



StriveTogether[®]

Every child. Cradle to career.

Cradle-to-Career Outcomes Playbook: Kindergarten Readiness

Kindergarten readiness is critical for lifelong success — and it begins long before a child enters school. The years from birth to kindergarten are foundational, as research shows that children who are ready for kindergarten are far more likely to thrive in life. Ensuring strong starts requires a communitywide investment in education, health care, child care and supportive neighborhoods.

The StriveTogether Kindergarten Readiness Playbook is a comprehensive guide to the latest research and best practices on kindergarten readiness, made possible by support from the Gates Foundation. Communities can use the playbook to identify local needs, prioritize areas for collective action and design tailored strategies. With coordinated efforts, we can ensure every child is ready to thrive in kindergarten and beyond.



Why Kindergarten Readiness Matters

- **Laying the Foundation for Success**

Early readiness leads to future academic achievement, high school graduation, college attendance and, ultimately, economic mobility.

- **Ensuring Healthy Development**

Prenatal care and early health interventions reduce risks associated with low birth weight and

developmental delays. High-quality early child care fosters social, emotional and cognitive growth.

- **Strengthening Economies**

Investing in early education yields high returns by improving life outcomes, reducing social costs over time and increasing communities' economic mobility.



Essential Questions for Kindergarten Readiness

The playbook addresses 17 essential questions to guide planning, offering actionable practices, policies and indicators for tracking progress. The essential questions are grouped into five focus areas:

1. Kindergarten Success

- Are young learners demonstrating readiness across the five key domains?
- Do learners have access to high-quality, full-day kindergarten?

2. High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten

- Are high-quality, full-day pre-K programs available to eligible children?
- Are eligible children enrolled in high-quality, full-day pre-K programs?
- Are pre-k programs adequately funded to support access for families with limited incomes?

3. Teaching and Learning

- Do young learners have trained, certified, representative early childhood teachers and leaders?
- Do young learners have access to quality curricula and instruction?

4. Positive School Environments

- Do young learners have access to quality pre-k environments and facilities?
- Do young learners attend schools with safe, inclusive and supportive environments?
- Do young learners attend schools that support their social, emotional and physical development and well-being?
- Are young learners demonstrating consistent attendance?
- Are there young learners who disproportionately experience exclusionary discipline?
- Are young learners demonstrating positive behavior?

5. Early Experiences and Environments

- Do expecting parents have access to quality prenatal and neonatal care?
- Do families live in well-resourced neighborhoods?
- Do families with young children have access to public supports?
- Do children aged 0-3 have access to the developmental resources they need?



How to Use the Kindergarten Readiness Playbook

Mathematica's Education-to-Workforce Framework is the inspiration behind the playbook's organization and content. The playbook provides research-based guidance to help community leaders:

- Identify priorities
- Track key indicators to measure community-level progress
- Design strategies with stakeholders
- Build collective support for investments in early childhood development



Five Domains of Kindergarten Readiness

1. Language and Literacy Development:

Communication skills and basic vocabulary set the stage for academic success.

2. Cognition and General Knowledge: Foundational math, science and problem-solving skills support later achievement.

3. Approaches Toward Learning: Positive learning attitudes and sustained attention lead to better readiness.

4. Physical Well-Being and Motor Development: Gross and fine motor skills enable active participation and academic engagement.

5. Social-Emotional Development: Emotional regulation and healthy relationships promote motivation and participation in school.