



GET READY FOR

**A** Kindergarten!



**B**



**C**



**D**



**E**



**F**



**G**



**H**

# Provider Transition Tool-Kit

**A resource to help your  
families transition to  
kindergarten**



Countdown to Kindergarten is sponsored by Mayor Thomas W. Menino,  
The Boston School Committee, Superintendent Carol R. Johnson, and our community partners.



This Provider Tool-Kit can be used in conjunction with the Information Sheets. The Information Sheets, which are referenced throughout the Kit, provide valuable information for parents on important transition issues for families, ranging from Visiting Schools, Choosing Schools, and Registering for Schools to Transportation and Before- and After-School care.

Please share these Information Sheets with your families. Additional copies can be obtained in English, Spanish, Chinese, Cape Verdean Creole, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Somali or Vietnamese. Please use Provider Resource Order Form or download PDF copies from our Web site at: <http://www.countdowntokindergarten.org>.



Dear Provider,

Transitioning to kindergarten can be an exciting yet sometimes overwhelming experience for children and their parents. Beginning the process early, even the year before kindergarten, can make the process much more manageable.

We know you are committed to helping families and, because of the close relationships you build with them, you are often called upon for guidance and direction. You become the link through which many families are connected to the appropriate resources to meet their needs. Countdown to Kindergarten recognizes and commends the work that you do so well and would like to support your efforts through our new provider tool-kit.

This tool kit consists of monthly suggestions for transition activities, important information on Boston Public Schools kindergarten enrollment, answers to some of the most frequently asked questions, and important phone numbers. It also contains information on the tools additional tools available to you from Countdown.

We hope you will find this kit to be a useful resource to help families make a smooth and successful transition into the Boston Public Schools. Toward that end, we encourage you to customize these suggestions to meet the needs of the families that you serve.

Please feel free to call or email us with any questions, suggestions or comments about this tool-kit.

Sincerely,

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**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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Boston, MA 02108-2505



## OCTOBER Transition Activity

### What can I do?

#### 1. Identify children who:

- Will be five by next September 1.
- Need additional immunizations (by the coming January).
- Need a physical exam (by next September 1).

*Children enrolling in K2 classes must be five by September 1. There are no exceptions. Everyone who applies is guaranteed a K2 seat in the BPS system.*

*Children who are not five by September 1 may be eligible for K0 (3 years by Sept. 1) or K1 (4 years by September 1). While the availability of K1 seats in the BPS is growing, K0 is very limited. Placement is not guaranteed.*

### What can I use to help?

#### 1. The Department of Public Health Immunization Survey.

Each September the Department of Public Health (DPH) sends an immunization survey to all licensed childcare facilities. Using the log (Child Name, DOB, Immunizations) provided by the DPH:

- Send a letter to parents alerting them to the immunizations the child may need (if any). Remind them that the immunizations are also needed for enrolling their child in Boston Public Schools Kindergarten and that they should keep a copy for registration in January.



## OCTOBER

### Transition Activity continued

*It is important that parents make appointments with their physicians as early as possible, to ensure that immunizations are current when enrolling in BPS Kindergarten, which starts in January. This immunization record is due at the time of registration. The physical exam is due during the first two weeks the child starts school in September.*

#### What has Countdown to Kindergarten produced to help?

1. Template letter to parents regarding immunizations and physical exam needs (**see attachment 1A**).
2. Reminder notices for parents about school visiting time (known as School Preview time), beginning in November (**see attachment 1B**).
3. "Home is a Child's First School Poster, which provides monthly activities for families to do together in preparation for kindergarten.



## NOVEMBER Transition Activity

### What can I do?

1. Explain to parents the importance of visiting schools prior to registration.
2. Encourage families to visit as many schools as they can, so they can make an informed decision about the schools that they list in their registration form.
3. Help parents identify their school zone. For help visit the BPS web site: [www.bostonpublicschools.com](http://www.bostonpublicschools.com). Let them know that they may apply to any school in their zone nor within one mile of their home.
4. Post the School Preview Time poster (Please contact Countdown to Kindergarten to receive your copy).
5. Distribute school visiting schedules and a list of questions to ask when visiting schools or making inquiries by phone.
5. Let parents know the City of Boston and more than 30 Boston area employers now offer paid time off to visit schools during School Preview Time.

### What can I use to help?

1. Internet accessible computer
2. Countdown to Kindergarten web page [www.countdowntokindergarten.org](http://www.countdowntokindergarten.org) or call 617-635-3276.
3. Boston Public School website [www.bostonpublicschools.com](http://www.bostonpublicschools.com).



## NOVEMBER

### Transition Activity continued

What has Countdown to Kindergarten produced to help?

1. School Preview Time posters in English and Spanish (see Attachment **2A**)
2. School Preview Time schedules for elementary schools, in multiple languages (see attachment **2B**).
3. School Visiting Checklist (see attachment **2C**)



## DECEMBER Transition Activity

### What can I do?

1. Hold a Countdown to Kindergarten information session at your site for parents; or
2. Inform parents of an alternative location at which to attend a Countdown to Kindergarten information session.

*Countdown to Kindergarten sessions provide families with the information necessary to make a smooth transition from home or preschool into Boston Public Schools. Topics include: Registering for Kindergarten, Transportation Eligibility, Choosing Schools, Before and After School Care, and Readiness activities.*

3. Post Countdown to Kindergarten registration poster.
4. Give parents a list of documents needed for registration in Boston Public Schools



## DECEMBER

### Transition Activity continued

#### What has Countdown to Kindergarten Provided to Help?

1. Registration poster
2. Information sheets on where to register and what to bring (in eight languages)
3. A schedule of Countdown to Kindergarten information sessions in Boston listed on the countdown to Kindergarten website

Registration begins in January, usually the week following the New Year holiday. Encourage families who may need to take time off from work to plan ahead. All BPS Family Resource Centers are open late one night a week (usually until 6:30pm), during the peak registration dates in January.

Family Resource Centers also have a summer schedule. Usually there is only one location open during the summer months of July and August.

#### **Boston Public Schools Family Resource Centers**

##### **East Zone**

1216 Dorchester Ave, Dorchester, MA

617-635-8015

##### **North Zone**

55 Malcolm X Blvd, Roxbury, MA

617-635-9010

##### **West Zone**

515 Hyde Park Avenue, Roslindale, MA

617-635-8040

**(Please visit the BPS website for hours of operation of each of these locations)**



## JANUARY Transition Activity

### What Can I do?

1. Remind and encourage families to register now (First Round)
  - Families who register in the first round will receive notice of their child's assigned school by April. This information will allow parents to make the necessary arrangements for before and after school, as well as for their child's transportation needs.
  
3. Alert families about language testing
  - The Boston Public Schools performs a language assessment for children newly enrolling children whose primary language spoken at home is not English.
  - Parents fill out a language assessment survey as part of the registration process; the answers to the survey determine if the child will need to undergo the assessment.

*If language is a concern, it is advisable that parents take the child with them when they register. Staff at the Family Resource Centers can often perform the assessment that same day. An appointment will be made for the language assessment if the child is not present at the time of registration*



## JANUARY

### Transition Activity continued

4. Tell families they may register at any one of the three BPS Family Resource Centers (see [attachment 4a](#) or see below)

#### What Has Countdown to Kindergarten Provided to help?

1. A reminder to parents ([attachment 4b](#)).

The notice is a reminder to parents to register during the first round. Included in this notice is the location and phone number of each BPS Family Resource Center, along with information on the language assessment survey.

#### **Boston Public Schools Family Resource Centers**

##### **East Zone**

1212 Dorchester Ave, Dorchester, MA  
617-635-8015

##### **North Zone**

55 Malcolm X Blvd, Roxbury, MA  
617-635-9010

##### **West Zone**

515 Hyde Park Avenue, Roslindale, MA  
617-635-8040

(Please visit the BPS website for hours of operation of each of these locations)



## FEBRUARY TRANSITION ACTIVITY

### What can I do?

1. Help families to research before and after school options in their community.
2. Give families a list of resources to contact
3. Set up a before- and after- school lending library at your site
4. Collect resources for summer care

*Before and After School program hosted within BPS typically start at 5 yrs of age. However, some do not start until six. Due to the currently state licensing issues, very few on-site programs begin at 4 yrs of age. Parents should ask about starting ages for their school of interest.*

### What has Countdown provided to help?

1. A list of resources to provide to parents (**attachment 5A**)
2. Contact information for providers to obtain copies of before- and after- school program publications from several community and citywide groups (**attachment 5B**).



## MARCH TRANSITION ACTIVITY

### What can I do?

1. Alert families to watch for school assignments in the mail (late March if they registered in January-February). Have them call a Family Resource Center if they have not received their assignment.

*Once families know their assigned schools and the hours the school operates, they can begin to make decisions about before and after school plans.*

### What has Countdown to Kindergarten provided to help?

1. Information sheets on choosing an after-school program (**attachment 6A**).



## APRIL TRANSITION ACTIVITY

### What Can I Do?

1. Encourage families to get their names on waiting lists for Before- and after-school programs and to (develop their plans for care.) (Be sure parents ask the programs about their normal hours of operation and during vacation weeks, holidays, meals, homework help and activities, transportation, staff qualifications, fees, etc...)
2. Alert families to look for a Countdown to Kindergarten Welcome Card in the mail
3. Alert families about Welcome Sessions at their assigned schools. If they can't attend the Welcome session, encourage them to make a separate appointment to visit with their child. This is a great time to meet the principal, teachers, and other new families!



## APRIL Transition Activity continued

### What has Countdown provided to help?

1. A "How to Select an After-School Program" fact sheet  
Produced by Bostnet [www.bostnet.org](http://www.bostnet.org) (see attachment #7A)
2. Countdown to Kindergarten Information Sheet #7 on before- and after-school programs
3. A copy of the Welcome Card for you to post in your program or to remind parents of activities in the coming months
  - *Countdown to Kindergarten mails a Welcome Card to the home of every child registered for Boston Public Schools kindergarten. The Welcome Card provides information to families about the next set of information they should expect to receive from their child's new school, as well as activities in Boston for children and their families. These activities are all a part of an effort to help families transition to kindergarten.*



## MAY TRANSITION ACTIVITY

### What can I do?

1. Provide families with educational activities they can do with their child at home
2. Send in your request for Countdown graduation gifts (posters, bookmarks, etc.)
3. Encourage families to talk with neighbors, the school, Family Resource Center personnel, and / or the BPS Transportation Department to find out if their child will ride a bus to school, where existing bus stops are located and the approximate times for pick-up and drop-off.
  - Chances are, there are children in the family's neighborhood attending the assigned school. Taking a walk with one of these children to an existing bus stop and talking to other parents and children will give parents an idea of the bus schedule.
  - It is advisable that parents investigate school hours\* and transportation and make tentative plans early. Parents may need to make adjustments in their work schedule or set up another support system to accommodate their needs.
4. Encourage families to talk to the school nurse about any Medical issues



MAY

Transition Activity continued

*\* Please be sure to advise parents to call the school and ask what hours the school will operate in September. School hours periodically change.*

What has Countdown provided to help?

1. A poster "Home is a Child's First School" featuring twelve sets of activities. These activities are great to do with children ages 3-5. Every activity is "kid tested." Most can be done with things around the home.
2. 10 Ways To Get Ready For Kindergarten Bookmarks (they are available in eight languages)

*These items make great preschool graduation gifts. To place an order, visit Countdown to Kindergarten web page [www.countdowntokindergarten.org](http://www.countdowntokindergarten.org) or call 617-635-3276.*



## JUNE Transition Activity

### What can I do?

1. For families with additional transportation needs (to and from before- and after-school programs), provide parents with a list of licensed and insured transportation services.
2. Encourage families to check references of transportation vendors, as well as their policies for emergencies, holidays, early release and payment.
3. Distribute Countdown educational gifts to preschoolers at the graduation ceremony.
4. Encourage families to visit the Boston Public Library branch to pick up their Child's free "I'm going to kindergarten T-Shirt" and free activities list.

### What has Countdown to Kindergarten provided to help?

1. A list of licensed and insured privately owned transportation providers. This information was obtained from Child Care Choices of Boston (CCCB). CCCB does not endorse any of these vendors. New vendors are often added to this list. Please call Provider Services at CCCB for additional vendor Listings: (617) 357- 6000.
2. Postcard (see May)



## JULY Transition Activity

### What can I Do?

1. Encourage families to follow-up on before or after school program choices
2. Provide families with a BPS school year calendar and encourage them to plan now for the start of school\*
3. Remind families about Countdown to kindergarten events in August and early September and encourage them to attend.

The Boston Public Schools calendar lists information on the start of school for grades k-12. This calendar also identifies school holidays, professional days, vacation days and citywide early release days.

\*Note: When the child starts school, the school may send home a revised calendar with additional closings, early release days and meetings specific to that school.

\*Note: Many parents take the first few days off from work when their child is about to start school. Encourage parents to put in their request for time-off now.



## JULY

### Transition Activity continued

#### What has Countdown to Kindergarten provided to help?

1. Countdown to Kindergarten posts the BPS school calendar on our website. You can download the calendar or visit any BPS Family Resource Center.
2. Save the date Flyer for the Kindergarten Celebration at the Boston Children's Museum.



## AUGUST Transition Activity

### What can I Do?

1. Join families at the Countdown celebration at the Boston Children's Museum, the local Kindergarten Day parades, and other summer activities.
2. Encourage families to be active partners in their child's education.
3. Call the BPS Hotline for any last minute questions:  
617-635-9046 (mid August thru September)

### What does Countdown to Kindergarten provide to help?

1. A Welcome Celebration for children and their families entering Boston Public Schools kindergarten. The event is held at The Children's Museum in late August.
2. Free transportation to and from the Celebration, at five locations in Boston.
3. A series of activities throughout the summer, including free swims at the BCYF and special ReadBoston events, which are referenced in our Free Summer Activities card.



## AUGUST

### Transition Activity continued

The Welcome event provides an opportunity for families to:

- Have last minute questions answered by school personnel
- Participate in educational activities throughout the museum
- Meet principals, teachers and other families assigned to the same school
- Check out real school buses and learn about safety
- Listen to stories and get library cards
- Enjoy refreshing drinks, snacks and ice cream treats



## SEPTEMBER Transition Activity

### What can I do?

1. Breathe and ...
2. Get ready for the next transition to kindergarten!

### What does Countdown to Kindergarten provide to help?

1. Our special note of thanks.

Countdown to Kindergarten honors your efforts to help families transition to Boston Public Schools kindergarten. We thank you for taking the time to implement these transition practices into your work.

If you have suggestions for this tool-kit or would like to share a comment, please visit our website [www.CountdowntoKindergarten.org](http://www.CountdowntoKindergarten.org) or call us at (617) 635-6816