

Prekindergarten in New York State

Family Frequently Asked Questions Answered

What is Universal Prekindergarten (UPK)?

In New York State, prekindergarten comes in many forms. Universal Prekindergarten, or UPK, is a state and federally funded prekindergarten program offered to families free of charge, but does not guarantee that every child will have access.

Is my child entitled to UPK services?

No. Although UPK stands for "universal prekindergarten," in New York State, prekindergarten is not universally available to all families in all school districts at this time. It is a goal New York State is working toward.

When can my child attend prekindergarten?

Depending on the school district, a family can register their child for prekindergarten if their child is three or four years old on or before December 1st. For information on age levels served, please contact your school district.

Once registered, will my child be guaranteed a spot?

No. In districts where UPK is available, entry is based on eligibility age and the district lottery system. Please contact your school district to ask about waitlist possibilities.

What if I feel my child isn't ready for UPK?

UPK is a voluntary program for both school districts and children. Parents and/or caregivers may choose, but are not required, to enroll their child(ren) in a UPK program.

If I choose not to register my child for UPK this year, will they be able to attend next year?

No, because they would be eligible to enter kindergarten the next school year. However, families may send their child to a private prekindergarten program after attending UPK or deliver home instruction.

Will my child be screened before attending UPK?

Yes, as new students, regardless of age or grade level, they are required to be screened upon entry to the school district. Screening provides teachers with valuable information about each child's home language, individual interests, strengths, and needs.

My child may need preschool special education programs or services, can those be provided in a UPK program?

Yes, school districts are responsible for providing special education programs and services in the least restrictive environment. Your school district's committee on preschool special education will work with you to identify how your child's individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives may be addressed in the UPK classroom. Additionally, the IEP will identify the specialized instruction, related services, accommodations, and supports your child may receive to enable them to be educated in an inclusive UPK program to the maximum extent appropriate. For more information, see NYSED guidance [School District Responsibilities for Preschool Inclusion in Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs](#).

How will my child be supported if their home or primary language is not English?

The UPK program will connect learning at school with experiences your child brings from home. Supports may include visuals, books in multiple languages, as well as incorporating home languages throughout the classroom. Children will be encouraged to use all the language skills they have to promote their growth in English. To help your child navigate this new environment, it is important to continue to use your home language, and keep traditions, and culture present in your child's daily life.

If you are looking for more detailed information please use the link or email address below.

<http://www.nysed.gov/early-learning>

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