



**A U.S. School Navigation Guide  
for  
Immigrant and Refugee Families**



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## **Introduction**

Navigating public education in the United States can be difficult for parents. We developed this guide to help parents understand the public school system, including:

- How schools operate
- What services they provide
- How and when to communicate with your child's school

This guide is meant to be an introduction to public schools in the United States. Schools are different across cities and states. If you have questions at any point, please reach out to your child's school for more information.

Private schools often operate differently than traditional public schools. This guide does not discuss alternative school options. If you would like more information about alternative schooling options, please contact:

- The private school board
- The school district
- Your state education agency

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## Social Norms in the United States

### Time

In the United States (U.S.), time is viewed as “linear.” If something is to start at 8:00 AM (0800), you should be there no later than 8:00 AM. Arriving at 8:01 AM would be late. If your child is consistently late to school, they may get in trouble.

In the U.S., it is usually considered polite to arrive early. This means if something starts at 8:00 AM, it is polite to arrive five or ten minutes early such as 7:50 or 7:55 AM.

Americans usually use a 12-hour time system or clock (for example, 8:00 AM). A 24-hour clock, sometimes called “military time” (for example, 0800) is not usually used.



Although it is considered polite to be early in the U.S., it is also relatively common for people to fall behind schedule. Sometimes unexpected events occur causing people to be late. Sometimes people have busy schedules that put them behind. Generally, people who are using services should plan on being early but be flexible if the provider of the service is running behind.

Source: <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5>

### Appropriate School Dress



In the U.S., you will see people wearing all different types of clothing.

Clothing is a way people express their unique “individualism.” Your child can wear what they would like, but they should follow certain rules. Clothing should be modest, clean, and free from gang affiliation or profanity. Some schools require uniforms.

Hats are not usually permitted in classrooms.

Clothing should be comfortable for the temperature, not too hot or too cold.

Pajamas / Pajama pants are discouraged outside of the home.

See the ‘Resources’ section for information on local places for purchasing clothing. Also see the ‘School Discipline’ section for information about dress code.

## **Imperial vs. Metric Systems**

In the U.S., the imperial system is used to measure and weigh things. Most of the world uses the metric system to measure and weigh things.

This difference of measurement can impact many things from school to daily activities. In school, your child will likely learn to use both the imperial and metric system.

Another important difference is for measuring speed and distance. For example, when you are driving in the U.S., speed limits will be posted in miles per hours (MPH) instead of kilometers per hour. If you are traveling between towns, distances will be listed in miles instead of kilometers. Be sure to follow speed limits when driving, especially in school zones.

The imperial system measures temperature in degrees Fahrenheit while the metric system uses degrees Celsius. In the Rocky Mountain Region (such as Utah), it is not uncommon for temperatures to drop below zero or be negative degrees Fahrenheit.

This also means when your child sees their doctor, weight will be measured in pounds and height will be measured in feet and inches. However, many doctors use the metric system as well. Be sure to talk to your child's doctor if you have any questions about their measurements.

Also, when you are cooking or shopping for groceries, weights will generally be provided in pounds and ounces instead of grams.

The imperial system can be frustrating. Be patient, and don't be afraid to ask questions.



## **Classroom Etiquette**

Your child should be on time, be prepared, and attend every class.

Your child should take responsibility in their education. This means they should do the assigned work and turn in assignments on time. If your child misses school, they need to talk with the teacher and ask for missed assignments.

Your child should be respectful and avoid interrupting others.

If your child has a question or comment, they should raise their hand and wait to be called upon by the teacher before sharing.

Your child should not have private conversations with other students during instruction.

Your child should pay attention and avoid texting on electronic devices such as phones or tablets during class.

Unless your child has permission from the teacher, they should avoid eating food in class. Some teachers do not allow students to chew gum in class.

Unless your child has permission from the teacher, they should avoid working with other students and copying each other's work as this could be considered cheating. Cheating can result in disciplinary action for students.



Your child should be dressed in clean clothes and follow the school dress code.

See the 'School Discipline' section for more information on school and classroom rules, prohibited items, and dress code.

Source: <https://www.seminolestate.edu/student-conduct/student-behavior-guidelines>

## Costs and Fees

Public schools in the U.S. are free to attend. Public school placement is based on where the child lives. Although public school is free, and attendance is required, there can be extra costs and fees with school. You are legally responsible to make sure your child is attending school.

- Some schools have fees for school supplies ranging from \$10-100.
- Some schools have fees to cover the cost of "field trips," which are short activities outside of the school, such as a visit to a museum.
- Schools provide meals that usually cost around \$2.00 per meal.
- Schools offer discounted meals for low-income students. Free or reduced-price meals are offered. Reduced-price meals cost a maximum of 40 cents.
- Teachers may ask for money or donations for school projects and activities.



Meet with the school staff if you have concerns about costs and fees associated with school attendance.

Source: <https://education.costhelper.com/elementary-school.html>

## Common Values in the U.S.

Different places have different values or beliefs. Values guide how people act, think, and behave.

Understanding U.S. values can help with navigating the school system and culture.

Although values can be generalized among different cultural groups, it is important to know many people have different values within the cultural group. This is especially true in the U.S. where many people have value systems different from “general” U.S. values.

Some of the common values in U.S. are:

- Individualism - this value views each person as a unique and separate individual.
- Competition/Capitalism - this value views competition as promoting success.
- Action - this value views hard work and respect to time as important qualities.

Source: <https://www.bu.edu/isso/files/pdf/AmericanValues.pdf>

### **Recognized School Holidays**

During the school year, there will be days when your child does not need to come to school. These are called school holidays, days-off, or breaks.

Common school holidays include: Thanksgiving and/or a fall break, Christmas/Winter break, and Easter and/or spring break.

Sometimes schools will also have administrative breaks for the teachers where children should not go to school.

Make sure you have a current calendar for the academic year.





## Educational Rights

As a parent, you have certain rights to make sure your child gets an education and is kept safe. It is important to know these rights so you can make sure your child is treated fairly. Below are some of your rights related to education.

### Free Public Education



Most countries in the United Nations guarantee free public education in their constitution. The U.S. does not have a national education system, although there are federal laws that apply to education. Each state controls its own rights and laws related to education and must also abide by federal laws. This means:

- Public education in your state may look different from another state
- The money, policies, and curriculum at your child's school are controlled by local and state governments

Although states vary, most states require free public education to all children.

- These are called compulsory education laws.
- Parents are required to make sure their child is in a public, private, or home school program as young as 5-8 years old.
- Children are required to stay in school until they are 16-18 years old, depending on the state. Typically, students cannot withdraw (or dropout) or graduate from school until after this age requirement is met.

Source: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5\\_1.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_1.asp)

### Protection from Discrimination

Discrimination is the unfair treatment of a person or group based on part of their background or identity. People may be treated unfairly due to their:

- Race or ethnicity
- Country of birth
- Citizenship status
- Age
- Gender identity
- Disability status



Schools cannot deny services to, or report, undocumented immigrants to authorities. Also, it is illegal for schools to deny education or discriminate against students based on these factors. Your child's school may request certain records like:

- Proof of address
- Your child's birth certificate
- Previous school records
- Social security numbers
- Proof of immunizations

Sometimes, this information is needed to make sure your child is being enrolled at the right school and ensure the school knows everything it needs to know about your child. However, schools cannot:

- Use this information to prevent your child from enrolling in school
- Request proof of citizenship or immigration status, such as a visa.

Source:

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/know.html#:~:text=OCR%20enforces%20several%20Federal%20civil,on%20the%20basis%20of%20age>

### **Free and Appropriate Public Education**

Free and Appropriate Public Education is a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It makes sure that children with disabilities receive a free public education that is suited to their needs and skills. This law means:

- You do not have to pay for your child's education just because they have additional medical, physical, or mental health needs
- Your child's school is required to change curriculum or assignments and provide support to your child as appropriate so they can learn
- The school has to make sure your child can physically access and use school services



If your child has a disability, they may qualify for specialized education and school services for free. More information about this service is provided in the "School Services" section.

Source: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>

### **Right to Privacy in Education**

Schools keep a lot of information about your child in their files. This can include contact information, medical information, and their grades. Because schools have so much information, it is important that they keep it private.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act makes sure:



- You have access to your child's school records and grades
- Other people who do not work with your child directly do not have access to your child's information
- Only you can give permission for others to look at your child's information

Source: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

## United States School System Design

Schools in the U.S. may be different from other countries. There might also be some things that are the same.

### Preschool

Preschool is a school program that is highly recommended for all children who are between 3 and 5 years old where they can play and get ready for Kindergarten. It is also a way to identify children early who may need extra help with learning.



Preschool is different from daycare because there is a focus on learning and development.

Children in preschool learn language, communication, social skills such as getting along with others, and fine motor skills such as learning to color.

Some preschool programs are free to families who meet income guidelines. One example is the Headstart preschool program. For more information about the Headstart program, see the 'Resources' section.

You can call different preschools to ask questions about their programs and schedule visits.

Although preschool is not part of the U.S. education system, it may be offered in some school districts. Many preschool programs are private and cost money to attend. Early Intervention preschools are free and part of the school district. See the 'School Services' section for more information.

Source:

<http://www.healthofchildren.com/P/Preschool.html#:~:text=Preschool%20is%20an%20early%20childhood,two%20can%20attend%20some%20schools>

### Elementary



Elementary school is Kindergarten to grade 5 or 6. Children in elementary school are usually ages 5-11.

Children attend each grade for one academic year (August to May).

Children in elementary school typically have one main teacher for all academic subjects.

Children in elementary school learn to read and write. They learn math, language arts, science/health, and social studies. They also learn about art, music, library, and physical education.

Children learn about health and how to keep their bodies feeling well by eating healthy foods, drinking water, washing hands, and covering their mouths when they sneeze and cough.

Children learn about social development such as accepting responsibility, practicing self-control, getting along with others, accepting suggestions, and following directions.

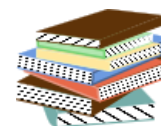
Your child's school will usually hold an orientation day so you and your child can visit the school and ask questions about what to expect.

Some schools provide free bus transportation, and some require a parent or caregiver to provide transportation.

Source: <https://www.verywellfamily.com/what-your-child-will-learn-grade-guide-620869>

## Middle School

Middle school is typically grades 6 to 8, although some schools have what they call a 'Junior High' school, which is grades 7 and 8. Smaller school districts might have children in attendance from grades 7 through 12.



Middle and Junior high school is usually in a different building than the elementary school, and may have a larger number of students in attendance.

Children in middle school typically have different teachers for each academic subject. That means they switch classrooms throughout the day.

Children in middle school often have homework. This means they complete their school work at home and take it to school to give to their teachers.

Children are enrolled in classes such as math, science, language arts, social studies, history, and foreign languages.

Middle school might have student clubs that your child could join such as the Student Government Association.

Your child's school will usually hold an orientation day so you and your child can visit the school and ask questions about what to expect.

Source:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/middleschool.html#:~:text=You're%20growing%20up%20and,life%20skills%2C%20such%20as%20cooking>

## High School



High school is grades 9 to 12. Children in grade nine are typically referred to as Freshman. Tenth graders are known as Sophomores. Eleventh graders are Juniors, and children in grade twelve are Seniors.

High school is usually in a different building, but your child's school might be different.

Just like middle school, there is usually an orientation day at the beginning of the school year. High school students also have different teacher for each academic subject and often have homework. Like middle school, high school students are encouraged to join clubs or teams.

Children in high school are enrolled in classes such as math, also known as algebra, calculus, geometry, and trigonometry. They also take science classes, also known as biology, geology, physics, and chemistry. Children also take language arts, social studies, history, and foreign languages.

Children in high school may also take Advanced Placement (AP) classes. See the 'Standardized Testing' section for additional information about the associated exam.

Some high schools offer concurrent, or dual enrollment programs. These are partnerships between high schools and local colleges that allow children to earn college credits by enrolling them in college classes. This encourages children to attend college after high school and gives them a head start on that path.

Some high schools are approved to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma. The IB program is recognized around the world, and the diploma can be used when students apply to college. If children do not want the diploma, they might be able to take IB classes the same way they would take AP classes. The following websites have more information on the IB program:

Source: <https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/high-school-notes/2014/09/02/discover-the-difference-between-ap-and-ib-classes#:~:text=The%20IB%20Diploma%20Program%20is,by%20colleges%20around%20the%20world.>

## Grade Advancement

Children stay in each grade for one academic year (typically August to May). Some schools are on a "year round" schedule. For example, children may attend school for 60 calendar days (Monday through Friday), and then have 20 days of vacation from school. After 20 days, they will return for another 60 days of instruction. There may be other patterns that schools follow.

Once children complete a grade, they go to the next grade for the next academic year. They do this from Kindergarten, all the way to grade twelve.

Your child goes to school for 13 years total, more if they also attend preschool before Kindergarten.



When your child is in middle and high school (typically grades 6 to 12), they usually need a certain Grade Point Average (GPA) and number of credits to pass to the next grade. Your child earns a specific number of credits each time they complete a course.

A GPA is a way of scoring a child's overall grades. GPAs range from 0-4, where a 0 equals a F grade, and a 4 equals an A grade. For more information about the A through F grading system, see section below titled 'Grading System'

High school students also must meet the GPA and credits requirements to graduate from high school. Graduation requirements are typically located on your school's website or you may talk to the school counselor.

See the 'Technology' section about accessing grades. Grades can typically be accessed online but this might not be an available feature with children in elementary school. You can check with your school.

If you feel your child is having problems with their school work, you can ask to talk with their teacher. This is encouraged and shows interest in your child's school progress and development. Sometimes you can email the teacher, or call the school and leave a message with the administrative assistant. The teacher will call you when they have time.

Source: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/school-help-teens.html>

## Basic Information About School Topics

*Mathematics:* Often called 'math.' This is the teaching of numbers, shapes, and patterns. Basic concepts are taught such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. In middle and high school, other math classes are offered such as algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and calculus.

*Science:* Children learn how to conduct experiments and make predictions about the world around them. In middle and high school, other science classes are offered such as biology, chemistry, physics, geology, and geography.



*Social Studies:* Children learn about United States history, government, and culture. In middle and high school these classes may be called history, civics, government, or political science.

*Language Arts/English:* In elementary school, children learn about proper spelling, grammar, and communication. They also learn how to read and understand English writing. In middle and high school, it may not be called language arts class but maybe called English.

*Foreign Language:* High school students may be able to choose a foreign language class such as Spanish, French, German, Mandarin, or others.

*Art:* In elementary school, art can be coloring, painting, or gluing. In middle and high school, art can include music, photography, painting, pottery, or other options depending on the school.

*Music:* In elementary school, children sing songs and play musical instruments. The school might also have an optional orchestra program that your child can choose to sign up for. In middle and high school, music may be considered an elective class.

*Physical Education:* This is often called 'P.E.' In elementary school, your child will take part in exercise and active movement of the body through games and other fun activities. In middle and high school, your child will learn how to play a variety of sports

Source: <https://www.verywellfamily.com/high-school-subjects-2610106>

## Elective Classes

Schools usually have elective options or classes offered in addition to a standardized curriculum. Elective options are classes students are allowed to take outside of core

educational requirements. These elective classes occur during the normal school day. Examples of elective classes include:

- Theater
- Music
- Art or graphic design
- Physical education
- Computer programming
- Life-skill classes (cooking, sewing, woodwork, automobile servicing, and more!)



Elective classes offered will depend on what school your child is attending. Elective classes are provided in middle and high school. Children usually must take one or more elective classes.

### **Dual Immersion Programs**

Some schools provide dual-language immersion programs. These are programs that provide academic instruction in both English and another language. This allows children to learn a new language or maintain their native language, while learning English at the same time.

Source: <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/dual-language-immersion-programs-boost-student-success>

### **Grading System**

In preschool, children are not typically given grades. In elementary school, children might be graded on a satisfactory (pass) or unsatisfactory (fail) basis. Check with your child's teacher to learn about their grading system.

- Satisfactory (pass) means your child is doing well and learning the information
- Unsatisfactory (fail) means your child needs to make improvements. If this happens, your child's teacher will talk to you about ways to help with learning.

Your child might be graded on a letter system (A to F).

- An A grade means your child understands the information being taught.
- B grades are given for good schoolwork. This means your child understands the information but sometimes has trouble.
- For work that is okay, your child will receive a C grade. This means your child needs help during class.
- A teacher will grade poor work by giving your child a 'D' grade. This means your child needs help outside of class to understand the information being taught.





- An F grade means your child failed the class and will have to take it again to receive credit. Your child needs much help with the information.
- Your child may be given an I grade for 'Incomplete' if they still have homework to give to the teacher. Once the homework has been given to the teacher, a grade of A through F will be assigned.

If your child receives a D or F grade, you should talk with the teacher about how to help your child improve. There might be tutors or additional resources provided by your child's teacher or the school that can help instruct your child either during school hours or after school.

Some schools offer plus (+) and minus grades (-). If you see a + or – beside the grade, that means your child achieved slightly higher or lower than the letter grade.

Grades are selected based on your child's work they complete in school, along with tests and homework.

Some schools do not use the letter-grade system. Some schools use what is called a 'proficiency-based grading system.' Once a child reaches a certain skill level in an academic subject, they are able to move on to the next level.

Many schools put their students' assignment grades in an online system where you can login as often as you like to check those grades.

If you have questions about your child's grades or the grading system used at your child's school, talk with the teacher.

Source: <https://brycs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Educational-Handbook-English.pdf>

## Report Cards

A report card is a piece of paper with a list of your child's classes and grades.

It is sent home 2-4 times per year and some schools ask that you sign it, and send it back to school. Some schools do not require your signature.

A report card may also tell you about how your child is behaving at school.



For children in preschool and elementary school, report cards might have information about social development, including how well they follow directions, listen to the teacher, get along with others, obey school rules, respect others, and produce neat work.

For children in grades 6 to 12, concerns about poor behavior might be emailed from the teacher to the parent.

For children in middle/junior high and high school, they might be given a 'citizenship' grade. This is measured by how active they are in classroom discussions, showing respect for classmates and teachers, and following the rules.

In high school, school grades might be considered for a child's college selection process, and for school awards.

If you do not understand your child's report card, talk to the teacher.

Source: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/key-components-report-cards-explained/>

### **Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)**

Most schools have a PTA, which is a formal group of parent volunteers that meet on a regular basis to discuss important information about the needs of the children and teachers in their school.



The PTA typically conducts fundraising activities, so they can host fun and educational events for families. They also fundraise for new items or programs the school might need such as a reading program, computers, or other new equipment.

If you are interested in joining your school's PTA, talk to your child's teacher.

## Extracurricular Options and After-School Programs

### Extracurricular Activities

In addition to activities completed in association with the school, your child should also consider involvement in extracurricular activities. The activities are additional engagements in various commitments such as clubs, sports, or employment.

Extracurricular activities are helpful for developing useful life skills and hobbies, as well as improving resumes for applications for jobs, technical school, and/or colleges once high school is completed.

Examples of extracurricular activities related to school include:

- Sports teams
- Special-interests clubs
- Student government
- Music groups or drama/theater

Examples of extracurricular activities related to the community include:

- Music groups, theater, dance, etc.
- Volunteer positions
- Involvement with a church or other respected organization



Examples of extracurricular activities related to employment include:

- Internships
- Part-time jobs
- Babysitting

Source: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/outside-the-classroom/extracurriculars-matter-to-you-and-to-colleges>

### After-School Programs

Schools generally also have after-school programs that run until the end of the workday. These programs vary by schools and are dependent on various factors such as school funding. After-school programs organize activities for children after the school day ends. These programs are supervised by one or more adults. Some schools may also have before-school programs.

There are many examples of after-school programs and options offered vary by school. Common after-school programs include sports, music, and personal development programs. Some schools may offer academic related after-school programs like Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

More after-school programs are offered for children in middle and high school.

After-school programs *usually* cost extra money. Generally, there is a cost associated with renting gear or purchasing necessary items. You can talk with your child's school to see if any waivers can be completed to decrease additional costs associated with many after-school programs.

After-school programs also have extra needs for travel. If your child stays after school for an after-school program, it is the parent or guardian's responsibility to ensure transportation after the program is complete.

After-school programs can help children meet new friends, learn new skills, and prepare for adulthood.



**AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM**

## School Procedures

Schools have a lot of children to manage, so they must have procedures for parents and children to follow to ensure the school environment is safe, efficient, and promotes learning.

### Administrative Procedures for Registration

You will need to register your child to attend school in the U.S.



Registration usually occurs at the start of the school year, in August or September. For preschool and kindergarten, registration usually takes place in the spring for those children starting the following school year.

If you move to a new place in the middle of the school year, you can still register your child for school by contacting the public school district where you live.

If you need an interpreter, you can ask for one and the school district will arrange it for you. See the “Communication with Schools” section for information on how to request an interpreter.

The school district will schedule an appointment to help you with the paperwork to get your child registered for the school your child will attend.

The school district will ask you to bring your child’s birth certificate or passport, immunization record, or other health records to the appointment. The school should not ask for documentation about immigration status in the U.S. The school cannot deny your child access to school services based on immigration status. See the ‘Educational Rights’ section for more information.

You will also need to bring papers to show proof of where you live, such as an apartment lease or utility bill with an address.

Source: <https://usahello.org/education/children/register-child-in-school/#gref>

### Figuring Out Which School Your Child Should Attend

You can contact your school district to ask about which school your child will attend according to your address and your child’s age.



You may also search the internet for a map of the boundaries of your school district, which will also show which schools children will attend according to where they live in the city or town.

Source: <https://usahello.org/education/children/register-child-in-school/#gref>

### Record Keeping

Schools keep records on students such as parent or guardian contact information, grades, credits earned, attendance, health records, Individual Education Programs (IEP), and 504 plans.



Not all children have an IEP or 504 plan. If your child has one, you will be given a paper copy. You should keep this in a place within your home where you can easily access it. See the 'School Services' section for more information about IEPs and 504 plans.

Most student records are digital. That means they are stored in a confidential computer software program.

Some paper files are kept on children. For example, emergency contact information and important health and medical information.

Only certain people within the school who work directly with your child can have access to your child's records. Only you as the parent or guardian can give permission to people outside the school to look at your child's record. You as the parents or guardians have access to your child's records. You might give case workers or other service providers in the community access to your child's records so they can get to know your child's needs.

If you need to access your child's records such as a transcript, you may contact the school office to make the request.

A transcript is similar to a report card, but is for high school students. This is a paper or electronic document showing classes taken, credits given for each class, and overall Grade Point Average (GPA).

More information about student records can be found in the sections on 'Technology' and 'Educational Rights.'

### **Who Can Pick Up Kids from School**

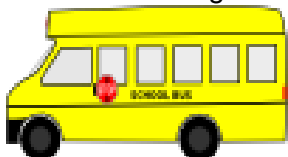
If you need to pick up your child during the school day for a doctor's appointment (or other appointment), you must first check in at the front office.



You will probably be asked to show your photo identification card to check your child out of school during the school day. At the beginning of the school year, you would have filled out paperwork that stated who would be permitted to pick up your child from school. Usually, this would be certain family members or perhaps a caregiver. The people on this list will also likely be required to show photo identification prior to taking your child out of school.

### **Transportation**

Some schools have a school bus service, and others do not. Each school district decides if they will provide transportation to children. You can ask your school if it is provided. If your child receives special education services, it may be provided as part of your child's Individual Education Program (IEP).



If your child will be picked up by a school bus, your school will send home information about the location of the bus stop. This means you will take your child to the bus stop each morning at a certain time.

If there is no school bus service, this means you, a family member, friend, or caregiver, will need to drop off your child at school at the designated drop off time.

If you feel you live close enough to the school, and your child can walk safely, you may practice walking the route to and from school with your child until they can walk it independently. If your child is able, they may ride a bike to and from school (weather permitting).

If your child takes the school bus home, you might pick up your child at the bus stop at the designated time, or your child may walk home.

If you completed paperwork approving other family members, friends, or caregivers to pick up your child, they may also pick up your child after school.

Your school will send home information about child pick up and drop off procedures, which might include a map of the school grounds.

You are accountable for picking your child up for school or arranging a method to make sure they get home safely.

### **Absences and Tardies**

If your child is enrolled in a public or private school, attendance is required by law. Showing up to school on time and consistently is expected and important for maximizing school learning.

Parents can get in trouble if their child misses too many days of school or is late (tardy) too many times.

An absence is when your child is not at school for the entire day. There are two types of absences. They are known as excused and unexcused. A parent/guardian must contact the school for an absence to be considered excused.

Examples of excused absences include:

- Illness
- Religious holidays
- Suspensions from school
- School sports team participation
- Family member death

Examples of unexcused absences include:

- Not going to school (and not having an important reason).
- Sometimes this is called 'skipping school' or 'skipping class.'



### **Tardies**

A tardy means a child arrived late to school or to class. Just like absences, tardies can be excused and unexcused. The same examples of absences apply to excused and unexcused tardies.

Source: <https://usahello.org/education/children/register-child-in-school/#gref>

## Homework

Homework is schoolwork that is sent home with your child to complete in the evening and take back to school.



Some schools might give children a planner/calendar each year to stay organized with classwork and homework due dates.

Your child might need your help to complete homework in the evening. You should provide a quiet location at a table and allow sufficient time to complete homework before your child's bedtime.

If your child is at home sick for more than one or two days, you can call the school office and ask for homework to be sent home, so your child does not fall behind. The administrative assistant or other staff member will have the teacher prepare the homework and leave it at the office for you to pick up at a certain time. You can also ask your teacher if there is an alternative way to access your child's homework such as through an online system.

## Lost and Found

Most schools have a 'Lost and Found' box. This means if children leave their clothing or other items on the playground, or in the hallway, the item gets placed in this box.

It is a good idea to label your child's clothing items with their name, so a staff member can return the item to your child.

For older children, you may not need to label their clothing items, unless there are many children with similar clothing items, such as schools where school uniforms are required.



If your child loses clothing or other items at school, you should ask your child to check the lost and found box.

If you check in at the front office, you may be allowed to check the lost and found box yourself rather than relying on your child to look through it.

## School Meals

U.S. schools serve breakfast and lunch to students since they are in school during these mealtimes. Typically, parents are expected to pay \$1-2 per meal for each child. Your child's school will send you information at the beginning of each year to inform you how to pay. If you cannot afford this fee, you can apply for free or reduced lunch prices.



Some schools receive funding to give all students free or reduced price breakfast. If not, free or reduced lunch price waivers also apply to breakfast.

The National School Lunch Act states all students should have lunch at school. Because of this,

- Some schools will automatically give free or reduced lunch prices to all qualifying students.
- Other schools will have a form for you to fill out, if you would like to apply for free or reduced lunch prices.



Your child will receive the same lunch at a free or reduced-price as children whose parents pay full price. Generally, U.S. school lunches:

- Include nutritionally balanced options for the children to choose from.
- Provide milk or fruit juice as a drink.
- Serve fruits and vegetables every day as part of the meal or in a salad bar for your child to select separately.
- Include meat and grains.
- Follow American cuisine. This means foods like hamburgers, pizza, chicken nuggets, pasta, and sandwiches are most frequently served.

The school provides a calendar online or on paper to all parents that lists what meals will be available each day.

If you have dietary, religious, or allergy concerns for your child, you can:

- Make and pack them a lunch from home to eat at school
- Talk to the school secretary. Most schools will honor requests related to allergies when serving your child food.

Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp>

## School Staff and Faculty and Their Roles

There are many people with different roles in the schools in the U.S. Schools may use different titles for the people that fulfill those roles.

### Superintendent

Every school is located in a school district.



The superintendent is the top administrator in the school district. The superintendent works with the district's school board to meet the goals they have outlined.

The superintendent also makes decisions about how money is spent, educational programs in the schools, and equipment in schools.

The superintendent hires, supervises, and manages the principals in a school district.

### Principal

The principal is in charge of the school. The principal is the leader and makes sure the operations of the school run smoothly. The principal can make decisions about suspensions and expulsions of students (see the "School Discipline" section). The principal supervises the teachers and staff at the school.

### Assistant Principal

Some schools have an assistant (or vice) principal, and some do not. An assistant principal helps the principal.

### Administrative Assistant

An administrative assistant is typically located in the front office of the school to welcome parents and other visitors.



Sometimes this person may have other titles such as 'secretary' or 'receptionist.' Each school may choose to use a different title for this person.

This person also answers the phone and takes messages for the principal, teachers, and other staff members. This person might also take attendance, and schedule meetings such as parent-teacher conferences.

Some schools might have an attendance office or attendance secretary that you can call to let them know your child will be late or absent from school.

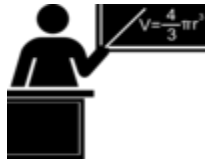
### Special Education Teacher

Special education teachers work closely with children who need more time to learn new information.



Those children might have learning or physical disabilities. Those children will have an Individual Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan that provides them with a variety of special services during the school day. See the section titled 'School Services'

### **General Education Teacher**



The general education teacher provides instruction to children, alongside their peers, in the core academic curriculum. They create and implement lesson plans to promote the learning of all children in the classroom. They must also be able to provide instruction in ways that meet the learning needs of all children.

Source: <http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/specific-roles-general-educators/>

### **Paraprofessionals and Aides**

A paraprofessional is sometimes also called a teacher's aide. This person helps children who need extra help. Children might need extra help with personal care, academics, or emotional needs. Paraprofessionals and teacher's aides might work with children in special education classrooms or in general education classrooms

Source: <https://www.betterteam.com/paraprofessional-job-description>

### **English Language Learner (ELL) Teacher / Assistant**

English language teachers work with children who are learning English as their second language. Children will learn how to listen, speak, read, and write in the English language. Some schools offer ELL classes for parents and other adults. You can call the school to ask.

### **School Psychologist**

School psychologists perform special testing on children to see if they need extra help. They help children and teachers come up with ideas to deal with problems like anger, fighting with classmates, or other problems in the school. They also provide emotional support strategies that school staff can use with students.

Source: <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/who-are-schoolpsychologists>

### **School Nurse**



School nurses manage care plans of children who have medical needs. If your child needs to take medication at school or has a medical condition, the nurse will call you to ask questions, and set up your child's care plan

Some schools have their own nurse, but other schools might have a nurse that travels to different schools each day, so they may not always be at one school. See the section titled 'Health Care' for more information.

Source: <https://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/nursing/blog/being-school-nurse/>

## **School Counselor**

Most schools have a school counselor. School counselors are there to listen if a child is having strong emotions such as sadness. School counselors go to each classroom and give children ideas on how to manage their emotions. School counselors can also provide a list of mental health resources and referrals for your child that are available in the community.

In high school, counselors often help children plan for when they finish high school such as if they want to go to college or get a job.

## **School Social Worker**

Some schools have a school social worker. School social workers work with children who struggle with managing their emotions and behavior. They help assess and refer children for counseling or other types of services available in the school.

School social workers are often part of Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings and services provided to children.

Sometimes school social workers will visit a child's home to make sure the child has what they need to be successful in school.

They can also provide a list of mental health resources and referrals for your child that are available in the community.

Source: <https://www.sswaa.org/school-social-work>

## **School Volunteers**

Some schools allow volunteers, or adults, from the community to come in and help children with a variety of activities. Volunteers work for free and must pass screening requirements set up by the school, such as a background check.

Volunteers might help children with academic skills such as reading or math. Volunteers might engage in fun learning activities with children. Volunteers might help children prepare for college.

Volunteers make a difference by providing more positive role models in a child's life, which improves their chances at doing better in life.

Source: <https://sfedfund.org/5-reasons-volunteer-school/>

## **School Officer or Security Guard**

Some schools have police, security, or resource officers. These officers watch the school campus during the day to keep children safe from harm. If there is criminal activity, the police will be called.



Source: [http://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PF\\_IssueBriefs\\_Defining-the-Role-of-School-Based-Police-Officers\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PF_IssueBriefs_Defining-the-Role-of-School-Based-Police-Officers_FINAL.pdf)

<https://www.npr.org/local/309/2019/08/27/754459083/having-the-talk-expert-guidance-on-preparing-kids-for-police-interactions>

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## School Calendar

Schools in the U.S. are in session for most of the year, but there are regular holidays and breaks.

### Required Education Days

Schools are required to be open and teaching students 180 days a year on average, but this number can vary by state. Because of this:

- Schools usually start in late August / early September and end in May or June the following year.
- Students are expected to go to school every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday during this period unless the school is closed.
- Schools are closed for the summer months, like June and July, and sometimes parts of May or August.

Some schools will follow a modified schedule that has different starting and ending dates. If this is the case for your child's school, they will tell you.

Your child's school will send a yearly calendar at the beginning of the school year for you to keep. If your child has not started school yet, this calendar will be given to you with the registration materials.

Source: <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/95/05/9505.pdf>

### School Holidays

In addition to summers, schools also close for short periods during the school year. Schools are typically closed for:

- Federal and state holidays like Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, and Labor Day.
- A few days in September or October, usually called "Fall Break."
- Thanksgiving Day
- Two weeks surrounding Christmas and New Years Day, usually beginning the Monday before Christmas and ending the day after New Years Day, if it is not a weekend, usually called "Winter Break."
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
- New Year's Day
- A few days to a week in March or April, usually called "Spring Break."



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School\\_holidays\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_holidays_in_the_United_States)

### **Other School Closures**

Schools may close for other reasons, but this varies between school districts. One reason schools may close for the day is to have a Teacher Preparation Day.



- Teacher Preparation Days typically occur once a term or semester.
- They usually occur on the Friday before or after parent-teacher conferences, but this may vary depending on your school district.

Schools will also close for dangerous weather events or due to large amounts of snowfall. If schools close for these reasons, you will be told by the school as soon as possible (see Technology section).

Source: <https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/32551>

### **School Day Schedule**

The amount of time your child is expected to be in school will depend on their age, school district, and weekday. In general, school begins between 7-9 AM and ends between 2-4 PM. You can find the time your child needs to arrive at and leave school on the school website and calendar.

Many schools include a short day once a week, this can mean:

- School starts 1-2 hours late one specified day per week, often called “Late Start.” This day will be the same for all students every week of the year.
- School dismisses 1-2 hours early once a week, usually on Friday.
- If your school has a short day, it will be listed on the school calendar.

Source: [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708\\_035\\_s1s.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass0708_035_s1s.asp)

## Communication with Schools

### School to Parent Communication



In the U.S, schools typically expect parents to participate in the education of their children. To participate in your child's education, communication with the school is important. There is information schools share with parents as well as information parents share with schools.

Here are some examples of information your child's school might need to share with you:

- The school is closed due to weather that day.
- Your child is sick or broke school rules and needs to come home.
- Your child's teacher would like to talk to you about your child's performance or behavior in class and how to help them.
- The school is having a special event for the students, like an assembly.

Schools also expect parents to share information about their child so the school can take care of all students. You should contact your child's school if:

- Your child has missed or will miss school because they are sick, visiting a doctor, or attending a family event.
- Your child has allergies or needs to avoid certain foods for their health.
- Any of your important contact information like phone number or address changes. This information needs to be up-to-date so the school can contact you if they need to.
- You have any questions for the school

Most of the time, you are encouraged to contact the school whenever something changes or you have a question. The school will usually contact you at specific times through the school year including:

- Before the school year and during the first month, the school will send you a lot of information about school and class policies.
- Most schools also send weekly general updates to keep parents aware of events and lunch menus.
- Schools will often send reminders about bigger events like school holidays or parent-teacher conferences a few days before as well.
- Depending on your child's age, teachers might also contact you. Teachers of younger students may send a daily or weekly note home to share with you how your student did that day. They may also tell you about assignments and class news this way.



Because there is a lot of information the school is sharing with you, there are lots of ways the school may contact you. Other than phone calls and letters, most of this communication will come through technology. See the “Technology” section to learn more.

Make sure you know how your child’s school sends information to you. Check your mailbox, email, and phone regularly for messages from the school.

## **Contacting the School**

If you want to talk with the school, the fastest ways to contact the school are through:

- Phone calls to the office
- Emails to your child’s teacher or to office staff
- If you need to you can set up a meeting with your child’s teacher or with administrators to talk about your questions or concerns.
- Some teachers may also have an online communication platform. Teachers may use apps like WhatsApp or ClassDojo to talk to you. You can also use these apps to contact teachers, but not school staff and administrators. If your concern is outside your child’s classroom, please talk to your child’s teacher.

Source: <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/working-with-childs-teacher/how-often-should-parents-contact-teachers>

## **Translation and Interpretation**

When you receive a letter or email from your child’s school:

- It will most likely be in English
- Some schools also include automatic Spanish translations, but other languages are less common
- If you do not understand English, you can request translated forms through the school district.
- This process is different for each school district, so ask an administrator at your child’s school how to make this request.
- Google translate can also be useful for translation and interpretation services, but the translation may not be perfectly accurate.

If you do not feel comfortable speaking or understanding English, you can also request an interpreter for meetings at the school.

- Most schools ask that you give them a few weeks' notice so they can find an interpreter that speaks your language

- You can make this request to your child's school through a paper form, an online application, or a phone call. Ask the school secretary which method the school uses.

Source: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>

## Use of Technology in Schools

Technology can mean several things. In schools, technology is the devices that students use to complete their class work such as computers and tablets. Technology also refers to web pages, grading and attendance software, communication apps, email, and social media pages.

### Accessing Grades and Attendance

Most schools have an online grade reporting system, or other software program.

At the start of the year, schools typically send home information with instructions on how to login.

Parents can login regularly to check their child's progress in each subject area such as math, science, and so on. Parents can also check their child's number of absent days from school and tardies.



If children are in higher grades, they will be able to login to check their scores on homework assignments and overall grades in subject areas.

If you have problems or questions about the online system, ask your child's teacher or the school administrative assistant for help.

### School news



Some schools will send home a school newspaper or newsletter, with important dates and information. This may be sent by email rather than on paper.

Some teachers will send home a classroom newsletter every week or month to let you know what is happening in your child's classroom.

School or classroom news might be shown on the social media pages, or on the school's website.

Many schools have a web page with detailed information about the school, the teachers, a calendar, and a schedule of events and activities.

Some schools and teachers might send parents an email with important news. It is important to check your email frequently.

If there is an important message from the school, or school district, you may receive a phone call with an automated voice message.

For additional information, see the 'Communication with School' section.

### Social Media

Many schools have their own Facebook, Instagram, or other social media page to keep parents informed of school activities.



At the start of the year, your child's teacher will send home papers with instructions on how to join the classroom and school social media pages. Sometimes, the teacher might use an app to communicate with parents such as Class Dojo, Remind, or other app.

## **Homework Requirements**

Homework is schoolwork that is done at home during evenings and weekends.

In elementary grades, homework is most often completed on paper. In higher grades, a computer is often needed to do homework.

Many schools provide 1-1 technology. This means each child receives their own computer to use while at school, and often at home too.

It is important that your child be able to access the internet for certain homework assignments. If you do not have internet access (WiFi) at home, ask your child's teacher for help.

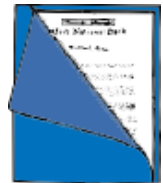
You could also check at your local library or community center, as they usually have computers and internet for the public to use.

## **Distance Learning**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, some children might have to attend school from home. This is called distance learning.

Your child's teacher will send home papers (or email you) with instructions on how and when to join the classroom from home every day.

You will need to use a computer such as a Chromebook.



You will need to let the teacher know if you don't have a computer. They should be able to loan you one.

You will need to let the teacher know if you do not have internet (WiFi) access in your home. They might be able to help you get this.

## School Discipline

School discipline refers to the school rules and procedures put in place when a child breaks the rules.

### School and Classroom Rules



Rules tell children what they can do and what they cannot do. Rules let children know how they should behave in the classroom and in the school. Rules also let children know what they should and should not bring to school.

The teacher talks about the rules and consequences for breaking the rules at the start of the school year, and reminds children of them each day.

Teachers may send home papers that explain the rules and what happens when children don't follow them.

Most schools also have a student handbook that contains a list of rules and is located on their website.

Parents can ask questions at parent teacher conferences, typically 2-3 times per year. If you would like to talk with your child's teacher, see the section titled 'Communication with School.'

Source: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/rule>

Examples of School Rules:

- Children listen/obey the teacher and follow instructions.
- Children walk inside the school. They do not run.
- Children stand in a line at the classroom door to walk to recess, the lunchroom, or other areas of the school.
- Children do not push, hit, or say bad words to each other
- Children complete some schoolwork at home and bring it back to school
- Children do not bring toys to school unless the teacher says it is okay for show and tell, or a school project.
- Children do not bring weapons to school such as knives or guns
- Children do not take things home from school unless the teacher says it is okay to do so
- For additional school rules, see the 'United States Social Norms' section.



If children do not follow the rules, there are consequences. There are also rewards for good behavior.

## Consequences

When a child does not follow the rules, the teacher might give the child a time out. A time out is a break from the classroom activity.

If you have concerns about how your child is being treated by their teacher, it is a good idea to bring it up with a different teacher or faculty member such as the principal.

## Detention

The teacher might give a child a detention, which means they stay indoors during recess, lunch, or after school to complete extra schoolwork.

This is a strategy used mainly in middle or junior high and high school. In elementary school, time outs or breaks are more likely to be used.



Sometimes, a teacher might send a child to a different room for a timeout. This room is meant to give the child a quiet space to take a break.

If a child breaks many rules, they may be sent to the principal's office to talk about how to correct their behavior

The principal might decide on a consequence. The principal might need to talk to the child's parents about the behavior

## Suspension

If a child shows dangerous behavior, they could be suspended from school for one or two days, or longer. This is serious and means they are required to stay home from school. They are expected to still do all of their schoolwork at home.

## Expulsion

Expulsion is when a child is permanently removed from the school, or told they cannot come back. The reasons a child could be expelled are for dangerous behavior and consistently violating serious school rules such as bringing a weapon (knife or gun) to school. Other reasons for expulsion might be for fighting, bringing illegal drugs or alcohol to school, or being under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol. The length of time a child will be expelled from school is different for every school district.

Parents are sometimes given a warning and asked to have a meeting about their child's dangerous behavior.



Children who have been expelled might have the opportunity to attend alternative school programs. You can ask your school principal to help you find some options.

Parents can help at home by talking with their child about their behavior and how they are expected to behave

Source: <https://www.weareteachers.com/logical-consequences-in-the-classroom-2/>

## Rewards

Teachers often provide children with rewards for following the classroom rules. Rewards might be stickers, prizes, tokens, getting to be the teachers' helper, or extra recess/play time outdoors. Each school may have a different reward system. Ask your teacher to explain it to you.



Source: [https://www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/curr301.shtml](https://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr301.shtml)

## Prohibited Items

Prohibited means these things are not allowed inside the school. Weapons such as guns and knives are prohibited in all schools as are drugs and alcohol. Check your school handbook to see which items are prohibited, as each school is different

The following items are typically prohibited: Toy (plastic) guns, drugs/alcohol, medicine, cigarettes, vape pens, lighters, matches, pets, or anything you consider valuable and could get lost.



If you are not sure, ask the teacher first before allowing your child to bring an item to school.

If your child brings one of these items to school, it could be taken away. Your child might have to talk with the principal about why the item was brought to school. Your child could get expelled from school for bringing a prohibited item.

## Dress Code

There may be clothing items that are prohibited in your child's school such as sleeveless tops or denim pants with holes on the legs. Every school is different, so it is important to check your school's handbook. Clothing items associated with a person's religion, such as a hijab for example, are permitted.

Many schools do not allow hats, hoods, bandanas, and any clothing that shows gang affiliation. Gangs are groups of people that cause trouble in communities.



Schools do not allow any type of show of support for gangs including hand signs, tattoos, clothing, or other symbols. No other symbols (pictures or signs) are allowed that might upset other children in the school.



Children should always be appropriately dressed according to the weather. For example, if it is cold outside, they should have a warm coat, hat, gloves, and shoes.

For more information about appropriate dress, see the 'United States Social Norms' section.





## School Services

Schools provide a lot of different services for students, including language services, specialized education, and behavior supports.

### English Language Services

U.S. schools teach lessons in English unless your child is enrolled in a language immersion or elective language course. If your child does not understand English, schools are required to help them learn English. This means:



- Schools must find which students need help understanding and speaking English.
- Provide language learning services to these students.

English Language Services can include:

- Taking your child to a separate classroom for English language learning for part of the day or one subject
- An aide who comes to your child's classroom to give English language lessons in the classroom

The goal of English language learning programs is to make sure your child can understand and participate in the regular classroom. If your child does not understand or speak English but they do not receive these services, talk to their teacher or the principal.

Source: <https://www.nap.edu/read/24677/chapter/9>

### Gifted and Talented Education

For children that have above average academic or creative skills, schools may offer advanced classes. If you think your child is gifted and may benefit from these courses:

- Check that your child's school offers this program.
- Talk to your child's teacher or school psychologist to request an assessment
- The school will test your child to see if they are eligible

Source: <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/gifted-education-us>

### Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act



Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was created to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities. If your child has a disability, they may be eligible for a 504-plan at school.

504-plans are documents created for your child to make sure their teacher(s), aides, and school staff understand what your child needs and how to help them.

These plans can include behavior support like:

- Scheduled breaks for your child throughout the day
- Reward systems to help your child stay on task

504-plans may also include accommodations to make sure your child can participate in class. For example:

- Changes to the classroom seating chart so your child can get to their chair or see the teacher
- Extra time for tests or assignments
- Visual or audio aids
- Technology for communication assistance

If your child has special healthcare needs, a 504-plan could make sure your child:

- Has regular visits to the school nurse
- Is sent to the office to take prescribed medications
- Can get to and move around the school building

Schools usually require proof of a disability to provide a 504-plan. If your child has a disability, talk to your child's school about a possible 504-plan. In addition to 504-plans, healthcare plans are available through the school nurse. See [CHAPTER REFERENCE SCHOOL STAFF].

Source: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/504-plans.html>

## **Special Education**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires schools to provide an appropriate education for children with disabilities. Because of this, schools have to identify students with disabilities and make sure they get needed services. This is different from a 504-plan in several ways:

- A 504-plan can help your student with accommodations and supports, but it cannot change the curriculum. Only special education qualifies a student for specialized education and teaching.
- Students with any form of documented disability needing aid can receive a 504-plan. However, students need to be evaluated for a disability through the school to get special education services.

If you or your child's school suspects your child has a disability, the following will happen:

- You will receive a letter from the school to let you know their concerns or you will need to notify the school in writing of your concerns and request an evaluation.
- You will be asked to give permission if you want your child to be evaluated. If you do not want your child to be evaluated or have specialized education, you can say no.
- During the school day, your child may be pulled out of class for some testing with the school psychologist or another professional approved to evaluate the suspected disability type.
- You may be asked to answer questions on a survey or in-person with a school psychologist or other personnel about your child.

During this process, the school is required to have an interpreter and translation services for you if you do not understand or speak English fluently.

If your child qualifies after evaluation, you will be asked to meet with the school as a team to create an Individualized Education Program (also called an IEP) for your child. At this meeting, remember:

- You are part of the team and have the right to voice your opinions and preferences related to services.
- You can say no to the services the school suggests.

Before the meeting, you should receive a letter that lists all your rights as a parent. If you do not understand the letter, you can ask the school staff to explain it to you. Keep this letter and any reports the school gives you related to your child's special education.

At the IEP meeting, you will be given information regarding your rights as a parent. It is important to review this information and make sure you understand you and your child's rights regarding special education services.

An IEP can include a lot of different programs and supports for your child, depending on their needs. Many of these are the same as the services listed above for a 504-plan. In addition to those, IEPs can make sure your child:

- Sees a special education teacher for part of the day to work on lessons specific to your child
- Meets with a psychologist, social worker, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist for specific services
- Is given assignments that are specific to their ability level
- Has help preparing for adult life after high school

When the team creates this plan for your child, it will also have specific goals for your child to work toward. Once a year, you will meet with your team to review the plan and how your child is

doing. Every three years, your child's file will be reviewed and assessment will occur again as needed to make sure your child still needs an IEP and change these goals.

Source: <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/ieps/understanding-individualized-education-programs>

### **Early Education Preschool**

Also, through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, children with disabilities or developmental delays may be eligible for early intervention services at schools. These are often provided in the form of a half-day or full-day preschool. If your child is between the ages of 3-5 and not yet in kindergarten, you can request an evaluation for these services.

The process is similar to an IEP:

- Talk to the school to see if they provide an early education preschool program.
- If they do and your child may benefit, request an evaluation.
- If the school finds your child has a disability or developmental delay, they will meet with you to develop an IEP and admit your child to early education preschool.

## Health Care

### Sick Days

When your child is sick, they need to stay home from school. Children need to stay home if they might make others sick. Some examples include:

- They have a fever.
- They are vomiting.
- They have diarrhea.

If you are unsure if your child needs to stay home, call their doctor or the school. Make sure your child is safe to stay at home. You may need to have a family member or friend watch your child if you work.



If your child gets sick at school, they can tell the teacher, the school nurse, or another faculty member to get help.

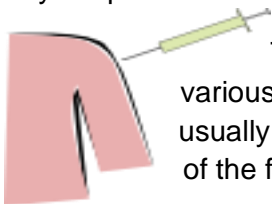
Children with special health care needs often require more sick days. They may need more time to heal when they get sick and they often have more doctor's appointments. This is normal and the school will understand, just be sure to communicate with the school about your child's needs.

Some schools may require doctor notes if your child is sick or misses school for an appointment. Review your child's school policy around doctors' notes and excused absences.

Source: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/When-to-Keep-Your-Child-Home-from-School.aspx>

### Shots and Vaccines

Vaccines are injections, or shots, that help provide people protection against various infections. Vaccines are safe and help prevent your child from getting sick. When your child is vaccinated according to requirements, they are also helping other people stay safe because they are less likely to spread an illness.



There are vaccine requirements for initial enrollment in school and then at various points during your child's education. For initial enrollment, schools usually require certain shots to be completed before starting or within two weeks of the first day of school

Shots are required to attend school. Shots can be completed at many places such as doctor offices, public health offices, local health fairs, and many pharmacies.

Since shots are required for school attendance, it is important to have a paper or electronic access to vaccine records. Be sure to ask the person who administers the shot how to access records for proof of completion or request a printed version.

If your child does not have their shots, certain steps must be completed in order for the child to enter school:

- If you have medical, religious, or personal objections against vaccinations, your child may be able to opt out of vaccinations.
- Some states may require a valid medical exemption from their doctor OR the school may require the first dose of the shots must be given within the first 14 days of school. Other states may be more lenient on vaccine requirements. It is important to review the school's vaccine policy.
- Most colleges require proof of vaccinations.

Usual required vaccines for elementary school include:

- Diphtheria and Tetanus toxoid-containing vaccine and Pertussis vaccine (DTaP or Tdap)
- Hepatitis B
- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)
- Polio
- Chickenpox (Varicella) - this shot may not be needed if your child had chickenpox
- Your child may also be required to have the haemophilus influenzae type B conjugate (HiB) vaccine and a pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)

Usual required vaccines for middle and high school include:

- Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MenACWY), grades 7-12

Source: [https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/schools/school\\_vaccines/](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/schools/school_vaccines/)

### **Children with Special Health Care Needs**

Many children have special health care needs. Examples include:



- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Depression

If your child has special health care needs, inform the school so appropriate accommodations can be made.

Don't worry! Children have access to a school nurse or another trained faculty member who can help your child. The nurse or another faculty member helps children with taking their medicine. Nurses or another faculty member also help when children become sick at school.

Nurses, or another assigned faculty member, can also help store and administer medications for allergic reactions.

## Standardized Testing and Screenings

### End of Year Standardized Testing

Standardized testing in the U.S. school system is required, although there are occasions when exceptions can be made. Standardized tests are exams that your child will take once a year in subjects such as reading and math to measure their progress.

Principals, teachers, and the state, use the exam scores to review the effectiveness of their educational programs.



The exam results don't count toward student grades. Your child's grades are a measure of how they are doing in school. If you have questions about these exams, you can talk with your child's teacher or principal.

Source: <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/essa-and-testing>

### Honors Program

Many schools have an honors program. Some schools have testing requirements for getting accepted into their honors program. If you have questions, talk to your child's teacher.

Honors classes are typically more challenging than standard classes, have more assignments, and may be viewed very positively on college applications.

### AP Classes and Exams

Advanced Placement (AP) classes are offered in many high schools and help children study the material in a specific subject to prepare for the AP exam.

AP exams are standardized exams that determine how well a child knows the content in that subject area. The exams are not free. The class is free, but there is a cost for taking each exam.

If a child does well enough on the AP exam, they may be able to earn college credit.

Most children are permitted to take AP classes without a placement test or other requirements. If you have questions about AP classes, talk to your child's principal or school counselor.

Source: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap-2021/ap-coordinators#:~:text=2020%2D21%20AP%20Exam%20Fees,territories%2C%20Canada%2C%20and%20DoDEA%20schools>

### SAT and ACT

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is a standardized exam taken by students in grades 11 or 12. The exam score can be used in college admissions decisions. There are two exams that measure reading, writing, knowledge, and reasoning skills in different subjects. There is an optional essay-writing portion that is recommended especially for students applying to colleges.





The American College Testing Program (ACT) is very similar to the SAT. It measures the same subject areas. There is an optional writing exam portion that is recommended especially for students applying to colleges.

If your child takes the SAT/ACT exam through school, it is free. If they decide to take the exam again later to increase their score, there is a fee. Most U.S. colleges accept both the SAT and ACT exam scores. There may be an entire day set aside for high school children to take the SAT/ACT exam.

Your child may be given the opportunity to study outside of school hours for the SAT/ACT exam.

In the Eastern U.S., schools typically administer the SAT exam, whereas in the Western U.S., schools typically administer the ACT exam.

If you have questions about the SAT/ACT exam, talk to your child's teacher.

Source: <https://www.testive.com/state-sat-act/>

### **Health Screenings at School**

Children are typically screened (assessed) for common physical conditions at school.

In kindergarten, screenings are usually completed within the first 120 days of school. Then screenings are usually completed every year or every other year

The most common screenings are for hearing and vision. Some schools also screen for high blood pressure and measures for body mass index (height and weight). Your child may also be screened for scoliosis. This screening is noninvasive where your child's back is observed for abnormalities. The person completing the screen will assess for misalignment of the spine.

Some states may also require yearly screenings for teeth (dental exam) and general physical exams. Physical exams are also required if your child wants to compete in after school sports. These are completed by the child's health care provider or doctor. If a concern is noted during the screening, the school will inform you.

Screenings only identify children who may have a problem. Then, a doctor can help complete additional testing to see if a condition is present. Even though your child will be screened for certain conditions at school, it is still important to complete recommend visits with your child's doctor.

Some schools also include academic screenings. These are to identify children who may need extra support with reading or math. They also help teachers, children, and parents monitor their child's progress.

Less commonly, a school may complete mental health screenings. These are to identify children who may be at risk for a mental health illness or suicide.

For more information on screenings please visit: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/Health-Screenings-at-School.aspx>

## **Bullying, Trauma, and Mental Health**

### **Bullying**

Bullying is when one person acts aggressively towards another person. Aggressive behaviors can be physical, emotional, or verbal. Physical bullying includes acts such as hitting or kicking. Emotional bullying includes acts such as mocking. Verbal bullying includes acts such as name-calling.

Bullying affects everyone! This includes those who are bullied, those who bully others, and those who witness bullying. Bullying can also negatively impact families, schools, and communities.

Bullying is complex. Schools try to prevent, stop, and minimize bullying by creating cultures of respect.

You can talk to your child about bullying. You can also be a good example by modeling love, kindness, respect, and the importance of seeking help.

Source: [https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/facts#\\_Definition\\_of\\_Bullying](https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/facts#_Definition_of_Bullying)



### **Trauma**

Trauma is the body's natural response to terrible, disturbing, or distressing events.

If your child has experienced trauma, it may impact their behavior, including school performance. Trauma looks different for everyone. What is traumatic for one person may not affect another person.

Many types of events can result in trauma. Some examples of events people might consider traumatic include exposure to violence or life-threatening events, forced relocation, being abused or neglected, sexual assault, and the sudden loss of a loved one.

After traumatic events happen, people usually feel overwhelmed and in disbelief. Weeks, months, and even years after traumatic events people can still have troubling emotions. Some people might feel the need to avoid certain places or people and sometimes vivid memories of the traumatic event can occur.

There are many physical and emotional symptoms to trauma. These responses are normal reactions to abnormal events.

Trauma impacts our mental health and behavior. Children who have been impacted by trauma may struggle to concentrate on school tasks, make meaningful relationships, or complete important activities of daily living.

You should seek professional support if you feel your child is unable to function at home or school. Other times to seek professional support include if your child has intense memories or nightmares about an event, are using drugs or alcohol to feel better, or avoiding things.

For more information on how trauma can impact development, school performance, and mental health please visit the following website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>

Source:

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/coping-with-emotional-and-psychological-trauma.htm>

## **Mental Health**

Mental health is essential to success and happiness. Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Mental health affects how we think, feel, and act. As such, a good mental health state is helpful for a child to perform their best at school.

Positive mental health means children are meeting developmental and emotional milestones.

Mental health disorders are common and negatively impact the way children are able to learn, act, and handle their emotions.



- If a child struggles to complete usual daily tasks, has frequent outbursts, and/or has strong emotional reactions, they may need support with their mental health. Mental health disorders are only diagnosed when there is not another underlying condition impacting behavior such as a physical illness.
- Mental health disorders can be treated! Common forms of treatment include therapy/counseling, lifestyle modification, and prescription medications.
- Common mental health disorders in children and adolescents are attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, and behavior disorders.

Parents and guardians know their children best. Tell a professional, such as a doctor or teacher, if you have concerns about your child's mental health.

Many resources exist if you have questions or concerns about your child's mental health. See the "Resources" section for more information on local mental health care providers.

Your child's behavior can improve their mental health in many different ways. Examples include eating a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, exercising, talking about their emotions, positive self-talk, asking for help, spending time with family and friends, and avoiding alcohol and drugs.



Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/basics.html>

## Community Resources

Schools can provide a lot of services, but sometimes families need more services than are provided in schools. Resources in the community are also available to support you and your child.

Here are some resources in and near Logan, Utah:

**Website:** [utahparentcenter.org](http://utahparentcenter.org)

**Number:** (801) 272-1051

### Bear River Head Start

- Bear River Head Start is an early intervention service and preschool that helps your child prepare for kindergarten and learn early life skills.

**Website:** <https://www.brheadstart.org/>

**Number:** (435) 787-8885

### Bear River Health Department

- The Bear River Health Department provides mental health services, medical care, and resources to help people connect to welfare programs like the Women, Infants, and Children Program and food stamps.

**Website:** [brhd.org](http://brhd.org)

**Number:** (435) 792-6500

### Cache Food Pantry

- The Cache Food Pantry is a food bank with several locations where struggling families can get food for free. They also provide clothing when they receive donations to do so.

**Website:** <https://cachefoodpantry.com/>

**Number:** (435) 753-7140

### Cache Refugee and Immigrant Connection

- Cache Refugee and Immigrant Connection is a support center for immigrants and refugees that can help people finish forms and applications, practice for citizenship tests, and access community resources.

**Website:** <https://www.cacherefugees.org/>

**Number:** (435) 915-6689

### Cache Valley Community Health Center

- The Cache Valley Community Health Center provides health care services to families with low income or no health insurance.

**Website:** <https://www.bearlakecommunityhealthcenter.org/cache-valley-community-health-center-north-logan-utah/>

**Number:** (435) 755-6061

### **CAPSA**

- CAPSA is a non-profit support center for victims of domestic abuse.

**Website:** <https://www.capsa.org/>

**Number:** (435) 753-2500

### **Centro de la Familia**

- The Centro de la Familia provides crisis services and childcare for Latinx families.

**Website:** <https://cdf.org/>

**Number:** (435) 754-3730

### **Deseret Industries**

- Deseret Industries is a nonprofit thrift store and humanitarian organization. Reduced-priced clothing, toys, furniture, and household items can be purchased at their stores. Adults can receive job training and job assistance as well.

**Website:** <https://www.deseretindustries.org/what-we-do>

### **Family Place**

- The Family Place can help support families who need help getting food. It also provides classes and services for social skills, behavior, and parenting.

**Website:** <https://thefamilyplaceutah.org/>

**Number:** (435) 752-8880

### **Refuge Group**

- The Refuge Group helps connect refugees in Utah and has several information sources and community resources on its website.

**Website:** <http://refugegroup.org/>

### **Somebody's Attic**

- Somebody's Attic is a nonprofit thrift store that sells clothing, toys, furniture, and household items at reduced prices for families in need.

**Website:** <http://somebodysattics.org/donations.html>

### **Up to 3 Early Intervention Program**

- The Up to 3 Early Intervention Program provides early intervention services for children with disabilities who are under the age of 3.

**Website:** <https://cpd.usu.edu/up-to-3/>

**Number:** (435) 797-3727

### **USU Sorenson Center for Clinical Excellence**

- The Sorenson Center has a variety of services including mental health, speech/language, and audiology for people of all ages.

**Website:** <https://cehs.usu.edu/scce/>

**Number:** (435) 797-4200

### **Utah Heating Assistance**

- The HEAT program helps provide energy to low-income homes in Utah.

**Website:** <https://jobs.utah.gov/housing/scso/seal/heat.html>

### **Utah Parent Center**

- The Utah Parent Center is a non-profit group that has information, an advice hotline number, and training seminars for parents and people with disabilities.

In addition to these resources, your child's school may provide food, clothing, or other resources. These are usually funded by private organizations or short-term grants. Not every school will be able to provide this assistance.