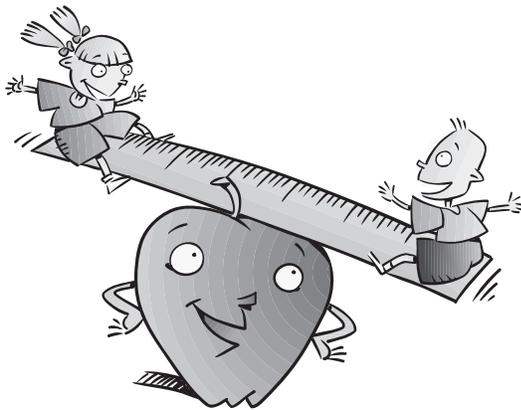


# Early Childhood Beginnings

Ages 3 to 5



## When are Children "Ready" to Start Kindergarten?



A child's readiness for kindergarten depends on many things. In Maryland, a child is considered ready for school when he/she is five years old (by September 1). There are various abilities, skills, and concepts that support student success in kindergarten.

Maryland's Ready 4 Kindergarten (R4K) framework helps parents, teachers, and early childhood providers understand what children need to know and be able to do when they start school.

It includes seven areas:

### **SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS**

Does your child get along with other people, show concern for others, and participate in group activities? Is your child curious? When facing a problem, does he keep trying? Is your child a risk-taker? Is she able to work independently on given tasks? Can he identify emotions?

### **LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Does your child speak clearly, and listen to and understand others? Does she know the difference between written and non-written information? Does he understand stories that he has heard or read? Can she sequence events from a story? Can he retell a story? Is she familiar with some letters and their sounds?

### **MATHEMATICS**

Is your child able to sort things by color or shape or other characteristics? Does he understand such ideas as "top," "bottom," "first," "second"? Can she represent relationships between numbers by showing "more than" or "less than" or comparing groups of objects? Can she identify numerals and count sets of objects?

### **SCIENCE**

Does your child explore and make guesses (predictions) based on things he observes? Does she understand cause and effect? Does he use all of his senses to gain information? Does she ask questions about the world around her?

### **SOCIAL STUDIES**

Does your child use the word "I" to express knowledge about herself? Does she understand her role and the roles of others in the family and the community? Is he aware of similarities and differences between people?

### **FINE ARTS**

Does your child express himself by trying artistic activities? Is he exposed to different kinds of art (visual art, music, drama)? Does he use different kinds of materials (chalk, buttons, string) to make art? Does he look for new ideas?

### **PHYSICAL WELL-BEING AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT**

Does your child have the physical basics (food, clothing, shelter and regular health and dental care) so that she can focus and participate in school? Is she able to run, jump, play ball and climb stairs? Can he use scissors appropriately? Can he draw with a pencil? Is she independently able to perform self-help skills (toileting, dressing, washing)? Does he try various healthy foods?

*Adapted from ParentTips, a monthly resource for parents with young children provided by the Ready At Five organization. Visit [www.readyatfive.org](http://www.readyatfive.org) for more information about school readiness.*

# The Year Before Kindergarten – Timeline for Families



## ALL YEAR

- Play, read, listen, and talk with your child. Ask questions and explore together.
- Provide opportunities for your child to play with other children and interact with other children in group settings.
- Follow HCPSS Early Childhood Programs on Twitter @HCPSS\_ECP and Facebook (Road to Kindergarten).

## FALL (September/October/November)

- Determine kindergarten eligibility. Children must be five years of age on or before September 1 to enter kindergarten.
- Visit [www.hcpss.org/enroll/kindergarten](http://www.hcpss.org/enroll/kindergarten) for information about school readiness.
- Use the “School Locator” on the HCPSS website to locate the school that serves your address. Point out the school to your child.
- Become familiar with readiness skills, behaviors and expectations.
- Attend parent conference and any offered parent workshops at your child’s preschool program, if applicable.

## WINTER (December/January/February)

- Review health requirements for kindergarten registration at [www.hcpss.org/health](http://www.hcpss.org/health).
- Schedule necessary well-child doctor visit and update immunizations, as needed.
- Visit [www.hcpss.org/enroll](http://www.hcpss.org/enroll). Begin gathering required documentation for kindergarten registration.
- Attend a “Road to Kindergarten” parent workshop.
- Visit the local library with your child.
- Develop consistent morning and evening routines that help children be most successful.

## SPRING (March/April/May)

- Determine date and time for your school’s kindergarten registration. Registration kickoff is held the first week of March.
- Register your child for kindergarten at your designated school.
- Work with your child to continue developing school readiness skills.
- Attend annual Howard County Children’s Discovery Fair.
- Visit [www.hcpss.org/mobile-apps/](http://www.hcpss.org/mobile-apps/) and [www.hcpss.org/hcpss-news/](http://www.hcpss.org/hcpss-news/) to find ways to connect to HCPSS and your school community.
- Practice self-help skills with your child (toileting, dressing, feeding, cleaning up toys, etc.).

## SUMMER (June/July/August)

- Visit your school website to determine supply needs. Shop together for backpack and school supplies to create excitement about starting school.
- Attend Howard County Library System’s “Kindergarten, Here We Come!” program (registration required). Your child can climb aboard a real school bus!
- Drive past the school to point it out to your child; play on the playground there.
- Attend events at school prior to the start of school, such as Parent Orientation, Open House, PTA events, etc.
- Visit the library or bookstore to find books to read about going to kindergarten. Find book suggestions at [www.hclibrary.org/uploads/road to kindergarten1.pdf](http://www.hclibrary.org/uploads/road%20to%20kindergarten1.pdf).
- Confirm first day of school, start/end times, and bus schedule.

# Resources and Activity Ideas for Early Learning and School Readiness

## American Academy of Pediatrics

Shares specific information about the growth and development of children ages 3–5. There are also links to topics such as safety, immunizations, nutrition, fitness, and emotional wellness. Numerous articles about varying topics are available, as well. [www.healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx)



## American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Provides suggested activities to encourage speech and language development for children, ages 2–4 years and 4–6 years. It also contains information about typical development patterns, learning more than one language, etc. [www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Parent-Stim-Activities.htm](http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Parent-Stim-Activities.htm)

## Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)

Offers helpful tips about supporting your child’s social/emotional development, including relationship building, confidence, communication, persistence, self-control, etc. [csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html)

## CDC Family Portal

Shares guidance on handling common parenting challenges (for children of all ages) through interactive activities, videos, and more. [www.cdc.gov/parents](http://www.cdc.gov/parents)

## Get Ready to Read

Helps support educators, parents, and young children in the development of early literacy skills in the years before kindergarten. Intended for use with all children, the resources and information provided promote skill-building, communication between adults, and ways to address concerns. [www.getreadytoread.org](http://www.getreadytoread.org)

## Howard County Library (HCL)

Includes books, developmental toys, CDs, DVDs, and audiobooks for children, as well as books and other resources for parents and caregivers. HCL offers an array of classes for preschoolers that teach creative expression, social skills, listening comprehension, and the foundations of reading through letter and number recognition and vocabulary building. Catalog and complete listing of classes are available online. [www.hclibrary.org](http://www.hclibrary.org)



## Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Early Childhood Programs

Offers many resources for families of young children, including helpful tips for promoting school readiness for children. There are resources available to assist you and your child with the transition to kindergarten, including a videotaped session of a parent workshop. You can also preview the curriculum and learn about registration procedures. [www.hcpss.org/enroll/kindergarten](http://www.hcpss.org/enroll/kindergarten)

## Launch Into Learning

Brings together numerous programs and agencies (through the Howard County Early Childhood Advisory Council) to support young children and their families. Find lots of local resources gathered here. [www.howardcountymd.gov/launchintolearning](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/launchintolearning)

## Maryland State Department of Education: Division of Early Childhood Development

Includes a wide range of information, such as how to find quality child care programs and resources to support early learning standards. [earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org](http://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org)

## Ready At Five

Helps you to see how involvement is key to your child’s future success. There are many things you can do with your child to help build skills, knowledge, and abilities in many different areas. Especially helpful are the “Activities and the Parent Tips” that can be found on this site. [www.readyatfive.org/raf/for-parents/parents-matter.html](http://www.readyatfive.org/raf/for-parents/parents-matter.html)



## Thinkport

Offers a wonderful collection of resources for educators and parent to help with early learning. An entire section of this site is devoted to early childhood education. The “Think Family and Community” area has numerous resources for parents, including videos, games, etc. [www.thinkport.org/FamilyCommunity/default.tp](http://www.thinkport.org/FamilyCommunity/default.tp)

## Vroom

Shows you that daily activities can be fun for both you and your child. Find out how these activities support brain development. Download the mobile application for easy access.

# What If I Have Concerns About My Child's Development?

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## Here are some practical suggestions to follow:

- Schedule and maintain regular visits with your child's health provider (e.g., pediatrician, nurse practitioner, family practice physician, Health Department staff). Discuss your concerns with them.
- Speak with your child's child care provider about your concerns and their observations. These individuals work with young children on a daily basis and have an understanding of child development. If they have concerns, it is important to follow up on their concerns, as well.

## If you still have concerns:

- Check a developmental checklist such as: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones), or [www.easterseals.com/mtffc](http://www.easterseals.com/mtffc).

## If you continue to have concerns...

- Contact the Child Find Program at 410-313-7046. Find information at [www.hcps.org/special-education/identification-assessment-and-evaluation](http://www.hcps.org/special-education/identification-assessment-and-evaluation).
- Contact the CARE Center at 410-313-CARE (2273). Find information at [www.howardcountymd.gov/carecenter](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/carecenter).

## Educational Opportunities

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- Half-day (and some full-day) prekindergarten services are available to children who are 4 years old by September 1 and who meet certain eligibility criteria. Information may be found at [www.hcps.org/schools/prek](http://www.hcps.org/schools/prek).
- Children must be 5 years old by September 1 to attend kindergarten. Kindergarten is a mandatory grade. Processes are in place for families who want an exception to this mandate (i.e., kindergarten waiver or early admission). Information is available at [www.hcps.org/schools/enroll](http://www.hcps.org/schools/enroll).
- Registration for Pre-K and kindergarten begins during the first week of March each year for the following school year. Early registration is helpful to both the school and the family as they begin preparing for the child's transition to kindergarten.
- International families may receive assistance with registration or have questions answered at the Office of International Student Services at 410-313-1525 and/or 410-313-7102.
- There are many high-quality, community-based programs in Howard County, including child care centers, nursery schools, family child care providers, etc. For more information, contact the CARE line for Howard County families at 410-313-CARE (2273) or email [children@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:children@howardcountymd.gov).
- The Howard County Library System offers many educational services and social opportunities for young children. Visit [www.hclibrary.org](http://www.hclibrary.org) for details.



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The Howard County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities, and provides equal access to the Boy/Girl Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Manager of Equity Assurance, Howard County Public School System, 10910 Clarksville Pike, Ellicott City, MD 21042, 410-313-6654 (phone), 410-313-1645 (fax). For further information on notice of non-discrimination, visit <http://wdcrocolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm> for the address and phone number of the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481.