



**C A M B R I D G E**  
Office of Early Childhood

# Getting Ready For Kindergarten

## - FAMILY GUIDE -

### More Information

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# You are your child's first and most important teacher!

A young child's experiences during the first 5 years play a big role in how well they enter school ready to learn.



Early learning skills are built every day through daily routines at home.

Mealtime  
conversations



Encouraging exploration  
through play



Playing alongside  
your child



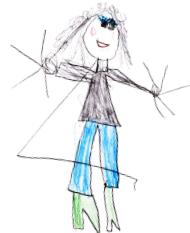
All help build the foundation for lifelong  
success in school.

# MAKING A SMOOTH TRANSITION

Your child's school is excited to welcome them into their new environment. This booklet will help you and your child feel confident and prepared for the first day of kindergarten and beyond!

## A child who is ready...

- is healthy, safe, well-rested and well-nourished;
- feels good about themselves;
- can identify and manage their emotions;
- is curious and loves learning new things;
- can focus and pay attention to another person or an activity;
- interacts positively with other children and adults



Want to learn more about school readiness? Visit our website.

[www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org](http://www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org)



# Build Healthy Routines

## Why is this important?

A consistent routine gives children a positive, confident start to their day. During the first few days of school, arriving on time helps your child feel well oriented and a part of the group

### Try This At Home!

- **Establish new bedtime and morning routines** at least a month before the first day of school. These routines will provide stability as your child navigates the first days and weeks of kindergarten.
- **Ask your child what happened in school.**  
Be specific! Some examples:
  - What book did you read?
  - What did you do at circle time?
  - Who did you sit next to at lunch?
  - What did you play at recess?
- **Remember to dress your child for the weather and the day's activities.** This may include painting and other messy projects.
- **Check your child's backpack** each day for their work and school notices.



# Build Independence

## Why is this important?

Allowing children to try new things on their own has many benefits. Independence helps build self esteem and confidence. These skills are helpful for making friends and being part of a larger community.

### Try this at home!

- **Let your child practice independence** by allowing them to make choices ("Do you want an apple or a banana?" "Do you want to wear a yellow or red shirt? ). Choices encourage your child to develop independence, try new things, and solve problems.
- **Give your child experiences** and time to practice things they will be doing at school:
  - **Manage their own bathroom needs**, including washing and drying hands
  - **Take care of their own clothing** by putting on and taking off their coat and shoes
  - **Carry, open, and close** their own backpack
  - **Open their own snacks and clean up** after meals and playtimes
  - **Provide opportunities** to use pencils, crayons, and safety scissors

# Build Emotional Awareness

## Why is this important?

Understanding emotions leads to strong social-emotional skills.

Social emotional skills are more than just feelings. When children develop strong social-emotional skills, it helps them make and keep friendships, gain confidence, resolve conflicts, manage stress and anxiety, gain awareness of what others are feeling, and make decisions. These are all lifelong skills.

### Try This At Home!

- **Have conversations with your child about their feelings.** Talk about and describe emotions. Help your child label their emotions by using words like happy, sad, frustrated, and excited.
- **Use play to explore emotions.** Role-playing with dolls, puppets, or costumes allows children to practice expressing emotions in a safe and creative way.
- **Encourage resilience.** Learning how to handle setbacks and process emotions helps children adapt to new challenges, a crucial skill for school and beyond.



If your child talks about being unsure about starting Kindergarten, discuss their feelings and give them ways to express their thoughts. Answer your child's questions about school and reassure your child that school is fun!

# Build Foundational Skills Through Play

## Why is this important?

Children at this age learn by doing and being hands on with their learning. Through play, children practice and build the skills needed to be ready for school. This is the perfect time to help your child develop a love of learning!

### Try This At Home!

- **Act out a story or book together.** Visit the Cambridge Public Library to check out books or story times.
- **Sing their favorite songs** and recite your favorite chants/rhymes.
- **Boost your child's pre-reading skills**
  - Help your child learn the letters in their name.
  - Point out letters when playing when outside.
  - Introduce new words into your child's vocabulary such as "That's an enormous dog!" or "This apple is delicious!"
- **Help your child write their name.**
- **Count objects** at home and in your neighborhood.
- **Cook Together!** Have your child help you with simple cooking at home. They can try measuring, counting, and reading from a recipe. Pouring, tearing, and cutting with a butter knife also help build the small muscles in their hands.



# Build Social Skills

## Why is this important?

How young children feel is as important as how they think. Young children learn best when they feel safe, loved, and supported. When children learn about feelings, sharing with friends, and classroom rules, they are building skills for success in school and life.

### Try This At Home!

- **Give your child opportunities to ask for help and offer help to others when needed.**
- **Play simple turn-taking games.** These games offer opportunities for children to learn to take turns, cooperate, or handle frustration. While playing games together, focus on fun instead of winning or losing.
- **Use words to figure out conflicts.** Model your thinking process out loud. It will help your child understand how to cope with frustration and solve problems. Ask open-ended questions such as “What would you do?” to help develop problem-solving skills.
- **Encourage a sense of self. Ask your child questions about their likes and interests.** Ask them to compare their interests to those of their friends. This will help them define their identity in relation to others.



# Build School Involvement

## Why is this important?

Creating a connection to your child's new school will help your child feel more confident and sure about the first day. Plan a school visit with your child before school begins. If you can't see inside, try visiting and playing at the school's playground.

### Try This At School!

- Go to **Back-to-School nights** and parent meetings.
- Join a **parent group**, like the PTA or School Council.
- **Reach out to your child's teacher or principal** if you have questions or concerns.
- Talk to your child's teacher about any **big changes in your life** that may affect your child.
- **Read books about going to school** such as [This is a School](#) by John Schu, or [All Are Welcome](#) by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman. Read in your home language or in English!



# Get Support From Cambridge Public Schools

**Office of Family Engagement  
135 Berkshire Street, Cambridge 02141**

**Director of Family and Community  
Engagement**  
Raymond Porch | 617.201.7817



**Family Engagement Specialist**  
Debbie Bonilla | 617.233.4348

**Haitian-speaking Liaison:**  
Diecline Dorvil | 617.201.6039

**Spanish-speaking Liaison:**  
Jose Rivera | 617.349.6468



**Amharic-speaking Liaison:**  
Aboma Dirbaba | 857.331.1199

**The Family Engagement Office is here to support families, in  
ways that are compassionate, respectful and effective.**

**Scan the QR code to learn how:**



# Family Liaison List By School

Contact the Family Liaison at your school if you have questions or need family support. **If you do not speak English, make sure the school staff talk with you or through an interpreter, not through your child.**

## **Amigos**

Katherine Vasquez-Sanchez  
(617) 349-6315

## **Haggerty**

Lissa Galluccio  
(617) 349-6555 x208

## **Baldwin**

Susan Tiersch  
(617) 349-6525 x105

## **King Open**

Neusa DaCosta  
(857) 235-2961

## **Cambridgeport**

Kristen Emack  
(617) 349-6587 x111

## **Morse**

Amy Diaz  
(617) 349-6679

## **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Marguerite Hicks-Gyewu  
(617) 349-6454

## **Peabody**

Nicole Sullivan  
(617) 349-6530 x1141

## **Fletcher Maynard Academy**

Daniel Skeritt  
(617) 349-6589

## **Tobin Montessori**

Sandra Paunov  
(617) 349-6600 x153

## **Graham & Parks**

Lauren Morse  
(617) 349-6577 x120

# Important Contacts

## Cambridge Office of Early Childhood

**Quéla Jules**, School Readiness Coordinator  
(857) 235-2264 | [qjules@cpsd.us](mailto:qjules@cpsd.us)  
<https://earlychildhoodcambridge.org/>



## Cambridge Public Schools

**Karen Feeney**, Executive Director of Early Childhood  
(617) 349.6716 | [kfeeney@cpsd.us](mailto:kfeeney@cpsd.us)  
[https://secure1.cpsd.us/family\\_portal/](https://secure1.cpsd.us/family_portal/)



## Center for Families

Information, resources, and support in Cambridge:  
**Silvia K. Cote**, Case Manager  
(617)-349-6385 | [scote@cambridgema.gov](mailto:scote@cambridgema.gov)  
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/dhsp/programsforfamilies/centerforfamilies>



## Out-of-School Time Network

For information regarding after-school options:  
**Greg Green**, Elementary School Out-of-School Time Network Coordinator  
(617)-453-8445 | [Ggreen@Cpsd.us](mailto:Ggreen@Cpsd.us)  
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP/programsforfamilies/agendaforchildren>

