

## Minnesota Kindergarten Readiness (School Readiness) Definition

Minnesota supports the educational success of all young children as they become eligible to enroll into kindergarten.

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### Eligibility for Kindergarten in Minnesota

Children are encouraged to enter kindergarten in Minnesota when they are age-eligible; which is when they are 5 years old. According to Minnesota law, children are eligible for kindergarten entrance when they:

- Are at least 5 years of age by September 1 of the child's enrollment year into kindergarten ([Minn. Stat. § 120A.20](#)).
  - Have received early childhood screening, comparable health and developmental screening or the parent is a conscientious objector to the screening program for their child ([Minn. Stat. §121A.17](#)).
  - Have received medically acceptable immunizations ([Minn. Stat. §121A.15](#)).
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Kindergarten entrance tests, other assessments, or the birthdates of children (i.e., children turning 5 years old in the summer months before kindergarten entry) should not be used to determine if children can enroll into kindergarten.

It is important to note that children are “not innately ‘ready’ or ‘not ready’ for school. Children’s skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments,” early learning experiences, or participation in early learning programs or child care prior to enrolling into school. (1)

### Goal: Every Child is Ready to Learn

How Minnesota defines kindergarten (school) readiness is no different than how many other states may define the term. The Head Start program says “school [kindergarten] readiness occurs when children have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in primary school, later learning, and life.” (2) Minnesota’s kindergarten (school) readiness definition includes interconnected contributors that, when aligned, promote eligible children’s transition to kindergarten. Minnesota’s definition of kindergarten readiness is based on the support children must have in place to foster the development of their own unique characteristics, knowledge and skills that equip them for optimal school success. This includes the essential ingredients of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Children need every one of these essential elements to help them prepare for a successful and seamless transition from the early learning years to kindergarten and beyond.

Minnesota’s commitment to equity is seen in our definition of kindergarten eligibility and kindergarten

(school) readiness. We recognize children's success in school is based on a multitude of factors. Kindergarten (school) readiness refers to not only ready children, but ready communities, families, and schools and early care and education (ECE) programs. The essential elements to children's success in school are:

- [Ready communities](#) — provide services to enhance the health, safety, economic stability, development and learning of all children and their families.
- [Ready schools and early care and education programs](#) — provide access to high-quality affordable child care, early education programs and schools that support the needs of all children when they enter kindergarten and in the areas of their development and learning.
- [Ready families](#) — who know how to support their own children's learning and have access to adequate resources.
- [Ready children](#) — who bring their own unique characteristics, skills, experiences, and are filled with curiosity and an eagerness to learn.

## Ready Communities

Ready communities are critical contributors who provide a foundation for seamless transitions for children from the early childhood years to formal education in kindergarten and beyond. Ready communities identify opportunities and implement key strategies to ensure and support the health, well-being, and development of all children to help them be successful in their learning experiences. Ready Communities value and support children, families, early learning and schools.

### Ready communities:

- Build collaborative opportunities among essential stakeholders to support smooth transitions and the learning of all children, birth through early elementary.
- Engage community members in reaching the most vulnerable children and their families through innovative outreach strategies and partnerships.
- Ensure children have access to the Early Childhood Screening program, or a comparable health and developmental screening, and other health programs (as needed), between the ages of 3 to 4 years.
- Seek strategies to improve health care and nutrition of their community's children and their families, including mental and dental health.
- Increase access to effective early learning experiences and high-quality child care for all children and their families to build a strong foundation for future learning.
- Invest resources to support all families in the community.

## Ready Schools and Early Care and Education (ECE) Program

Early childhood education and care programs and elementary schools support children's smooth transition to kindergarten and early elementary. Children's opportunity for high-quality early learning environments and experiences prior to kindergarten entry may increase their ability to be more successful in kindergarten. Early learning programs and child care that work in partnership with schools help support this transition for children and families.

Schools must be prepared to support the kindergarten entry of children and families who come from many different cultures, as well as a wide variety of early childhood education programs. Programs may include: Head Start; private or faith-based child care; family, friend and neighbor care; or in-home learning experiences provided by parents or others.

The readiness of schools to receive and meet their young learners' needs plays a critical role in the optimum success of children's transition to kindergarten and beyond.

### **Ready schools and early care and education programs:**

- Deliver evidence-based instruction by ensuring their teachers and staff are trained to deliver explicit, systematic, evidence-based instruction that is developmentally appropriate for young learners;
- Align policies; practices and curriculum prekindergarten through third grade to establish coherence and continuity so instruction builds on prior learning.
- Foster relationships with families as a partner in their children's education with a focus on family strengths, and link children and their families to information, family/school events and family/community liaisons who can help them navigate and understand the kindergarten and school that they are entering.
- Form collaborative relationships with other community partners involved in supporting young children's lives prior to and after kindergarten enrollment (for example, local public health, Head Start, county services, libraries, community cultural organizations).
- Understand and respond to all children's individual strengths, needs and differences, because children arrive at kindergarten with a wide range of experiences, skills and competencies, including children with special needs and children who are multi-lingual learners.
- Work with early learning programs, community programs and services, and families in their communities to provide a seamless transition to kindergarten for children and their families;
- Employ well-trained leaders, teachers and staff and ensure they have resources to provide effective, age-appropriate learning experiences.
- Meet the unique learning needs of their enrolling young learners by creating classrooms that are age-appropriate and engaging and use evidence-based practices for all children in kindergarten and early elementary.
- Provide instruction that engages children, builds on their prior learning and is based on how young students learn best.
- Employ teachers who resemble the children in their classrooms.
- Ensure the leaders, teachers and staff are culturally responsive and take into account individual differences in language, culture and prior experiences.
- Provide information, resources and supports to address diverse needs of students including education services, health and mental health services, and other social services.
- Create a welcoming and supportive environment for all children and their families.

### **Ready Families**

Ready families have an understanding of their own child's development and learning and are the first teacher of their children.

#### **Ready families:**

- Interact and talk with their children, and help them build communication skills and their ability to express their feelings, needs, and wants.
- Regularly read, sing or tell stories with their children.
- Provide routines for their children.
- Seek out parenting education, resources, and community and peer supports.
- Ensure their children are healthy and have completed hearing, vision, dental, and development screenings, including immunizations.
- Seek to have a partnership with the kindergarten teacher and other school staff to support their children's learning.

- Engage in their children’s education by volunteering and attending meetings and events at school.
- Have an understanding and awareness of the school and community their children will enter.

Beginning at birth, families can use the simple ideas in [Every Day is a Great Day to Learn](#) parent guides to help their children grow and learn, and transition to kindergarten when they are eligible.

## Ready Children

When a child arrives at kindergarten, he or she will have knowledge and skills across multiple development and learning areas and will exhibit physical health and emotional well-being. They will demonstrate curiosity and show confidence to learn and will display multiple unique skills in general knowledge, language, cognition and numeracy. These multiple learning areas are described in [Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards Birth to Kindergarten \(2017\)](#) and [Minnesota’s Kindergarten Academic Standards](#).

**These key development and early learning areas help a child prepare for kindergarten entry:**

- approaches to learning
- the arts
- language, literacy communications
- mathematics (cognitive)
- physical development
- scientific thinking (cognitive)
- social and emotional development
- social systems (cognitive)

How each child develops and demonstrates skills in each learning area is different, and each child’s learning in these areas will vary upon kindergarten entry.

The [Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards \(ECIPs\)](#) provide detail about what young children may know and be able to do. The ECIPs are not intended to be a checklist or an assessment of children’s skills that prohibit them from enrolling in kindergarten. Rather, they are intended to help guide the development, learning and teaching of young children in various settings beginning at birth and continuing to the transition to kindergarten.

## How can the Kindergarten (School) Readiness Definition be used?

This definition may be used to help the interconnected contributors, including families, early learning programs, child care, schools, families, and others better understand kindergarten readiness. The kindergarten readiness definition importantly serves as the foundation for [World’s Best Workforce](#) planning related to school readiness goal (Goal #1) so that all children reach their optimum potential.

## References

(1) K. Maxwell, K., & R. M. Clifford, R. M. (2004). [Research in review: School readiness assessment](#). Beyond the Journal. Young Children on the Web. Retrieved from <http://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Anna%20Bing%20Arnold%20Children%27s%20Center/D>

[ocs/naeyc\\_school\\_readiness\\_article.pdf](#).

(2) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families (2019, August 12). [Head Start Approach to School Readiness – Overview](#).