

Kindergarten Frequently Asked Questions

Enrollment

1	Does the state require children to attend Kindergarten?	No. Kindergarten is not compulsory in New Jersey.	N.J. Admin. Code §6A:24-3.2
2	What is the compulsory school age?	Age 6 – 16	N.J. Admin. Code § 18A:38-25
3	What is the state's Kindergarten entrance age?	A student must be 5 years old by October 1 in order to have a statutory right to enrollment where a kindergarten program is offered by a public school.	N.J. Admin. Code § 18A:38-5
4	What age exemptions or waivers exist for Kindergarten entrance?	Opt-in: Age 5, local school board decision.	N.J. Admin. Code § 18A:38-5
5	What is an Abbott School District, and does it impact Kindergarten?	The landmark Abbott v. Burke school funding case decided by the New Jersey Supreme Court requires that all 3- and 4- year-old children in the highest-poverty school districts receive high-quality preschool education. Abbott School Districts are required to offer Kindergarten. Abbott School Districts	N.J. Admin. Code §18A:44-2
6	Can I withdraw my 5-year-old child from Kindergarten?	Yes. A child's parent or guardian, working with the child's teacher and principal, can formally withdraw a child from Kindergarten if the child is 5 years old. A 6-year-old cannot be withdrawn from Kindergarten because New Jersey law says a child must be in school by age 6.	N.J. Admin. Code § 18A:38-25
7	Does the state require the district to offer Kindergarten and if so, full or half day?	No, with one exception. Only Abbott School Districts are required to offer Kindergarten. It must be a full-day program.	N.J. Admin. Code §18A:44-2
8	How do I know which public school district my child should be enrolled in?	Information about identification of the school that a child should attend may be found by an internet search using the full home address and the word "schools." Phone numbers,	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:22

		addresses, and school leaders' names are on the webpage. If internet access is not available, neighbors, business employees, and people that are in the family's social network are also good resources. Generally, children are assigned to a school based on their home address. Some children with special needs are assigned to the school that can best serve their needs. Individual school districts may require various forms of proof of residency.	
9	Are there required admission tests for Kindergarten?	No, admission tests are not required. Some districts use a screener or assessment to determine children's learning needs and prepare to meet those needs.	Not specified in statute, rules, or regulations.
10	What is the state's requirement of the minimum number of days in a school year?	180 days	N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:7F-9
11	What are the state's requirements for the start/or finish date of the school year?	District Option	N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:36-2
12	How many hours are required for grades K-3?	2.5 hours for full-day Kindergarten 4 hours for grades 1-3	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:32-8.3
13	What counts as a full-day attendance for a shortened/snow day?	One continuous session of two and one-half hours may be considered a full day in kindergarten.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:32-8.3
14	Does absenteeism count in Kindergarten?	Yes. NJ school districts hold all enrolled students accountable for attendance from preschool to 12-grade. If a student's absentee rate is equal to or greater than 10 percent, the student is considered chronically absent. The school collects the number of days that every student is absent from school. Except for	Not specified in statute, rules, or regulations. District guidance is found in New Jersey Guidance for Reporting Student Absences and Calculating Chronic Absenteeism , and additional information

		<p>preschool, the state is required to report the total absenteeism rate, including kindergarten, to the federal government. Preschool student absenteeism rates are collected, but not reported to the federal government. School districts have their own policies on what constitutes a preapproved excused absence. Ways to reduce absenteeism should be discussed with the school district.</p>	<p>can be found in the: NJ ESSA Plan, page 55</p>
15	<p>Can I choose which Kindergarten my child attends?</p>	<p>Children may attend any private Kindergarten program. However, if a parent wants to enroll their child in a public school, the child may only attend their local school district or a Charter school operating within the school district.</p>	<p>School Choice N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:36B-20</p>
16	<p>What if my district doesn't offer Kindergarten?</p>	<p>Former Abbott Districts are required to offer full-day kindergarten programs. All other NJ school districts are not required to offer kindergarten programs. Since kindergarten is not a required grade, children are not required to attend any kindergarten program. Each district has its own plan for providing educational services to resident kindergarten-age children. Families should contact the district directly.</p>	<p>N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:38-1</p>
17	<p>If my 4-year-old child attends private Kindergarten, can I enroll them in first grade at my local public school the following year?</p>	<p>If a child is 4 years old when enrolled in a private Kindergarten program and the following year the parent intends to enroll their 5-year-old child in first grade at their public-school district, the parent should prepare in advance by asking their school district about any age-related policies for first-grade enrollment. In NJ code the cut-off date for age at enrollment is October 1. Therefore, if the child is still 5 years old on or after October 1,</p>	<p>This is a district decision.</p>

		the district's policy may require the child to attend Kindergarten, not first grade.	
18	Are there immunization requirements for school entry?	DTaP Diphtheria, Tetanus, acellular Pertussis, Polio Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella), Varicella (Chickenpox), Hepatitis B Summary of NJ School Immunization Requirements NJDOE Keeping Our Students Safe, Healthy & in School	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A 6A:16-2.2
19	What if I don't want my child to receive vaccinations?	Parents have options for exemptions such as religious or other medical exemptions.	N.J. Admin. Code § 8:57-4.3 N.J. Admin. Code § 8:57-4.4
20	What are the required medical screenings?	Medical history, including allergies, past serious illnesses, injuries, operations, medications, and current health problems. Health screenings including height, weight, hearing, blood pressure, and vision; and Physical examinations	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:16-2.2
21	Is recess a requirement?	A public school district shall provide a daily recess period of at least 20 minutes for students in grades Kindergarten through 5.	N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:35-4.31
22	Will my child need to bring a snack or lunch for full-day kindergarten? What about half-day kindergarten?	Contact the district directly. Each kindergarten program will provide information on snacks and meals to families of enrolling children. In some school districts the district board of education shall establish proof of income eligibility for free or reduced-price meals for students. Contact the district for information on the free or reduced-price meal program.	Not specified in statute, rules, or regulations.

Assessment, Intervention & Retention

23	Are state assessments required in grades K-3?	Assessments in mathematics and language arts are required in grade 3.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:8-4.1
24	Beyond the federal and state-required third grade assessments, what other assessments are required in grades K-3?	Assessments beyond federally required third-grade assessments are not specified in state statute.	Not specified in statute, rules, or regulations.
25	What do the results of third-grade assessments inform?	Commissioner must report to the state board on the results of assessments. The Department shall report annually to the State Board and the public on the progress of all students and student subgroups in meeting the NJSLS as measured by the Statewide assessment by publishing and distributing the New Jersey School Report Card. The department of education must report assessment results to district boards of education for students and student groups under their observation.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:8-4.1; N.J. Admin Code § 6A:8-4.5
26	If my child needs additional support, are there interventions available beginning in Kindergarten?	District boards of education shall establish and implement a system for intervention and referral services. The intervention and referral system should be designed to assist students who are experiencing learning, behavior, or health difficulties and to assist staff who have difficulties addressing students' learning, behavior, or health needs. Families should ask the school about a Child Study Team evaluation.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:16-8.1
27	I think my child may have special learning needs. What services are available?	Contact the district directly to arrange for a Child Study Team assessment. The Parental Rights in Special Education (PRISE) document may be helpful to understand ways to help your child.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:14

28	My child just arrived from another country and does not speak English. Are there special services to help him learn English while he learns other subjects?	Yes. The NJDOE works with districts to ensure that English Language Learners (ELLs) and immigrant students are provided equitable educational opportunities to succeed academically in compliance with the federal education law (Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA). Families should contact the district directly.	N.J. Admin. Code §. 6A:15
29	Can Kindergarten students be suspended or expelled from school??	Students in Kindergarten through 2nd grade may not receive an out-of-school suspension or expulsion, with district exceptions.	N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:37-2a
30	Can districts retain Kindergarten students?	Retention policies are permitted and are a local school district decision.	N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:35-4.9
31	Is parent engagement in retention decisions required?	Parental notification is required, and parental appeal is allowed.	N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:35-4.9
32	Is there a third-grade retention policy?	Retention and promotion policies are determined locally.	N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:35-4.9

Curriculum

33	What subjects do children study in kindergarten?	The NJ Student Learning Standards for kindergarten students include: English Language Arts; Mathematics; Science; Social Studies; Visual & Performing Arts; World Languages; Career Readiness, Life Literacies, & Key Skills; Comprehensive Health & Physical Education; Computer Science & Design Thinking	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:9
34	I believe my child is gifted. Can my child skip kindergarten and go directly to first grade?	The age at school entry is a district policy decision. Contact the district directly.	N.J. Admin. Code § 18A:38-5

Family Engagement

35	Is family engagement required as part of a student's transition from preschool to Kindergarten?	Yes. Family engagement is included as a requirement of student transition plans. District boards of education shall include P-3rd grade transition programs in their preschool program plan.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:13A-6.1
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Finances

36	Can a district charge tuition for Kindergarten?	Yes. Other than in Abbott districts where tuition may not be charged, districts are not required to offer Kindergarten. However, if a district does offer Kindergarten, they may charge tuition. If the district charges tuition, it must have a sliding fee scale for tuition costs based on family income.	Not specified in statute, rules, or regulations.
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Health

37	How do I learn more about School Health Services?	The NJ DOE has a comprehensive website on Keeping Our Students Safe, Healthy & In School	Keeping Our Students Safe, Health & In School
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Safety

38	How will I know if my child is safe at school?	The NJDOE takes proactive measures to protect all our students and staff members. Through the Department's Office of School Preparedness & Emergency Planning (OSPEP) the goal is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the school population by providing direct support to New Jersey's schools in establishing safe and secure school environments and increasing their capacity to respond in the event of crises. All schools are required to have a safety plan. Contact the school directly for a copy or questions about their safety plan.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:16-5.1
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School Readiness & Transitions

39	Are Kindergarten readiness or entrance assessments required for all children?	NJ does not require school entrance exams for any child.	Not specified in statute, rules, or regulations.
40	Can my child take an "entrance exam" to prove that he or she is gifted or can go to Kindergarten at age 4?	The state does not require or provide admission tests.	Not specified in statute, rules, or regulations.
41	Are there policies in place to guide the preschool to Kindergarten transition process?	The board of education with a state-funded preschool program must include their transition initiatives from preschool through grade three in their preschool program plan.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:13A-6.1
42	Does the state have a statutory definition of school readiness?	No. A definition of student readiness is not listed in NJ statute.	Not specified in statute, rules, or regulations.

Social-Emotional Learning

43	What is social and emotional development?	Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.	NJ DOE Keeping Our Children Safe, Healthy & In School
44	Where is social-emotional development emphasized in statute?	Social-emotional development is included in the teacher professional development standards.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:9-3.3

Teacher Quality

45	What are the teacher-to-student ratio requirements for grade K-3?	1:25; however, in Abbott Districts the ratio in K-3 is one teacher and one aide for every 21 children.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:32-8.3; N.J. Admin. Code §6A:24-3.2
46	Is an aide required for every classroom?	School districts in which 40 percent or more of the students are "at-risk" as defined in P.L. 2007, c. 260 shall maintain all existing full-day kindergarten programs with a teacher's aide for each classroom. Class size for these kindergarten classrooms shall not exceed 21 students.	N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:13-3.2

Transportation

47	Are Kindergarten students eligible for transportation?	All public elementary school students (grades K-8) who live more than two miles from their school are entitled to transportation.	N.J. Stat. Ann. § 18A:39-1
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