challenging for my child?
3. What can be done ahead of time to make this transition go as smoothly as possible?
4. What support and services might help my child?

About a week prior to your child starting kindergarten, you could email teachers, related services providers, or other staff who will be working with your child to introduce yourself and your child. Share brief information on your child in a one-page document, or you can use ECAC's "Painting the Big Picture" tool from our website in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

How can families prepare their children?

- Practice academic, functional, and social skills – See ideas of things to work on [here](#) and [here](#)!
- Plan visits to the school virtually or in person. Attend open houses, summer events, play on the playground (with permission), drive or walk by and say "hi" to the school, etc.
- Explore your school's website, social media and YouTube channel to see pictures of the school, staff and/or welcome videos.
- Watch videos or read books to your child about going to kindergarten, and talk about what to expect and how they are feeling about going to kindergarten.
- Talk about and show pictures of the bus or other transportation that your child will use to get to and from school.



Where can I learn more?

Office of Early Learning: A Family's Guide to Supporting Kindergarten Readiness [Let's Get Ready! A Family's Guide to Supporting Kindergarten Readiness \(nc.gov\)](#)

Duke Children's Law Clinic: A Parent's Guide to Special Education in NC [Parents' guide.pdf \(duke.edu\)](#)

Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC) [www.ecac-parentcenter.org](#)

- ECAC Parent Educators, who are all parents of children with disabilities, can provide individualized support for families and professionals on various special education related topics. All services are provided to families at no cost.
- Contact a Parent Educator feature on our website: <https://www.ecac-parentcenter.org/contact-a-parent-educator/>
- Call **1-800-962-6817**
- Services are available in English and Spanish; other languages available upon request



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