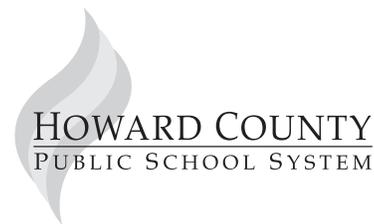
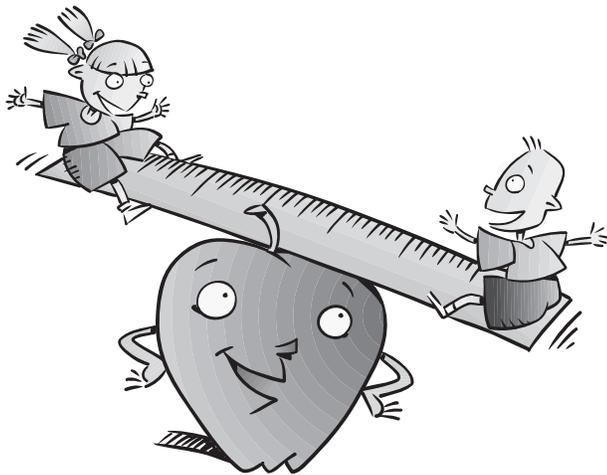


Early Childhood Beginnings

Ages 3 to 5



When are Children "Ready" to Start School?



A child's readiness for school depends on many things. In Maryland, a child is considered ready for school when he/she is five years old (by September 1) and has the abilities and the knowledge to successfully learn in kindergarten.

The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) 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:

1. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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?

2. 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 she understand stories that she has heard or read? Can she sequence events from a story? Can she retell a story?

3. MATHEMATICAL THINKING

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

4. SCIENTIFIC THINKING

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?

5. 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?

6. THE ARTS

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

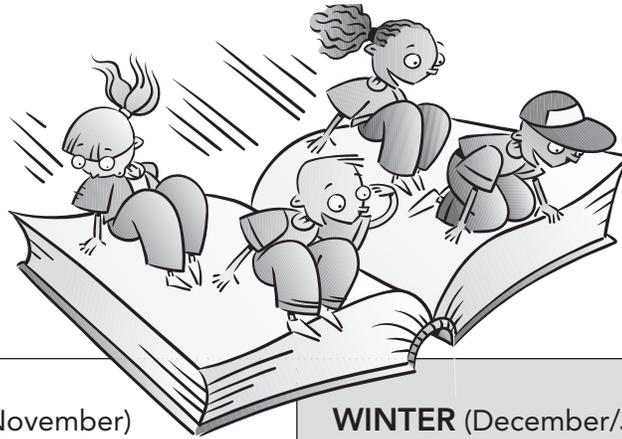
7. PHYSICAL WELL-BEING AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

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?



Adapted from ParentTips, a monthly resource for parents with young children provided by the Ready At Five organization. Visit www.readyatfive.org for more information about school readiness.

The Year Before Kindergarten - Timeline for Families



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 for information.
- Use the "School Locator" on the HCPSS website to locate the school that serves your neighborhood.
- Point out the school to your child.
- Become familiar with readiness behaviors.
 - Get *Tips* booklet from HCPSS website.
 - Complete some of the *Tips* activities with your child.
- Play, read, listen and talk with your child.

WINTER (December/January/February)

- Attend parent conference and any offered parent workshops at your child's preschool program, if applicable.
- Be sure to schedule well-child doctor visit and update immunizations.
- View videos about school readiness and the transition to kindergarten at: www.hcpss.org/schools/kindergarten .
- Visit local library with your child.
- Find opportunities for "group experiences" for your child.
- Build excitement about learning!
- Play, read, listen and talk with your child.

SPRING (March/April/May)

- Review HCPSS website and gather required documents for registration.
- Determine date and time for your school's kindergarten registration. Early registration is held the first week of March.
- Register your child for kindergarten at the school.
- Work together on the readiness packet obtained at registration.
- Attend Children's Discovery Fair at East Columbia Library in April.
- Register to receive HCPSS news and alerts at www.HCPSSNews.com.
- Play, read, listen and talk with your child.

SUMMER (June/July/August)

- Visit your school website or local store to determine supply needs.
- Shop together for backpack and school supplies.
- Attend Howard County Library System's "Kindergarten, Here We Come!" program (registration required). You can even 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.
- Read books about going to kindergarten. For sample list, visit www.hcpss.org/schools/kindergarten .
- Play, read, listen and talk with your child!

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

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

Howard County Library (HCL)

The library's collection 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

For a list of children's books that can support a child's transition to school, visit www.hclibrary.org/uploads/road_to_kindergarten1.pdf.



Howard County Public School System (HCPSS):

Early Childhood Programs

The prekindergarten and kindergarten pages offer 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/schools/kindergarten/k_readiness.shtml
www.hcpss.org/students

Early Intervention Services

If you have concerns about your child's development, this site provides information about eligibility criteria and available services.

www.hcpss.org/special/identification.shtml



Maryland Family Network

You will find information about kindergarten assessment (Maryland Model for School Readiness) and activity ideas to help young children build the skills they will need to succeed in school. There are also tips for working parents and other helpful links.

www.mdchildcare.org/mdcfc/for_parents/parents.html

Maryland State Department of Education:

Division of Early Childhood Development

Includes information about child care programs and community services, as well as early learning and school readiness.

www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/

Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR)

Provides an overview of the state's program created to enhance school readiness for all children. Information includes an overview of MMSR as well as topics such as classroom instruction, assessment, communication with families, and coordination with early learning programs and initiatives.

www.mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/readiness/index.html

Ready At Five

Your 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



Thinkport

Discover 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

What if I Have Concerns About My Child's Development?

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 or 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:

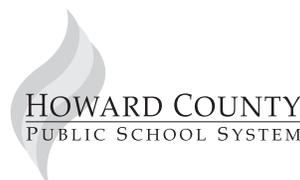
- Check a developmental checklist such as: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones, or http://es.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntlc10_mffc_homepageasq.

If you continue to have concerns...

- Contact the Child Find Program at 410-313-7046. Find information at www.hcpss.org/special/details.shtml.
- Contact the CARE Center at 410-313-CARE (2273). Find information at www.howardcountymd.gov/carecenter.htm.

Educational Opportunities

- Half-day prekindergarten services are available to children who are 4 years old by September 1. Priority is given to students who meet income-eligibility criteria. Information may be found at www.hcpss.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.hcpss.org/schools/kindergarten.
- Registration for 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 childcare providers, etc. For more information, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/DisplayPrimary.aspx?id=6442463930.
- The Howard County Library System offers many educational services and social opportunities for young children. Visit www.hclibrary.org for details.



10910 Clarksville, Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 410-313-6600 • www.hcpss.org