



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Transition to Kindergarten Factsheet

If your child was born in 2021, they are entitled to a kindergarten seat in NYC starting September 2026

Families of children with disabilities will participate in two processes: **Applying to kindergarten** and **Creating the kindergarten Individualized Education Program** ("IEP"). For more detailed information, see AFC's [Applying to Kindergarten Guide](#) and our [Transition to Kindergarten Guide](#) for students with disabilities.

Applying to Kindergarten

APPLICATION PERIOD: December 9, 2025 - January 23, 2026.

APPLY TO: New York City Public Schools [elementary schools and Gifted & Talented programs](#)

HOW TO APPLY? You can apply in your preferred language in one of these ways:

1. Online: [MySchools.nyc](#)
2. By phone: 718-935-2009 (Monday-Friday, 8am-6pm)
3. In Person: Visit a [Family Welcome Center](#).

AFTER YOU APPLY: You'll get an offer in spring with details on how to accept and register. Your child will also be waitlisted for any schools you ranked higher than the one that made you an offer. Schools can offer waitlist seats until September 2026.

CHARTER SCHOOLS: These are not part of the kindergarten application. Use the [common charter school application](#) or apply to schools directly (most deadlines are by April 1, 2026).

If your child has a disability, the Department of Education ("DOE") will hold an IEP meeting this year to decide:

1. If your child qualifies for special education in kindergarten.
2. The type of class and services your child will need in September.

If the school offering your child a seat through kindergarten application can't meet their needs, the DOE will help find a suitable placement.

QUESTIONS?

For application and enrollment help, email: ESenrollment@schools.nyc.gov

For IEP help, email: kindergartenIEPprocess@schools.nyc.gov

Copy AFC on your emails to the DOE!
kindergarten@afcnyc.org

The Kindergarten IEP Process

REFERRAL. *If your child already has a preschool IEP.* You will get a letter this winter telling you your child was referred to the [Committee on Special Education](#) (“CSE”). It will include contact info for the DOE representative managing your child’s transition.

If you don’t get this letter by February 1, 2026, email kindergartenIEPprocess@schools.nyc.gov or call (718) 935-2007

REFERRAL. *If your child is new to preschool special education.* If referred to preschool special education after March, send an additional referral letter to the [CSE](#) office to request kindergarten services.

EVALUATIONS. Before the IEP meeting, the DOE will review progress reports from your child’s preschool program and providers and decide if new evaluations or classroom observations are needed.

You can:

- Request new evaluations in writing.
- Share private evaluations.
- Gather [medical forms](#).

IEP MEETING. Most kindergarten IEP meetings will take place between February and May. Your participation in this meeting is very important. If you cannot attend the meeting, ask to reschedule. Remember to invite your child’s preschool and special education service providers.

At the meeting, the team will decide if your child qualifies for special education services. If eligible, they’ll create an IEP which includes:

- [Disability Classification](#) (1 of 13 types)
- Recommended program and services
- Goals for your child

SCHOOL PLACEMENT. After the meeting, the DOE will send you a copy of your child’s IEP and a School Location Letter with a kindergarten placement. You should contact the school right away to make sure they can provide your child’s IEP services.

If you do not receive a School Location Letter by June 15th, or the school tells you they can’t provide the services on the IEP, your child may be eligible for voucher for placement in state-approved non-public school for a year. For help, contact our Helpline at (866) 427-6033.

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.

151 West 30th Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10001
Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline: 1-866-427-6033 (toll free), Monday—Thursday, 10am—4pm
www.advocatesforchildren.org

This guide does not constitute legal advice. This guide attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.

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“Least Restrictive Environment”

The DOE aims to place children with and without IEPs in the same classrooms whenever possible.

Program recommendations include:

General Education

Integrated Co-Teaching (“ICT”)

Special Classes

[Specialized Programs](#)

[District 75 schools](#)

[State-approved non-public schools \(NPS\)](#)

[Home or Hospital Instruction](#)

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