

## **About Junior Kindergarten**

### **Who is eligible for Junior Kindergarten?**

Junior Kindergarten is a free, optional first year of school designed for students who turn five between September 2 and December 1 of 2024 (students who would only qualify for kindergarten using a waiver). Students who attend Junior Kindergarten go on to attend a full year of traditional Kindergarten the following school year. When space permits, students who turn five between June 1, 2024 and September 1, 2024 may be considered for the Junior Kindergarten program and there is often room within a few of the JK classrooms for these students with late summer birthdays. This is especially important to consider if your child did not attend a strong preschool program or needs additional time to master academic or social skills.

Priority is given to students with birth dates closest to the start of the waiver window.

Students who turn five after December 1, 2024 are **not** eligible for Kindergarten or Junior Kindergarten for the 2024-25 school year. Students in this group may be eligible for the Great Start Readiness free preschool program coordinated by the district's Early Childhood Center, depending on your family's income. Children in this age group can enroll in the tuition preschool programs at the Early Childhood Center as well. Call the Early Childhood Center at 248-573-8330 or visit their page on the district website for additional information.

### **Where is the Junior Kindergarten program held?**

Junior Kindergarten will not be offered at all district elementary schools. Not all elementary schools have space for an additional program. Final school locations for the Junior Kindergarten program will be assigned after the initial round of kindergarten registration, as the number of needed Kindergarten classrooms determines the number of available classrooms at a school. The number of available classrooms for Junior Kindergarten determines the number of students the district is able to accept into the program.

In 2023-24, the district offered 4 Junior Kindergarten classrooms. These classes were located at Bartlett, Dolsen, Kent Lake, and Sayre.

As you complete the application for Junior Kindergarten for the 2024-25 school year, you will be asked to rank all the potential sites in terms of your family's preferred locations. Providing a ranking for all the sites available helps us move faster through the placement process. We do know that Hardy Elementary School does not have space for a Junior Kindergarten classroom next year.

### **Not sure if Junior Kindergarten is right for your child?**

### **Kindergarten or Junior Kindergarten?**

In general, we recommend the children begin kindergarten with their same-aged peers. Therefore, in most cases, students who are turning five years old on or between December 2, 2023 and September 1, 2024 should enter kindergarten. Families of students who are near the end of that window may wish to consider enrolling their child in the Junior Kindergarten program. This is especially important to consider if your child did not attend a strong preschool program.

Students who turn five years old on or between September 1, 2024 and December 1, 2024 are considered to be in the waiver window. While these students are eligible for kindergarten, we normally suggest their families consider our Junior Kindergarten program or continue with preschool for an additional year.

If you are still undecided, you can reach out to the principal at your child's elementary school to discuss your child's specific needs.

If you need additional days to make your decision, you have until the Junior Kindergarten enrollment deadline to do so. The deadline is 4:00 PM on March 1, 2024.

<b>Turning 5 on or before:</b>	<b>General Recommendation:</b>
December 2, 2023 to September 1, 2024	Eligible for Kindergarten
June 30, 2024 to September 1, 2024	Eligible for Kindergarten, but <u>if space allows</u> , may apply for Junior Kindergarten
September 2, 2024 to December 1, 2024	Waiver window - may enroll in Kindergarten, with a signed waiver, but in general, we suggest families <u>consider enrolling their student in our Junior Kindergarten Program</u>
December 2, 2024 and later	Not eligible for Kindergarten or Junior Kindergarten

### **Junior Kindergarten or Preschool?**

Families of students who are near the end of the kindergarten age-eligible window may wish to consider enrolling their child in the Junior Kindergarten program. This is especially important to consider if your child did not attend a strong preschool program. There is often room in the Junior Kindergarten program for some children with late summer birthdays.

Students who turn five years old on or between September 1, 2024 and December 1, 2024 are considered to be in the waiver window. While these students are eligible for kindergarten, we normally suggest their families consider our Junior Kindergarten program or continue with

preschool for an additional year. Junior Kindergarten students have a typical elementary school schedule. Consider your child's strengths and needs when determining if he or she should continue with preschool for another year or make the change to elementary school.

Remember, only students who will turn 5 on or before December 1, 2024 can enroll in Kindergarten or Junior Kindergarten. **If your child is younger than this, he or she is not eligible to enroll for either Kindergarten or Junior Kindergarten.**

### **Is transportation provided for Junior Kindergarten?**

We are able to provide transportation only for Junior Kindergarten students who are attending their boundary school and live within a zone where busing is already provided to elementary aged students. This is because a bus route is already established and the route would typically have room for one or two more riders. Otherwise, Junior Kindergarten is like our Resident Open Enrollment program- it is an optional program and families provide or arrange their own transportation to and from school each day.

### **When can I enroll for the Junior Kindergarten program?**

Enrollment forms will be available from the district's website beginning in late January. Enrollment forms must be completed and submitted prior to the end of the day on Friday, March 1 by 4:00 PM for students to be considered in initial Junior Kindergarten placements.

Enrollments received after 4:00 PM on March 1 will be considered if/when space becomes available in the program. The program often fills quickly so we highly encourage interested families to submit their forms by the deadline.

### **When will I know if my child got a spot in the Junior Kindergarten program?**

Our goal is that enrollments received on time have a response as to program placement by mid March. Notification will occur primarily by email although we ask that you provide two working phone numbers as well. Spots are not held for long so be sure to closely monitor your phone and email accounts while you are waiting to hear! We do move onto the next family on the list if we do not hear back from you within 24 hours.

Late enrollments or waitlisted students will be notified if/when space becomes available within the program.

### **My child is part of two households and his/her parents disagree on which sites to request for Junior Kindergarten. How will the district determine which site the child is assigned to?**

If we receive conflicting requests from the parents/guardians of an incoming Junior Kindergarten student, both families will be notified and the child's application will be set aside until the families can reach an agreement. This may mean the child's application is skipped over in the placement process and desired locations may fill up in the meantime. We recommend

parents/guardians come to an agreement prior to submitting one set of enrollment paperwork for Junior Kindergarten.

**What do I need to enroll my child in Junior Kindergarten or Kindergarten?**

While the application for Junior Kindergarten and the enrollment forms required for Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten will not be available until the end of January, we highly recommend that families start gathering the required supporting documentation now so they're prepared when the window opens. The Junior Kindergarten classrooms often fill and applications to this program are not considered unless they include all of the required documents. In addition to the forms the district provides, families must provide:

- A birth certificate for the child
- Photo ID of a parent/guardian
- Three Proofs of residency
- An age waiver for any child turning 5 starting September 2 through December 1, 2024, regardless of if they are going into Kindergarten or Junior Kindergarten

Additionally, the following items are required to be submitted to the school *prior* to the first day of school but do not need to be submitted with a Junior Kindergarten application:

- Immunization records
- Proof of a vision test
- Proof of a hearing test