

## Directory of Parent Guides

Introduction	Entry Into Kindergarten
Parent Guide #1	Is My Child Required to Attend Kindergarten?
Parent Guide #2	How Do I Know if My Child Is Ready for Kindergarten?
Parent Guide #3	How Do I Enroll My Child in Kindergarten?
Parent Guide #4	Early Entry Option for Kindergarten Enrollment
Parent Guide #5	What if My Child Has a Disability?
Parent Guide #6	Selecting Full or Half-Day Kindergarten, Which Is Best for My Child?
Parent Guide #7	How Will My Child Get to School?
Parent Guide #8	What Does a Great Kindergarten Program Look Like?
Parent Guide #9	What Will My Child Do in Kindergarten?
Parent Guide #10	Why Play in Kindergarten?
Parent Guide #11	What Will My Child Learn in Kindergarten? Reading and Math Success = Student Success
Parent Guide #12	What Will My Child Learn in Kindergarten? Student Success in Science, Technology, Social Studies, Nutrition and Health, Physical Education, the Arts, Careers, and for some, World Languages
Parent Guide #13	How Do I Know if My Child Is Learning?
Parent Guide #14	What if There Are Concerns About My Child's Development?
Parent Guide #15	What Is a 504 Plan for Children With Special Needs?
Parent Guide #16	What Can I Do at Home?
Parent Guide #17	How Can I Help My Child Become a Reader?
Parent Guide #18	How Can I Help My Child Ease Those First Day Jitters?

*Parent Guides were adapted from Terrific Transitions by the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the National Head Start Association.*

- Parent Guide #19      Are There Books to Read to Get My Child Ready for Kindergarten? (English, Spanish and Arabic)
- Parent Guide #20      How Can I Be Engaged With My Child's Education?
- Parent Guide #21      What About Communication?
- Parent Guide #22      What Do I Do if My Child Does Not Speak English?
- Parent Guide #23      What About Sharing My Family Culture?
- Parent Guide #24      Will My Child Benefit From an Extra Year of Kindergarten?

*Parent Guides were adapted from Terrific Transitions by the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the National Head Start Association.*

## Introduction: Entry Into Kindergarten

**The reason to get a child ready for kindergarten is so he/she has a good start with “the big school.” Kindergarten may be different from the way it was when you were a child.**

This time can be exciting and stressful for your whole family. Children ask where they will be going and what they will be doing. Parents have lots of questions too! Parents wonder if their child is ready for school. They wonder how their child will adjust to his/her teacher.

**Every child who is five years old on or before September 1 may go to kindergarten, free of charge\*.**

To prepare your child, you can partner with the adults or teachers who are in your child’s life now.

### **Benefits:**

#### ***For the child:***

- More confidence.
- Good contacts with other children and adults.
- A chance to learn new things.

#### ***For the parent:***

- More confidence that your child will succeed in school.
- Sense of pride and involvement in your child’s school.
- Feel respected as a partner in your child’s education.
- Sense of pride with what you have already taught your child.

The following series of *Parent Guides* were designed to help you. You are your child’s first and most important teacher. You can help make your child’s start into kindergarten successful.

***\*Please see Parent Guide #4 for information about an early entry option for kindergarten enrollment.***

## Is My Child Required to Attend Kindergarten? Parent Guide #1

In the state of Michigan, enrollment into kindergarten is not required, but it is strongly recommended because kindergarten continues the groundwork for school success. Children are required by law to be enrolled in a public or a nonpublic school by age six.

Your child does not have to take an entry test for kindergarten. If your child meets the age requirement, he or she is eligible to attend kindergarten in Michigan's public schools.

A child who is five years old on or before September 1 may enroll in Kindergarten.\*

If your child enters public school at age six without having completed kindergarten, he or she may be placed in the first program of study, and that is kindergarten.

Parent Guides #11 and #12 provide information about what is taught in kindergarten.

The kindergarten entry age requirement does not apply to nonpublic schools. Nonpublic schools may set their own enrollment policies and may choose different age cut off dates than public or charter schools. Please contact your local nonpublic school for a copy of their enrollment policies.

***\*Please see Parent Guide #4 for information about an early entry option for kindergarten enrollment.***

## How Do I Know if My Child Is Ready for Kindergarten? Parent Guide #2

**A child who is five years old on or before September 1 may enroll in kindergarten.\***

- Some children seem too young or not ready for school. Some families and teachers believe that getting older will help the child get ready for kindergarten. This is not always true; remember that children change a lot between May and September.
- Children grow and develop by learning from the world around them.
- New people and children help your child learn and grow.
- All children need time to talk about what they are doing with adults and other children.
- Kindergarten can help parents help their children at home.

### ***The Family***

Every child wants to feel safe and ready to succeed in school. Your family is the most important factor in supporting your child to achieve these feelings. Parent involvement improves your child's school success. It also helps your child feel good about himself or herself. Family support helps encourage your child to learn.

- Maintain a daily routine that includes mealtimes, snacks, and bedtimes.
- Be sure your child's shots and health check-ups are current.
- Make sure your child has plenty of play and outdoor time.
- Play with your child.
- Listen to your child.

- Talk to your child.
- Read to your child.
- Write with your child.

### ***The Schools***

Work with families and neighborhoods so children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

- Must be ready to teach children who come to school with different experiences of learning.
- Teach the material children need to learn for that grade level.

All young children can learn if they are given proper material, encouragement and family support.

***\*Please see Parent Guide #4 for information about an early entry option for kindergarten enrollment.***

## How Do I Enroll My Child In Kindergarten? Parent Guide #3

**A child who is five years old on or before September 1 may enroll in kindergarten.\***

- Most public school districts begin signing children up for kindergarten in early spring for the following fall.
- Contact your local school to find out the exact date.
- If you are interested in signing up your child in a district other than your own, contact that district to see if they are offering schools of choice enrollment for kindergarten and if so, what the deadline is for application.
- Be ready with names, addresses and phone numbers to fill out forms. Also bring contact information about your child's doctor.
- Check with your local school for what information they want you to bring.
- If you do not have all of the forms they want, you should still sign up your child for kindergarten. The staff can help you get any missing forms.
- If you are staying in a temporary place or have lost your housing recently, let your school know that when you sign up.
- When you sign up, let the school know if your child gets other services, such as speech therapy.

Here are some common papers needed to sign your child up for kindergarten.

- Proof of your child's age and identity (birth certificate) is required. Other proof of birth may be accepted (passport, hospital birth record, adoption record or baptismal certificate, etc.).
- Proof of where you live (driver's license, voter registration card, utility bill, rent statement, income tax return statement, or any official document showing both your name and address).
- Records of vaccination and immunization. You may contact your school to apply for a waiver, which is an exemption from vaccinations for religious or medical reasons. Current immunizations can be found at the [Michigan Care Improvement Registry](http://www.mcir.org) ([www.mcir.org](http://www.mcir.org)).
- Vision and hearing tests. Each child needs to have a hearing and vision test before starting kindergarten.

***\*Please see Parent Guide #4 for information about an early entry option for kindergarten enrollment.***

## Early Entry Option for Kindergarten Enrollment Parent Guide #4

Michigan law\* states that a child must be five years old on or before September 1 to enroll in kindergarten.

### ***Early Entry Option:***

With the change in the state law about when a child can enroll in kindergarten, some children may end up having to wait an extra year to attend. This concerned lawmakers. What if your child's birthday causes him or her to just miss being able to enroll? That's where the "early entry option" comes in.

If your child is not five years old by September 1, but will be five years old on or before December 1, and you wish to enroll him or her in kindergarten the school year BEFORE he or she would now be age eligible to enroll, you must notify the school district of your plan.

Once a school district receives notice of the desire by parents to enroll their child who just misses the age cut-off, they consider the request. They may talk with you about your child's readiness for school, and about the kinds of things that children will be expected to do and learn in kindergarten. They may also recommend whether or not your child should be enrolled early. Regardless of what they recommend, you make the final decision about whether or not to enroll your child in kindergarten.

\*The section of the Revised School Code that addresses this issue is contained in the Michigan Compiled Laws under MCL 380.1147.

## What If My Child Has a Disability? Parent Guide #5

A kindergarten class should support ALL children.

- For children with special needs, there is a federal law called the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act" (IDEA).
- There are also Michigan regulations called "Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education."
- Both of these are about the rights of children with special needs and their families.
- For more information on IDEA, please visit the [U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html) ([www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html)).
- School districts are required to teach children with special needs in regular classes whenever possible. Sometimes supports and services are needed for this to happen.
- When ALL children learn together, they ALL benefit.
- A child with a special need may not need to work at the same grade level as the other children. He/she may not need to behave like the other children in class either.

All services, supports, and goals for a child receiving special education services are developed by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.

- IDEA requires that the IEP tell what supports, programs and services are provided to the child.
- The IEP will also include the amount of time the child will spend in the regular class.
- Parents are members of the IEP team.

During spring before your child's kindergarten school year, you begin to get ready.

- A team should be created that includes parents, adults and teachers who are important in your child's life.
- The team should focus on **the strengths and needs** of your child.
- The team should set goals and timelines for each service and support.

Other questions you may have:

- Does the staff need any training to work with your child?
- What is the rule on parent visits?
- Does your child take any pills or medicine?
- Does your child need specialized equipment?
- Do you have any concerns?
- Does your child have any movement needs?
- Does your child have a special diet?
- Do you have any social concerns?
- Does your child need specialized transportation?
- Does your child need assistive technology?
- What do you want from parent-teacher communication?
- Does your child need changes to the classroom itself or the teaching material?

Parents should receive a brochure about their rights. This will explain how your child's transition should be handled by your school district. You may request a parent handbook from your school.



## Selecting Full or Half-Day Kindergarten, Which Is Best for My Child? Parent Guide #6

**A child who is five years old on or before September 1 may enroll in kindergarten.\***

This program does not have to be traditional kindergarten. For example, five year olds may be served in a mixed age classroom with other children. Programming for five year olds must be available for at least one-half of the hours of the other grades.

**Districts may choose different schedules.**

- Morning or afternoon sessions
- Full-day sessions
- Alternate full-day sessions

Over time, most school districts in Michigan have decided to offer full day, every day sessions for kindergarten. This allows children more learning time.

Regardless if your child is in full day kindergarten or a part-day session with connecting child care, you will want to assure yourself that the settings provide lots of experiences for active play and learning suited to the child, along with ample opportunities to rest and relax.

**Some schools offer before- and after-school child care. There is usually a cost. The benefit is that the child can stay in one place for the whole day.**

- Schools may have limited openings in their full-day choice of kindergarten with connecting child care.
- A child care license from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) should be displayed in the classroom or office when before-or after-school care is in place.

**Schools cannot require fees or payment for kindergarten. They may charge a fee for that part of the day which is considered before- or after-school child care.**

***\*Please see Parent Guide #4 for information about an early entry option for kindergarten enrollment.***

## How Will My Child Get to School? Parent Guide #7

### **Getting to school safely is important!**

- Call the school if your child is going to be absent.
- Make sure the school has phone numbers where you can be reached.
- Teach your child how to contact you and keep that information in his/her backpack.
- Let your child know who you have chosen as emergency contacts.

### ***When your child rides the bus:***

Children of all ages may ride the bus at the same time. There are no laws related to the amount of time K-12 children may ride a school bus.

### ***Information for parents:***

- For safety, some schools provide home pick-up and drop-off for kindergartners. (This is not required.)
- Seat belts may or may not be provided. The law does not require them.
- Learn the bus schedule (both ways) for your child.
- Find out how you will know about school closings or changes in the schedule.
- Talk to the teacher and bus driver about any health issues or special traveling instructions for your child.
- If your child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), you will want to make sure all transportation needs are clearly defined.

### ***If your child rides the bus, share these safety tips:***

- Stand a safe distance away from the curb while waiting for the bus.
- Sit in your seat facing the front of the bus and listen to the bus driver.
- Remain in your seat until the bus comes to a complete stop.
- When getting on or off the bus, look both ways to make sure no cars are coming.

### ***If you drive your child to school:***

- Buckle up! The National Highway Safety Transportation Administration recommends children weighing 40-80 pounds sit in booster seats.
- Have your child sit in the back seat to protect him/her from injury from airbag operation.
- Take off the backpack before buckling up. (When children wear their backpacks, they do not receive the proper head support in case of an accident.)
- Arrange with someone to pick up your child if you are not able to pick up your child on time.
- Wear your seatbelt! It's a great example.
- Learn the school expectations for drop off and pick up.

### ***If your child will be walking to school, teach him or her to:***

- Always walk with friends.
- Stay on the sidewalk and NO shortcuts.
- Cross the street safely.
- Follow the direction of the crossing guard and school safety patrol.

## What Does A Great Kindergarten Program Look Like? Parent Guide #8

**Kindergarten continues the learning that begins at birth. Kindergartners need to have materials that are fun and exciting.**

This may be the first time your child goes to school.

### ***Some things to look for in a kindergarten program:***

- Children have a program that is appropriate. This means teaching and materials make sense for the age and needs of all children.
  - The number of children to adults is small. This allows the adults to know a child's abilities and needs.
  - Children and parents feel welcomed into the class.
  - Children have a class program that supports the needs and abilities for all children.
  - Children learn in both large and small groups.
  - Children make choices and decisions. Children are supported to start activities.
  - Children have both quiet and active times in the program.
  - Children have plenty of supplies and materials. There are enough available for the number of children in the class.
  - The teacher smiles and is friendly to all the children and parents. The room feels safe, warm and caring. The whole school feels cheerful and safe.
- The teacher talks with children using a soft or comfortable voice. When the teacher talks to a child she/he gets down to his/her eye level.
  - The teacher respects the differences among families and supports the sharing of family cultures.
  - The teacher supports parent engagement in the class and parents' engagement with their own children's learning.
  - Sometimes children listen to the teacher's lessons. Other times the children select where and how they want to spend their learning time.
  - The teacher shares with parents what is happening at school. The teacher and family work together to solve problems.
  - The room is clean, orderly and welcoming.
  - The teacher manages regular childhood behaviors, like sharing and taking turns, so children feel safe and included.
  - The adults in the school have helped children practice safety drills. Adults and children know what to do in case of an emergency.

## What Will My Child Do In Kindergarten? Parent Guide #9

**If your child has gone to a preschool or child care center, kindergarten could be a “big change.”**

- The kindergarten program will be more formal than preschool. Schools today have more teaching time to meet certain goals.
- Local schools are allowed to choose programs that meet those goals for learning. Schools also choose the daily routine in kindergarten.
- The state of Michigan has goals for what children should have learned by the end of the kindergarten year.

***Ask your child’s teacher to share the kindergarten daily routine with you. Then you can talk with your child about parts of the day, such as:***

- Large and small group time.
- Time for children to work alone on projects or in “centers” around the room.
- Snack time.
- Lunch in the cafeteria.
- Active and quiet activities.
- Extra classes such as gym, music, art, library and computers.

**No matter what the kindergarten routine looks like, the most important thing is the variety and types of learning opportunities.**

- Good teachers know that kindergartners need lots of learning opportunities. Activities in typical subject areas are blended with social/emotional and physical development experiences.
- By talking with the teacher, you can learn about what your child is doing. This is important during changes as you work together to help your child adjust.
- When this works, your child looks forward to school each day!

***Growing up - Changes from the preschool years. Differences your child may experience in the classroom:***

- More structured time and more teacher-directed activities.
- More group projects and less free play.
- More inside activities, less outside time.
- More writing letters and numbers.
- More school-wide rules.
- More children in the class.

## Why Play in Kindergarten? Parent Guide #10

**There are many ways to learn. Children and adults learn best when they are encouraged and interested.**

Many years of research shows that play is more than just fun and games.

***Play boosts strong growth in many areas, including:***

- **Mental:** There is a close link between play and strong brain growth. It lays the groundwork for later school success in reading and writing. It provides experiences that help children develop.
- **Social:** Play is important for the imagination. It also helps to develop creative problem-solving skills.
- **Emotional:** Make-believe play improves teamwork and compassion. It also helps children learn to control their behaviors.
- **Physical:** The rough and tumble of active play helps children's muscles develop and brains grow.

***Play has other benefits for learning:***

- Most kindergartners are not ready to sit and listen for long periods of time.
- Research shows play works better when the teacher uses the child's strengths and interests. The teacher can then provide chances to learn through experience.
- A young child's play is his/her work. A kindergarten classroom should be filled with chances to learn through play.
- Children love school when the teacher supports their learning both in and out of class and when their parents are interested in their school day.

## What Will My Child Learn in Kindergarten? Reading and Math Success = Student Success Parent Guide #11

When a child enters a kindergarten class for the first time, he or she continues the learning that began at birth. Just like his/her first years of life, in school there are skills like reading and simple math concepts he/she will need to develop before other skills can follow.

As your child's first teacher, you can help ensure your child's success. You can watch his/her progress. You can also support learning at home.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) guides each school in what should be taught for each subject or area. The [list for most subject areas](#) can be found at [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753\\_64839\\_38684---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_64839_38684---,00.html).

The [Career and College Ready Standards](#) (<http://www.michiganccr.org>) guide what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade in math and English language arts.

For children beginning to learn English, Michigan adopted [national standards](#) (<https://www.wida.us/standards/eld.a.spx>).

*What should my child learn in each grade?*

**Parent** resources are linked at the Career and College Ready website and

include "Roadmaps" developed for each grade level in math and English language arts by the Council of the Great City Schools. There is also a link to the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) parent guides that show what is expected at each grade level in math and English language arts.

*The PTA has created parent guides that show what the Common Core State Standards expect for each grade level. The guide for [kindergarten](#) can be found at [http://pta.org/files/2012\\_NPTA\\_PG-Kindergarten.pdf](http://pta.org/files/2012_NPTA_PG-Kindergarten.pdf).*

### **Parents can use guides to:**

- Learn what their child should know and be able to do at the end of each school year.
- Ask how this information will be taught in school.
- Talk about their child's progress.
- Look at ways they can support their child's learning.
- Ask for things their child can do at home to support what is being taught in class.

Remember...children grow and learn at different rates. You and your child's teacher will be able to talk about any concerns you have related to your child's learning.

**See Parent Guide #12 for other subjects your child will learn in school.**

## **What Will My Child Learn in Kindergarten? Student Success in Science, Technology, Social Studies, Nutrition and Health, Physical Education, the Arts, Careers and, for some, World Languages Parent Guide #12**

The Michigan Department of Education guides schools in what should be taught for each subject or area. The [list for all subject areas](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_64839_38684---,00.html) can be found at [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753\\_64839\\_38684---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_64839_38684---,00.html).

### ***Science***

Michigan has adopted the Next Generation Science Standards that were developed by the National Academy of Science.

### ***Technology***

Technology changes rapidly, and therefore, kindergarten students are exposed to digital tools and their uses.

### ***Social Studies***

At this age, children learn history, geography, civics, and other Social Studies concepts through the context of "Myself and Others."

### ***Nutrition and Health***

Schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students and staff are not physically, mentally, and socially healthy. Health Education addresses the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of health.

### ***Physical Education***

A child's intellectual growth cannot take place without having met his or her basic physical needs. The curriculum for every child's preschool through high school experience should include the opportunity to participate in quality physical education programs and other health-enhancing physical activity.

### ***The Arts***

Research shows students with an education in the Arts outperform others by virtually every measure. Michigan guides schools in ways to promote kindergarten student learning in Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater.

### ***World Languages***

Some schools will begin teaching a language other than English during the kindergarten year. These "immersion" programs use national principles of language acquisition adopted by the Michigan Department of Education.

***See Parent Guide #11 for what your child will learn related to math and reading.***

## How Do I Know if My Child Is Learning? Parent Guide #13

Parents wonder if their child is learning, can use his or her knowledge to solve problems, and is maturing socially and emotionally.

- Parents get information from a variety of sources. They ask for the thoughts of teachers, child care workers, and doctors. They listen to other parents' stories about the progress their child is making. They also look at any assessments (reviews) that have been completed for their child.
- There are different ways to assess students.
- There are also different reasons that children are assessed.
- Some assessments compare your child's performance to that of other children. This gives you an idea of how well your child is doing compared to others of the same age.
- Other assessments show if your child has mastered the skill being checked.

*Each of the following methods can help determine your child's strengths as well as needs. The best approach is to use many ways of determining what your child knows and can do.*

### **Reasons for Assessing Children**

- A child assessment helps the teacher plan class activities. Sometimes child assessment scores for all children in a classroom are used together to find out if the teacher is doing a good job.
- A developmental screening helps a teacher find out if your child might need more help.

- A language screening for children whose first language is not English will help teachers plan for their learning and for supports.

### **Types of Assessments**

- **Informal assessment:** Some teachers have their own way of measuring what children know and can do. These are based on their experience and are not always accurate.
- **Formal assessment:** Other teachers use assessment tools that have been created by experts in child growth and learning. These tools have often been studied to show that they are accurate.

### **Ways of Assessing Children**

- **Observation:** One of the best ways to find out what children know is to closely watch them play. Teachers use an assessment tool to interpret the play and plan what to do for your child's learning.
- **Parent input:** Teachers may also ask parents what their child does at home; this will help the teacher learn how the child acts in different places and with different people.
- **Testing:** Some assessments require teachers to ask children to answer questions or do a task.

### ***Results of screenings or assessments should not be used to hold a child out of kindergarten.***

- Formal educational programs, if set up to meet the developmental needs of children, are the best way to prepare for later success in school.
- Your child has a right to attend kindergarten if he/she turns



five by the cut-off date noted in Parent Guide #1.

- Once school begins, your child may be assessed on an on-going basis in the classroom for the reasons listed above.
- Language screening will be done for all children whose parents note that their child is an English language learner.
- Many school districts will begin to use the State of Michigan's Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) over the next few years. This assessment was selected to provide the state with information about what children know when they enter kindergarten. It will be completed early in the school year and must not be used to remove children from kindergarten classrooms.
- Ask the teacher about results of all assessments. Expect to be included in the goal-setting and planning for your child. Discuss your child's progress with the teacher.

## What if There Are Concerns About My Child's Development? Parent Guide #14

### When you have concerns about your child's growth and learning:

- Discuss your concerns with your child's doctor. Talk with people who know or work with your child (family, child care providers, and teachers).
- If you still have concerns about your child's development (social, emotional, educational, and behavioral), talk with the building principal.
- If you think your concerns are affecting your child at school, then you can ask for a complete evaluation. Submit your request for an evaluation to the building principal, teacher or other staff person.
- Within ten days of receiving your written request, the district will notify you and ask for consent to evaluate your child.
- The notice will explain why an evaluation is proposed, describe the assessment, and give you a description of the types of special education programs and services that may be available.
- Within 30 school days (after consent is given) your child will be evaluated. There will be an evaluation team assembled and an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting will be held. The IEP team, that includes you, will determine if your child qualifies for special services.
- If the team cannot determine from the evaluation that a disability is impacting your child's education, then the district will notify you in writing and provide you with information about your rights. Ask a staff person at your child's school about this process if you don't

understand the information. Or, if you disagree with the IEP team's decision, you may also request, in writing, an independent evaluation.

- The evaluation will remain in your child's school file. The information included in the evaluation can help your child's teacher understand your child's needs.
- If your child qualifies for special services, an IEP is developed.
- Remember, you are part of your child's team, and your child's individualized plan should be based on his/her strengths and interests.
- Always make regular contact with your child's teacher and discuss his/her progress. Working closely with the teacher as a partner is the best plan for having the best educational experience for your child.

**For more detailed information on your rights or the process contact:**  
[Michigan's National Parent Training and Information Center](http://www.parentcenternetwork.org)  
([www.parentcenternetwork.org](http://www.parentcenternetwork.org))

[Michigan Alliance for Families](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org)  
([www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org))  
The Arc Michigan  
1325 S. Washington Avenue  
Lansing, MI 48910  
(800) 552-4821

[Build Up Michigan](http://www.buildupmi.org) ([www.buildupmi.org](http://www.buildupmi.org))  
240 S. Bridge Street, Suite 250  
DeWitt, MI 48820

## What Is a 504 Plan for Students With Disabilities? Parent Guide #15

**If your child has a physical or mental disability, she/he may be eligible for a 504 plan.**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is the civil rights law that does not allow discrimination on the basis of disability; and guarantees individuals with disabilities equal access to an education.

### **What is a 504 plan?**

A 504 plan is a written plan created for students with disabilities who require support in order to be successful in the classroom. A 504 plan **is not** an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and is not special education.

### ***An eligible person/student is any person who:***

- has a physical or mental disability which limits a major life activity (such as learning, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, speaking, hearing and working); and has a record of such impairment; or
- is regarded as having such an impairment; and
- is in preschool, elementary, and adult education programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance.

### ***What accommodations are considered appropriate under Section 504?***

- Education in typical classroom settings.
- Education in typical classrooms with supplementary services, modifications and/or accommodations.
- Any combination of the above.

### ***Parents, teachers, adult-aged students, other staff, or community agencies can request a review for Section 504 eligibility determination.***

- Submit a written request to the school asking for an evaluation to determine if there is a significant impact on the child's learning and/or behavior.
- Request a copy of your school's policies and procedures on Section 504.
- A 504 committee could include parents, teachers, social workers, Section 504 coordinator, school psychologist, school administrator or others with knowledge of the child, the evaluations and the school resources.
- This committee determines student eligibility and needs based on information gathered from a variety of sources.
- An accommodation plan is written to address the individual needs of the eligible student.
- Plans are reviewed periodically (generally on a yearly basis).

- A plan may be terminated; once an evaluation has been completed and the 504 committee determines, based on the information gathered from a variety of sources, that the student no longer has a substantial limitation to a major life activity.
- 504 plans and termination documentation become part of the student's school records.

**Note:** Students in Special Education are covered by the protections of Section 504. For more information on the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including a 504 plan, please view [A Guide to Disability Rights Laws](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cguide.htm) (<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cguide.htm>).

## What Can I Do at Home? Parent Guide #16

**As your child's first teacher you have a key role. You can help your child prepare for school and life success.**

*The quantity and quality of time you spend with your child matters. You can do some things to help your child be better prepared for school while having fun.*

- **READ every day.** Share your love of books with your child. Research shows there are benefits from reading to your child for 30 minutes a day. It does not have to be done all at once.
- **TALK and LISTEN.** When you talk and listen with your child, he/she builds language and learns needed skills.
- **WORDS. Use as many words as possible to describe things in your child's world.** The number of words your child knows relates to his/her later reading success. Don't use 'baby talk.' If your child makes mistakes in grammar, repeat the word correctly.
- **RESPECT.** Be respectful with your child and others. Your child learns from watching you. Make sure your actions are ones you want your child to repeat.
- **PLAY with your children.** Let them see you as a playful person. Remember that play *is* a child's work. Children solve problems and learn new skills through play.
- **HELP your child see herself/himself as a capable person.** Help build self-esteem by pointing out all the things your child does 'right.' Make an effort to look for the good in your child. Help your child see how wonderful she/he is.
- **COOK with your child.** Measure, pour, stir, read the recipe, clean up, and eat with your child. Cooking activities are good ways to work small muscles. These muscles are used later to write.
- **COLOR and draw with your child.** This will improve his or her fine motor skills and help prepare the muscles in the fingers for writing.

**ASK for help.** If you are concerned about your child's development in any area, and he or she is under the age of three, call 1-800-*Early On*. If your child is over the age of three, contact [Build Up Michigan](http://buildupmi.org) (<http://buildupmi.org>), your local school district, or the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education, at 1-888-320-8384.

## How Can I Help My Child Become a Reader? Parent Guide #17

**Learning to read and write is important to a child's success in school and life. Often the subject of reading gets all the attention. It's important to know that reading involves more than just sitting down with a good book.**

*To help a child become a good reader, he/she must be exposed to all the areas of literacy. Reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing are all key parts to helping children master and love reading.*

- Speak to your child every day. Use many words to share your thoughts and ideas. The number of words children know makes a difference in learning to read.
- Listen to what your child has to say. If you listen well, your child will talk more. Sometimes it takes a long time to put words together to tell a story, so be patient.
- Write down a story your child tells you and read it out loud together. Ask your child to draw pictures that go with the words.
- Introduce your children to their written names. Help them learn to write their names with upper and lowercase letters.
- Let your child see you enjoy reading. Often children love when we read to them. Read the newspaper, magazines, advertisements, and mail aloud.
- Sing with your child. Words are repeated in songs so singing is a wonderful way to learn words and hear rhymes.
- Make up stories about your child's daily activities. Use your

child as a character in the story. Children love to hear about themselves and their own adventures. They can be real or make believe. Have your child add details to the story.

- Have paper and writing tools available. Be an example by modeling writing throughout the day (letters, shopping lists, to-do lists, etc.). Know that your child's first scribbles and pictures are writing experiences. Have your child read his/her writing to you.

***Read to your child every day! Research shows that reading 30 minutes each day with your child will help her/him become a better reader.***

- Encourage your child to read to you. All children can share what they know about reading by telling a story and reading pictures.
- Help your child understand important book concepts. Point out the title, front of the book, author, illustrator, back of the book, pictures, words on a page and punctuation.
- When you read, explain that the words on a page are read from left to right. You may want to move your finger over the words as you read them.
- Before you turn to the next page, ask your child to predict what might happen. Give plenty of time to think about the possibilities before you give adult answers.

### ***Reading to your child – continued***

- Ask your child to help you read the words that repeat on his/her favorite pages. Read with different voices for the characters. Encourage your child to do the same.
- Notice your child's skills at reading signs in his/her surroundings. Labels, milk cartons, pictures on cereal boxes, stop signs, and store signs are a great place to start.
- Reading the same story over is good for your child. Children love to hear their old favorites over and over again.
- Children will watch your face for excitement or surprise about the story. Your voice will show that you love reading with your child.
- You have always been your child's first teacher. Keep up the good work.

## How Can I Help My Child Ease Those First Day Jitters? Parent Guide #18

### ***Positive attitudes go a long way.***

- Your child will feel your confidence in his/her ability to succeed.
- Your child is influenced by the things you say and do. He/she also sees the feelings you show.
- It is important that you are happy and excited about your child starting kindergarten. Your child will follow your lead.
- There are many good books to read together to get ready for the first day of school.

### ***Breakfast is fuel for your child's body.***

A good way for your child to have energy through the day is to give him/her a healthy breakfast. This meal is important because your child's body needs the "fuel" to get going in the morning. Numerous studies show that children who eat breakfast daily have better school records and better attitudes. The fuel gained from a healthy breakfast also helps with memory.

### ***Choices are empowering.***

Let your child make choices about school clothes, food and school supplies. This can help him/her feel more confident and in control. This also increases his/her independence skills.

### ***Morning rush hour can be avoided.***

- Waking up with enough time to get ready for school makes your home more relaxed. This helps

your child feel more comfortable.

- Setting out clothes and supplies the night before works well for many families.

### ***Saying goodbye is better than the "disappearing act."***

- Leaving your child that first day might be difficult. Studies show that a loving but firm goodbye is the best way to go.
- Comfort him/her and let him/her know the next time he/she will see you. Don't make your child feel awkward when he/she is upset to see you go.
- The teacher can help with good ideas before the first day of school.



## Are There Books to Read to Get My Child Ready for Kindergarten? Parent Guide #19

*Here are some great books that are fun. They can help your child be aware of the kindergarten routines:*

### [Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Kindergarten-But Didn't Know Who to Ask](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0590936026/qid=1126148286/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books)

([http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0590936026/qid=1126148286/sr=1-1/ref=sr\\_1\\_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0590936026/qid=1126148286/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books))

Ellen Booth Church

### [First Day of School](http://www.amazon.com/dp/006050191X/ref=rdr_ext_tmb)

([http://www.amazon.com/dp/006050191X/ref=rdr\\_ext\\_tmb](http://www.amazon.com/dp/006050191X/ref=rdr_ext_tmb))  
Anne F. Rockwell

### [Get Set for Kindergarten!](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Get+Set+for+Kindergarten%2C+Rosemary+Wells&rh=n%3A283155%252)

([http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Get+Set+for+Kindergarten%2C+Rosemary+Wells&rh=n%3A283155%252](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Get+Set+for+Kindergarten%2C+Rosemary+Wells&rh=n%3A283155%252))

Rosemary Wells

Series includes six books: Adding It Up, Letters and Sounds, How Many?, Discover and Explore, Ready to Read, The World Around Us

### [The Kissing Hand](http://www.amazon.com/Kissing-Hand-CD-Audio/dp/0756992990/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1360701137&sr=1-1&keywords=the+kissing+hand)

([http://www.amazon.com/Kissing-Hand-CD-Audio/dp/0756992990/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1360701137&sr=1-1&keywords=the+kissing+hand](http://www.amazon.com/Kissing-Hand-CD-Audio/dp/0756992990/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1360701137&sr=1-1&keywords=the+kissing+hand))

Audrey Penn

### [Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come! \(Picture Puffins\)](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0140568387/qid=1126148954/sr=2-1/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books)

([http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0140568387/qid=1126148954/sr=2-1/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_b\\_2\\_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0140568387/qid=1126148954/sr=2-1/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books))

Nancy L. Carlson

### [Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten](http://www.amazon.com/Miss-Bindergarten-Ready-Kindergarten-Books/dp/0140562737)

(<http://www.amazon.com/Miss-Bindergarten-Ready-Kindergarten-Books/dp/0140562737>)

Joseph Slate, Author and Ashley Wolff, Illustrator

### [Mom, It's My First Day of Kindergarten!](http://www.amazon.com/Mom-Its-First-Day-Kindergarten/dp/0374350043)

(<http://www.amazon.com/Mom-Its-First-Day-Kindergarten/dp/0374350043>)

Hyewon Yum



UPDATED MAY 2015

**[The Night Before Kindergarten](http://www.amazon.com/Night-Before-Kindergarten-Natasha-Wing/dp/0448425009/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1364991398&sr=1-1&keywords=the+night+before+kindergarten+by+natasha+wing)** ([http://www.amazon.com/Night-Before-Kindergarten-Natasha-Wing/dp/0448425009/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1364991398&sr=1-1&keywords=the+night+before+kindergarten+by+natasha+wing](http://www.amazon.com/Night-Before-Kindergarten-Natasha-Wing/dp/0448425009/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1364991398&sr=1-1&keywords=the+night+before+kindergarten+by+natasha+wing))  
Natasha Wing and Julie Durrell

**[Seven Little Mice Go to School](http://www.amazon.com/Seven-Little-Mice-Go-School/dp/0735840121/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1359492687&sr=1-2-fkmr0&keywords=Seven+Little+Mice+Go+to+School+by+Haruo+Yamashita)** ([http://www.amazon.com/Seven-Little-Mice-Go-School/dp/0735840121/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr0\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1359492687&sr=1-2-fkmr0&keywords=Seven+Little+Mice+Go+to+School+by+Haruo+Yamashita](http://www.amazon.com/Seven-Little-Mice-Go-School/dp/0735840121/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1359492687&sr=1-2-fkmr0&keywords=Seven+Little+Mice+Go+to+School+by+Haruo+Yamashita))  
Haruo Yamashita

**[Tiptoe Into Kindergarten](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0439485924/qid=1126148717/sr=2-1/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books)** ([http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0439485924/qid=1126148717/sr=2-1/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_b\\_2\\_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0439485924/qid=1126148717/sr=2-1/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books))  
Jacqueline Rogers

**[We Love Our School](http://www.amazon.com/We-Love-Our-School-Read-Together/dp/0375867287)** (<http://www.amazon.com/We-Love-Our-School-Read-Together/dp/0375867287>)  
Judy Sierra

**[Welcome to Kindergarten](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0802776647/qid=1126149131/sr=2-1/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books)** ([http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0802776647/qid=1126149131/sr=2-1/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_b\\_2\\_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0802776647/qid=1126149131/sr=2-1/ref=pd_bbs_b_2_1/104-9768203-6276734?v=glance&s=books))  
Anne Rockwell

**[Will I Have a Friend](http://www.amazon.com/Will-Have-Friend-First-Grade/dp/1595720693/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1360700994&sr=1-1&keywords=will+i+have+a+friend+by+miriam+cohen)** ([http://www.amazon.com/Will-Have-Friend-First-Grade/dp/1595720693/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1360700994&sr=1-1&keywords=will+i+have+a+friend+by+miriam+cohen](http://www.amazon.com/Will-Have-Friend-First-Grade/dp/1595720693/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1360700994&sr=1-1&keywords=will+i+have+a+friend+by+miriam+cohen))  
Miriam Cohen

## How Can I Be Engaged With My Child's Education? Parent Guide #20

**Research shows it is important for you to be engaged in your child's education.**

*Parent engagement helps your child succeed in school. It results in your child being absent less and better behaved. A home that supports learning is important. This affects your child's school success. It matters more than your income, educational level or cultural background, and it is fun.*

**Three things that help your child succeed in school:**

1. Help organize your child's time.
2. Help with homework.
3. Talk about school.

**The following tips may help your child do well:**

- Start a daily family routine. Provide time and a quiet place to study. Be firm about bedtime. Eat dinner together.
- Set limits on TV watching. Set up after school activities and care.
- Show the values of discipline and hard work.
- Notice and support special talents.
- Share successes with family and friends.
- Talk positively about school experiences.

**Different ways to be engaged:**

**COMMUNICATION:** Read and respond to all notices and newsletters. Attend parent-teacher conferences. Translators may be available if needed.

**VOLUNTEERING:** Support your child's class by helping their teacher. Go on a field trip. Share your family's culture with the other children.

**PARENT LEADERSHIP:** Join PTA/PTO or other parent groups. These groups offer a lot of chances to help in the school. They also give you a chance to connect with other parents and staff.

**DECISION MAKING:** Let the principal know if you want to serve on advisory councils or committees. Attend school board meetings or work sessions.

If you are a parent of a child with a disability, make sure you are included in the development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Your engagement is important to the IEP process.

## What About Communication? Parent Guide #21

### **Communicating with your child's teacher helps your child make an easier move into kindergarten.**

*Parents who keep in touch with teachers are more satisfied with their child's school experience. As partners, parents and teachers learn how to work together.*

### **Parents and teachers have different viewpoints that are important to share:**

- You see your child playing with family members and learning from family activities. You see things from a parent point of view.
- The teacher sees your child playing with other children and learning from school activities. They see things from a teacher point of view.

### **You can take the first steps:**

- Does the teacher use email or have a preferred way to communicate?
- Write notes to the teacher and respond to any letters sent to you.
- Call the teacher if you have questions and respond to any messages.
- Attend school nights and special programs.
- Volunteer to help in the class. Do what you can when the teacher asks for help.
- Look over your child's work and talk to the teacher about your child's progress. Find out how to support learning at home.
- Attend parent-teacher meetings. Ask for other meetings if you have questions or concerns. Share your child's strengths, talents,

and interests. Work together on learning goals.

- Use voice mail, if available, to leave messages for the teacher.
- Check out your child's school website.

### **Tips for talking with teachers and staff:**

- Prepare ahead of time: What are your questions?
- Choose a good time: Find out when the teacher is free to talk.
- Come ready to listen: The teacher has lots to share, too.
- Be open to ideas: The teacher wants to work with you.
- Give and expect respect: You and the teacher are partners.

## What Do I Do if My Child Does Not Speak English? Parent Guide #22

**Public schools are responsible for testing and placing children in the right program. When possible, schools provide the test in the language spoken by your child.**

**If the language difference makes learning too difficult, your child may go to “English as a Second Language” (ESL) or a bilingual class. Your child will learn the same material as the other children in the same grade.**

### ***Suggestions for families:***

- Learning a second language should not replace your language.
- Support your child to speak, read and write your family language.
- Children are often quiet when they are learning a new language.
- Children can learn two or more languages at the same time.
- There are benefits to learning more than one language, and it is easier at a young age.
- Children may be confused at times as they try to understand two languages at once.
- Learning a second language takes time and support, but it is worth it.

## What About Sharing My Family Culture? Parent Guide #23

**Your family beliefs have a great impact on your child's life. Each family has its own set of customs, attitudes, and hopes for the education of their children. Good teachers accept and respect the beliefs held by families.**

*Children gain when their classrooms feel more like home. They learn more easily.*

***Share your family's culture with school. Here are some ideas:***

- Ask the teacher about opportunities to share photos of family events and customs in class.
- Volunteer to read stories in your child's class, in your language.
- Volunteer to make tape recordings of stories in your language. They can be used in class or in the library.
- Help the teacher make labels for the classroom that reflect your language.
- Work with the teacher so that the toys and materials in class reflect your culture.
- Help set up staff trainings about your culture and home language.

***Feel free to ask the teacher to help you in these ways:***

- Ask that newsletters and notes be provided in your language.
- Ask that contact with you be at times that are good for your family.

## Will My Child Benefit From an Extra Year of Kindergarten? Parent Guide #24

**A child who is five years old on or before September 1 may enroll in kindergarten.\***

***Kindergarten is a one-school-year program before first grade.***

Starting kindergarten may be a time of concern for some families and teachers.

If you are thinking about sending your child to developmental kindergarten, you should know these things:

- Developmental kindergarten is intended to provide children who are not ready an extra year of schooling.
- Children who attend developmental kindergarten and then go on to kindergarten have school records that indicate they were retained.
- It is not true that holding your child back will help him/her socially or academically or to have success in sports.
- Research shows that children who attended developmental kindergarten and then kindergarten have no long-term gains.
- Children who attended two years of kindergarten may have lower self-esteem and are 30 percent more likely to drop out of high school.
- Age does not matter in an appropriate kindergarten.
- Kindergarten should be ready to support all children.
- School success differences between the oldest and youngest children in a class tend to disappear by third grade.

- Teachers and parents tend to hold back the youngest children.

### ***Advice to families:***

- Become familiar with the kindergartens in your area. Are the staff members ready to meet the needs of ALL children?
- Find out why families are holding their children back.
- Keep the future in mind. How old will your child be in middle school? At what grade will he/she be old enough to drive? At what age will your child graduate from high school?

***\*Please see Parent Guide #4 for information about an early entry option for kindergarten enrollment.***