

The deadline to apply to kindergarten is

★ January 20, 2023. ★

The Park Slope Parents Guide to Public School: *Kindergarten*



2023/2024 Edition

(For students starting kindergarten in Fall 2023)

A Park Slope Parents Informational Guide

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Basics of applying to kindergarten

The kindergarten application process can be daunting. Park Slope Parents is here to guide the way, with input from special guest and NYC school expert Joyce Szufliita—“the borough’s long-established [doyenne](#) of the business”—of [NYC School Help](#).

Before we get started: If you’re not a Park Slope Parents member already, [now is an excellent time to join!](#) PSP and the member community can help you arrange meet-ups before school starts so that your child can begin kindergarten already having a strong network. Plus, our [message boards](#) allow members to discuss all sorts of important questions and offer advice on the adventure that is NYC public school, from preschool to kindergarten and well beyond.

All children born in 2018 and living in New York City are eligible to start kindergarten in September 2023. By law, the Department of Education must provide a kindergarten spot to any child born in 2018 whose parents submit a kindergarten application. That doesn’t exactly mean kindergarten is mandatory in NYC, but if you choose not to enroll your child in kindergarten, your child will be placed in first grade once you send them to a public school the following year without reapplying to a school. Kindergarten applications are accepted between early December and mid-January. Applications are not first come, first served, so there’s no need to rush.

What’s new in 2023?

The big change in this year’s process is that you will apply for zoned schools, unzoned programs, dual language programs AND Gifted and Talented programs **all on the same application**.

You will apply for G&T even though you don’t know yet if you qualify. If you do end up qualifying, then your G&T choices will go into the mix. If you don’t qualify, then they are not a factor in your placement.

In addition, **you will only get only one placement from your application**. In the past, you would get a general ed placement and then later, if you qualify and want it, a separate G&T placement that you could accept or reject.

Note: Given school sizes, it’s unlikely that your child will attend the kindergarten where they went for Pre-K.

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TIMELINE

September

- [Sign up for the DOE newsletter](#) to stay updated on admissions news and deadlines

October/November

- Learn about schools, take tours, and build a list of 12 possible schools.

November/December

- Go on school tours, research via insideschools.org and school websites, go to PTA meetings.

January

- Applications due mid-January of the year they will start kindergarten (e.g., January 2023 for Fall 2023 start date).

March

- Offer letters delivered.

April

- Accept your child's kindergarten offer by pre-registering at the school with appropriate documents and your child.

Determining your zoned school

The first step in applying for kindergarten is to find your child's zoned school. You can apply to up to 12 schools for kindergarten, but if you like your zoned school, placing it first is likely (although not guaranteed) to lead to your child's acceptance into that school. This knowledge can lead to a much calmer research and application process.

There are 32 geographic districts in New York City. These districts are divided into smaller zones, which determine the area served by local schools. The zones might change in terms of their lines of inclusion, but districts don't move. Zones are infrequently rezoned, so it's unlikely—but not impossible—that the zoned school where you live will change. In Park Slope, the Department of Education (DOE) redrew the zoning lines in District 15 in 2012. It's possible your zoned school will be farther away than the school physically located closest to your home. Some zones are drawn, or changed, to increase diversity in a school.

To check which school your home is zoned for, go to the NYC Public School Guide, click on "Find a School," and enter your address. The DOE ["Find a School"](#) function is about 98% accurate, but some boundary lines can be iffy. If you're not sure, call the school to verify.

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BROOKLYN LOCATIONS:

District 13
Brooklyn Heights, Ft. Greene, Clinton Hill

District 14
Greenpoint, Williamsburg

District 15
Sunset Park, Cobble Hill

District 16
Bedford Stuyvesant, Weeksville

District 17
Prospect Park, Wingate

District 18
Canarsie, East Flatbush

District 19
Cypress Hills, East NY, Starrett City

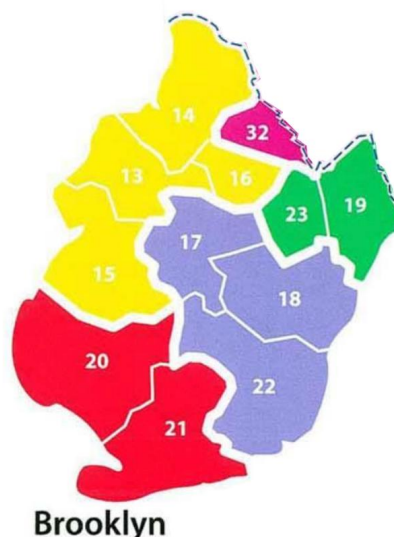
District 20
Bay Ridge, Fort Hamilton, Dyker Heights

District 21
Coney Island, Sheepshead Bay, Gravesend, Ocean Parkway

District 22
Marine Park, Georgetown, Flatlands

District 23
Brownsville, Ocean Hill

District 32
Bushwick



The DOE does its best to fit you into your zoned school, and while there are some spots for non-zoned students, the most popular programs typically don't have much room. In grades K–5, there is sibling preference, and if you move out of the zone where your child attends school, your child will be allowed to stay at that school with non-zoned siblings getting preference above non-zoned non-siblings.

But...will my child get into our zoned school for kindergarten?

Given the demand at some of the schools in the area, there is no guarantee your child will get a spot at your zoned school. It would be a mistake to think of your zoned school as a “default school” that your child will automatically be placed in if they don't get into a school you listed higher.

Researching schools

Your best resource for researching NYC schools is insideschools.org. This site allows you to filter your search by grade level and then drill down into specifics like zoned, un-zoned, gifted, dual language, wheelchair accessible, ASD program, and charter. Reviews and information are based on in-person school tours by InsideSchools staff, along with parent feedback. We've found that insideschools.org is more current than other websites and goes beyond test scores (be sure to check the bottom of their school reviews for the last date each review was updated). Other websites, like [GreatSchools](https://GreatSchools.org), [Niche](https://Niche.com), and [SchoolDigger](https://SchoolDigger.com) rely on demographic and testing data, without taking into consideration other important factors, such as test opt-outs, school culture and vibe, parent involvement, and more.

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Note: Calling 311 isn't your best bet here; they are using the same school search tool you've already used.

The DOE also gives a [School Quality Snapshot](#) of each school based on, as they say, “the learning environment and the performance of its students.” The snapshot is an abridged version of state reports and school surveys, with only a few questions from parent and teacher surveys included. The [Quality Guide](#), on the other hand, represents the unabridged version of the relevant data, including the full parent and teacher surveys. (Note that the parent responses reflect a self-selected group of parents that choose to fill out the annual survey.) Finally, there's also the [School Performance Dashboard](#), which presents school testing data dissected for factors such as race, affluence, and progress.

If you want to move beyond websites and test scores to find out more about schools, options abound. You can **attend school tours** (many are listed on the [MySchools Event Calendar](#), but you may also need to check school websites and call schools to find out dates and, in many cases, to register). Check the website for **PTA meetings** and attend those meetings to find out more about the culture of the school and involvement of the parents. Go to **fundraising events** like fall festivals, Spring Flings, school auctions, Touch-A-Truck events, and more. **Hang out during school pickup** and talk to parents. Follow the school on Instagram and Facebook and join any school Facebook groups.

Remember to ask for feedback on the [Park Slope Parents Advice/Community Group](#)!



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About that December 31st cutoff...

In New York City, December 31st is the cutoff date for attending kindergarten. Even if you feel like your child is not ready for kindergarten, it's unlikely that you can move this needle. While the DOE used to allow redshirting, it's now very difficult to change your child's entry date. Only a school principal can determine if a different grade placement is possible, and that extremely rare decision requires approval by the superintendent. It's worth noting that most NYC private schools and many preschools have different cutoff dates than the DOE. If you've moved from another state, one with a different cutoff date, and your child already started kindergarten at another school, your child may be required to move back to Pre-K or retake kindergarten here.

What this means is that, if your child is born in January, February, or March, they'll be one of the oldest kids in the class. Children born in October, November, and December will be among the youngest. In New York City, you will not be allowed to register in the system for any grade other than the one that corresponds to your child's birth certificate. If you're worried about your October, November, or December child falling behind older kids, don't overthink it. Research suggests that most younger children do fine because they [develop grit](#) by keeping up with their older classmates. Other research, like these reports from [Business Insider](#) and [EducationNext](#), says that any advantage children gain from being on the older end of the classroom spectrum early in life will quickly even out. Ultimately, if your child is really struggling during kindergarten, educators often recommend repeating kindergarten so that the child may catch up developmentally to class peers before heading to first grade. Research shows that, if there is ever a "good" time to repeat a grade, kindergarten is definitely the best time, as peer pressure is still minimal (compared to higher grades). Ultimately—take it from us—this is not something to make yourself crazy about. It's just a reality of NYC public schools.



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Looking ahead—a few things to consider about middle school: Due to recent diversity initiatives, there are no zoned middle schools and no sibling preference. As of the 2019/2020 school year, middle school acceptance in District 15 (the area stretching from Red Hook to Sunset Park, including the brownstone Brooklyn neighborhoods of Park Slope, Windsor Terrace, Fort Greene, and Carroll Gardens) is based on a lottery system, rather than on grades, test scores, and attendance. Preference for 52% of seats at each school is given to students who come from low-income families, who are English-language learners, or who are homeless. It's still early days for this diversity initiative, so stay tuned as the DOE continues to fine-tune the details.



Types of schools

The NYC DOE offers a variety of schools, including your classic zoned elementary school, magnet schools, charter schools, and schools with dual language programs. Use the DOE's [Find a School page](#) to explore the different types of schools available in your neighborhood.

Zoned schools, un-zoned schools, and choice schools: As mentioned previously, most NYC families have a zoned school specific to their home address. Children who put their zoned school as their first choice have a priority over non-zoned families to attend these kindergarten programs at their zoned school, and most zoned schools will make all families an offer. However, it's not guaranteed that your child will get a spot at your zoned school (students who attended your zoned school for Pre-K and families with siblings have priority). There are also un-zoned schools (such as Brooklyn New School and The Children's School) requiring only that you live in the district. Choice schools are schools where no zoned schools exist in the district. The only example in Brooklyn is District 23 in Brownsville.

Magnet Schools: These schools receive grants to improve their programming and infrastructure to make the school more appealing and, in essence, “magnetize” families (both in-zone and out-of-zone) to attend the school. These grants often go to schools that are not

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filled to capacity. Grants may include funding for science labs, STEM or STEAM programs, and, on occasion, the arts. Magnet schools receive a three-year grant, after which funding runs out, but the school retains its “magnet” status, since most of the programming and infrastructure remains in place. It’s important to look at the year in which the magnet grant is allocated, since a new grant recipient may not have new programs in place yet. In District 15, the magnet schools include PS 10, PS 154, and PS 15.

Charters: There are a number of schools in New York City that are considered charter schools, meaning that they receive funding from the DOE and are public but operate more autonomously than regular public schools. Charters are accountable for meeting academic, organizational, and financial management standards as outlined in their charter. If a charter school fails to meet these standards, it can be shut down. Since charters don’t follow DOE schedules, they may have longer days or school years. Charter schools may have different vacation schedules (e.g., they might not close for Jewish holidays but might give an entire week at Thanksgiving). Redshirting is sometimes permitted at these schools.

In Brooklyn, some of the most well-known charter schools are Brooklyn Prospect Charter School, Brooklyn Urban Garden School (BUGS), Community Roots, and Hellenic Classical Charter School, to name a few. The [New York State Charter School Directory](#) has a list of charter schools by region and county.



Students in charter schools are typically chosen by lottery, and this process has NO IMPACT on your acceptance into non-charter schools. Therefore, if you want to keep your options open, applying to a charter school can be a good fallback strategy in case you don’t get into your school of choice.

Dual Language Programs: The DOE offers several options for students learning a language other than English. Visit the DOE’s [English Language Learner Programs page](#) for more details.

District 15, for example, offers both dual language and transitional bilingual education programs in Spanish, French, Chinese, and Arabic. Other districts have Russian, Polish, Hebrew and Japanese. District 13 has dual Language Programs at Brooklyn New School, Arts & Letters, and PS 133. There’s also a new school starting in 2020 called the School of Creativity and Innovation. Finally, there are also dual language inclusion classrooms available in the

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district. [Here](#) are the bilingual education programs available in Brooklyn.

It is important to note that not all dual language programs are created equal; quality and experience are teacher dependent, school dependent, and resources dependent. Do your homework and check these programs out thoroughly.

Before applying to a dual language program, ask yourself if it is right for your child. While some children may thrive in a dual language environment, some may find it a struggle. If you're questioning whether a dual language program is right for your child, see if you get pushback from them. While we typically don't condone letting your child make important school choices for the family, if your child seems resistant to speaking two languages, putting them in a dual language program could be detrimental to their self-esteem. As Joyce Szuflita, our resident school expert, says: "It can take a short time for your kid to feel like a dumb kid, but it can take years to undo it."



Navigating the turning-five process for students with special needs

This is a general overview of the process. If you have specific questions about any part of this process, review the information on the [DOE website](#). The DOE also has special presentations in November and December for parents who have special education needs. (Stay tuned on Park Slope Parents for dates, times, and locations). If you still have questions, you can email turning5@schools.nyc.gov.

Families of students with disabilities take part in the kindergarten application process following the same steps and timeline as their peers without an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The only difference is that, while the kindergarten admissions process is happening, an IEP

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team works concurrently with your family to evaluate your child and develop a kindergarten IEP. This is known as the [Turning Five Process](#).

The first step for the Turning Five Process happens in the winter of your child's Pre-K year and can take two forms:

If your child already has a preschool IEP, the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) will refer your child for an evaluation for school-aged special education.

If your child does not have a preschool IEP, you may submit a written referral requesting an evaluation. Read [here](#) for more details about how to submit a referral.



Once the DOE receives a referral for your child, they send you a blue Notice of Referral confirming that an IEP team will consider your child's need for a kindergarten IEP. Next, you should be contacted by a DOE representative, who will work with you through the entire process. This could be a school psychologist or a social worker from a local school or from the Committee on Special Education (CSE) office.

The DOE representative will contact you and arrange new observations or evaluations if needed. The DOE representative will then schedule an IEP meeting to determine whether your child is eligible for school-age special education services and, if so, to develop a kindergarten IEP. For details about the assessment process, read [here](#), and for a DOE overview of special education, [this page](#) includes lots of info.

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School options: neighborhood, specialized, accessible

Neighborhood (non-specialized) schools: The kindergarten admissions process does not treat students differently if they have an IEP. Most children with disabilities will attend the school where they are admitted through the kindergarten admissions process. That school will be responsible for providing the programs and services on your child's IEP. Your child has the right to attend a school that offers the program on your child's IEP. If the school that admitted your child does not have the program on your child's IEP (e.g., ICT or 12:1:1), the DOE's Special Education Office can make sure that the school opens that type of class or can grant a transfer to a school that has the type of program on your child's IEP. If the school your child is admitted to tells you it does not have the program required by your child's IEP, you should email the DOE's Special Education Office at turning5@schools.nyc.gov, or call the Parent Support Hotline at 718-935-2007.

Specialized schools (District 75) and specialized programs in neighborhood schools: Some children with IEPs require more specialized support. For example, your child might need a bilingual Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class. Bilingual special education programs are not available in every school; therefore, the DOE may offer your child an alternative school option where the recommended program is available. If the DOE cannot offer your child an alternative school option, then it must offer additional supports—such as a bilingual paraprofessional—at the school where your child originally received a kindergarten seat.

Families may apply to [specialized programs](#) such as the ASD Nest or the ASD Horizon Program for children on the autism spectrum and the ACES program for children with intellectual disabilities. Refer to this [tip sheet about specialized programs](#) from [IncludeNYC](#), one of several excellent organizations you should absolutely bookmark and lean on for expert advice, information and support groups during your child's educational journey.

Students with more intensive needs may require a specialized school placement, known as District 75. Families cannot apply to District 75 schools. The DOE will place students in a District 75 school based on the student's IEP recommendation. To learn more about District 75 programs, visit the DOE's [District 75](#) page.

Accessible schools: Unfortunately, not nearly enough NYC neighborhood schools are barrier-free or wheelchair accessible, as old infrastructure and meager funding have created an ongoing saga. Start [here](#) to find out which schools are fully accessible (meaning that all of the building can be navigated regardless of vision, hearing, or mobility needs), only partially accessible, or not at all accessible. For more details, and for a list of accessible schools, visit the DOE's [Building Accessibility page](#).

A note about you, the project manager in chief: It's important to stay on top of this process—you are your child's best advocate. Don't be afraid to check in regularly with your DOE

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contact person, your child's preschool/Pre-K teachers, and school administrators to make sure things are happening in a timely way. Here is a [great page with contacts and resources](#). Bookmark this page for easy access, since it contains contact info for a variety of DOE departments and is a great place to start if you have questions or concerns about your child's evaluation, supports, services and accommodations.

If, for some reason, you feel the ball has been dropped, or something isn't happening the way it should, get in touch with your various Turning Five contacts as soon as possible. This is a complex process that can take months, and, even if it feels overwhelming, you are the project manager who needs to make sure it all comes together.

Be proactive yet calm when talking to people. The DOE is underfunded and understaffed, but it's our best guess that the people you talk to want to help. If you feel you need outside help, look into advocacy and support organizations—they can be invaluable resources. Ultimately, should you be the firm and informed squeaky wheel? Absolutely! Just keep in mind that the special education continuum can be a long journey—a marathon, for some of us—so, when in doubt, try to remember that you catch more bees with honey than vinegar.



Considering Gifted & Talented programs

Gifted & Talented programs offer accelerated instruction to eligible elementary school students in New York City. Information about G&T programs can be found [here](#), and Joyce Szuflita has listed the schools with available programs for lower elementary [here](#).

Background: G&T programs have been the subject of much debate and change in recent years. In August 2019, a task force appointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio [recommended that the city eliminate all G&T programs](#) in an effort to curtail segregation, as selective admissions and

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G&T have led to selective schools being filled with mostly white and Asian students, while the rest of the public school system is largely Black and Hispanic.

Delve into the history and politics around school inequality and G&T:

- Watch a [talk with Courtney Martin](#), author of *Learning in Public: Lessons for a Racially Divided America from My Daughter's School*
- Read the School Diversity Advisory Group's 2019 report [Making the Grade II: New Programs for Better Schools](#)
- Listen to [School Colors](#), a narrative podcast from Brooklyn Deep about how race, class, and power shape American cities and schools

How the G&T process stands now

In 2022, the DOE released its updates to the G&T program for the upcoming year:

As announced by the Mayor, the Department of Education will eliminate the Gifted & Talented (G&T) test and phase out the current G&T model. In its place, we will launch "Brilliant NYC," a blueprint for accelerated learning for all elementary students in New York City.

- *Starting with Kindergarten in September 2022, accelerated learning will be offered to 65,000 kindergarteners compared to 2,500 kindergarteners that the current G&T model serves.*
- *Students currently in G&T will remain in their programming so there is no disruption to their learning. Brilliant NYC will be phased in for grades one through three.*

What this means for you: Testing for kindergarten G&T admissions has been eliminated and replaced with an evaluation/interview process. If you list G&T programs on your application, eligibility will be determined after you apply. The eligibility process varies a bit depending on where (and whether) a child currently attends Pre-K.

- For current Pre-K students at DOE/district schools, Pre-K Centers, NYC Early Education Centers (NYCEECs), or charter schools:
 - Anyone who adds a G&T program to their kindergarten application will be evaluated by their current Pre-K teachers.
- For current Pre-K students at private or parochial school programs, or for children who are not yet in school:
 - Interested families apply by listing a G&T program on their kindergarten application.
 - After the application closes, DOE's Division of Early Childhood Education contacts applicants to set up interviews.
 - Then, interviews take place.

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- Based on these interviews, early childhood education experts nominate eligible applicants for G&T admissions.

After all applications are submitted and eligibility is determined, all eligible applicants are considered for offers. Offers are determined based on families' application choices, seat availability, and admissions priorities. All G&T programs give an admissions priority to siblings of current students. Some programs also give a priority to applicants who live or attend school in a specific district.

Learn more from the NYC DOE [here](#).

Notes from our school expert Joyce Szufliita on the changes to the G&T process

The big change in kindergarten admissions this year is that G&T choices are included on your application along with your zoned school, un-zoned programs, out of zone programs, and dual language programs. You only get one placement from this list. This has been confirmed by the DOE.

There are two things that are important to understand.

1. You have a very high priority to your zoned school as a zoned family. That doesn't change if you list the school as your #1 choice or your #12 choice. Ranking a school lower on your list doesn't disadvantage you for that school. That has to do with the brilliance of the Nobel Prize-winning algorithm that places you in a program.
2. You are not "accepted to" G&T. You are ELIGIBLE or not. This seems like a fine point, but there is no threshold that places you in G&T. Whether you attend is a combination of whether you are eligible, the seats available, and how lucky or not you are.

As always, you must rank schools and programs in true preference order—and that can be hard because you are comparing apples and oranges.

For example:

If you rank your zoned school higher than G&T, you will likely get into your zoned school (because you have very high priority for that school). Even if you are eligible for G&T, you will not get the placement, because you ranked it lower.

If you place the G&T program higher than your zoned school, IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE, you will get in. In that case, you wouldn't have a placement at your zoned school. IF YOU ARE NOT ELIGIBLE, you are not in any way disadvantaged for your zoned school, and that is your likely placement.

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There may also be other options that you have lower priority for but you still may have a shot at, like dual language programs, unzoned schools or neighboring schools that you prefer.

Special needs and G&T

As the DOE states on their [website](#), they are committed to serving all students who qualify for a Gifted & Talented (G&T) program, including students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who qualify for a G&T program will receive special education services and supports in the G&T program.

Students receive G&T offers subject to:

- Performance on eligibility measures
- Seat availability

These offers are made whether or not students have an:

- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Individualized Education Services Program (IESP)
- 504 Accommodation Plan

For more information, check out the DOE page about [Students with Disabilities and Gifted and Talented](#).



You got into a G&T program. What's next?

All applicants will receive a results letter in spring 2023. If your child was eligible and there was a seat available, you will have the opportunity to enroll in a G&T program.

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The decision to enroll in a G&T program is a nuanced one. As Joyce Szuflita [shares](#):

There is no citywide or even district-wide information about curriculum or expectations in G&T classrooms, because there is no different curriculum and there is no uniform approach. They say it is "accelerated," but it's impossible to truly know what that means.

This is what you don't get in a G&T program:

- You don't get a smaller class size (although sizes will vary by popularity).
- You don't get a better teacher (although there are good teachers in a variety of classrooms, both gen ed and G&T).
- You don't get extra penny of funding (whatever arts and enrichments come to the school as a whole will come to the G&T classroom, AND you can't raise money for a separate classroom).
- You don't get a leg up for favored middle school placement (except if you are lucky enough to get into one of the Citywide K–8th grade programs).

Feelings about G&T range wildly around the City. In Brownstone Brooklyn G&T hasn't been terribly popular. Families often love their very high quality, high-performing local zoned schools. In the olden days when four-year-olds were tested for G&T, the data remained fairly stable. About 250 kids tested into G&T. There were 100 seats available. Usually 90 seats were claimed. Most people were curious to test, but they would ultimately choose their local gen ed programs. It is not the same in other districts. That is why you see many classrooms available in Bay Ridge and very few in D13, 14, and 15 relative to the district's sizes. Why doesn't 321 have a G&T classroom? They don't believe in tracking.

Another consideration is that G&T programs typically benefit from a high level of parent involvement. However, parent involvement doesn't necessarily extend to the whole school, since G&T programs, like magnet schools, can be placed in lower-performing schools or schools with extra seats.

Another thing to consider is the geographic distance of a G&T program from your home versus the distance of your zoned school. If it's negligible, great. However, if the G&T school is a bus/car/subway ride away, know that playdates with school friends, picking up a sick child, and PTA/PA meetings can be more of a juggling act. There's a lot to be said for going to your local school in terms of time saved in travel, feeling included, and developing a strong sense of community.

It is also worth noting that, while G&T programs vary from school to school, they follow essentially the same curriculum as zoned schools. The intention of these programs is to offer specialized instruction and enrichment opportunities to "exceptional" students. Your child isn't going to learn algebra in fourth grade. Your child will learn the same information as students

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learn at a zoned school, just in a different environment and perhaps delivered in a different way. Also know that class size is no different in G&T classes (which is one common misconception), and there are no assistant teachers in these classes.

Ultimately, touring is the only way to assess specific G&T classrooms.

Applying to kindergarten

There are two different application processes:

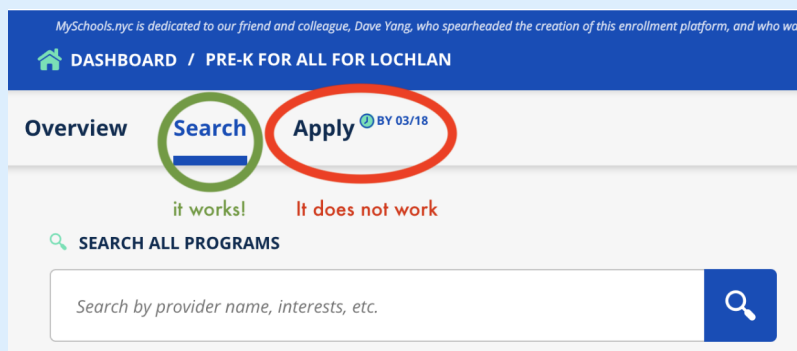
- **NYC Public School applications** (zoned and un-zoned)
 - Includes the Gifted & Talented option
- **Charter School applications**
 - Done individually through the school and typically on a different schedule

If applying for a non-charter school, you'll come up with your ranked choices in order of preference. To fill out the application, you have three options:

- **Option 1:** Online at [MySchools.nyc](https://www.myschools.nyc.gov)
 - Watch these video tutorials to learn [how to create your MySchools account](#) and [how to apply](#).
 - Questions? Contact MySchools at 718-935-2009 or by email at ESEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov.

Past note from a parent re: glitchiness on the MySchools website (may or may not still be accurate):

"When you search from the application tab, nothing shows up. But searching from the search tab works fine, and if you star it, it will show up in the application tab."



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- **Option 2:** By email or in person at a [Family Welcome Center](#)

Note: Brooklyn Technical High School houses the Brooklyn-based Family Welcome Center.

- **Option 3:** By phone at 718-935-2009, M–F, 8:00am–6:00pm

You can apply for up to 12 schools using just one form. **Apply based on your preferences;** don't try to game the system based on some magical thinking that if you put your first choice second, instead of first, you'll be more likely to get in. Also, as we said earlier, applications are not first come, first served, so rushing to get in your applications doesn't afford you special perks.

A note from our expert Joyce Szufliita:

The Nobel Prize–winning algorithm does not preference you because of your ranking on the application. THAT is why it won the Nobel Prize. You rank in true preference order and ranking a school #1 doesn't advantage you. Ranking a school #12 does not disadvantage you. The ranking on the application is ONLY your expression of your preference. If it was easy to understand we would all have the Nobel Prize!

Students are given priority based on zone and sibling preference. The priority for K is:

- In-zone siblings
- In-zone families with no siblings
- Out-of-zone/in-district siblings
- Out-of-zone/in-boro siblings
- Out-of-zone/out-of-boro siblings
- THEN Pre-K kids (who don't have a higher priority)
- THEN other people out of zone within district (which would likely be your priority if you didn't attend the school for Pre-K)
- Then other people out of zone outside the district

Applications typically open in mid-December and close in mid-January. Applying early may lead to more peace of mind, but there's no advantage to doing so. In addition, these deadlines have been known to be extended. The online and paper applications are available in multiple languages, and the DOE can provide interpretation in over 200 languages to help families. You can access aid by going to a Family Welcome Center or by calling the DOE.

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As part of the admissions process for most DOE public school programs, each applicant is assigned a random number, as in a lottery. These random numbers are used in cases where there are more applicants than seats available at a specific program. Watch the NYC DOE's video [here](#) to learn about how random selection works.

Also check out the DOE's video on [How Students Get Offers to New York City Public Schools](#) for a visual representation of the application and acceptance process.

How Students Get Offers to New York City Public Schools



Receiving your offer letter and the kindergarten waitlist blues

Typically, in April, you will receive notification that you have been accepted to a school on your list ([skip to the appendix](#) to view a sample offer letter). If you received your top choice, you're good to go, and you just need to register and sit back. If your child is put on the waitlist at your first-choice school, don't assume that the door is shut for good. Families move or opt for charter or private schools, so you very well might get a call about an open seat.

When will my placements be available?

In 2021, kindergarten placements came out around April 8, and in 2022, they arrived around April 5. Dates tend to be similar from year to year, but there is unfortunately no way of knowing for sure. Don't be alarmed if you have a friend who got their placement and yours hasn't come in yet, as the DOE releases offers in batches. Don't be alarmed if you have an offer and then the offer disappears, either. Everyone is guaranteed a placement. The DOE has to deal with uploading 80,000 offers, so some glitchiness is unfortunately to be expected.

MySchools can be glitchy. You should have one kindergarten offer, and if you're unable to pre-register online, just wait a day and try again.

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DOE waitlists work like this: If you applied to more than one school on your application, your child will be automatically placed on the waitlist for any schools you ranked higher than the school where you got an offer.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You can pre-register for the school where your child was offered a seat and remain on the waitlists for schools you ranked higher. If a school is able to offer you a seat from the waitlist, they will contact you directly.

Waitlist must-knows from our expert Joyce Szufilita:

- When your name is placed on a waitlist (for any school that you ranked higher than the school you are placed in—because it is your preference) you are clumped according to your "priority" (like "out of zone/within district"). **Within that priority, everyone is equal, whether they ranked the school #1 or #12.** Your placement on the waitlist is random within the priority. That is why you are high and your neighbor isn't. You have the same priority and you were lucky in the random order.
- **It is hard to see your name move backward on the waitlist but it is VERY normal.** Wait lists are batch ordered by [priority](#). Families can add themselves to wait lists after the fact. There may be people moving into the zone in the spring and summer and they will jump the line because they have a higher priority than you do. They may have siblings on any grade and they would jump the line. People with higher priority than you may change their minds about the school that they prefer and add their name to the waitlist at a zoned school. If the school gives priority to a certain percent of economically disadvantaged kids, they could take precedence.
- **The lotteries don't go by school.** There is one "lottery" before any sorting begins and every kid applying for k in the City is given a random number. When there are more applicants with the same priority than there are seats available, the random number comes into play. When you are placed on a wait list according to your priority, the random number comes into play.

A word about your place on the waitlist: As of Spring 2020, parents were reporting that MySchools shows where you are on the waitlist. This has not been done in previous years, and you should not necessarily trust it 100%, nor should you assume that your number will update in real-time. The DOE says that they are updating middle school and high school waitlists on MySchools, but the numbers have been very glitchy. As Joyce notes above, if someone moves

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into the zone of a school, and you are an out-of-zone person on the waitlist, that person will bump you because they have a higher priority for the school, so you may see your numbers move in the wrong direction from time to time.

You can try calling a school to find out a more accurate waitlist number, but they're not obliged to release that information to you, and frankly, the information they can access may not be much more illuminating than what you can access.

Remember that waitlists for charter schools, regular DOE programs, and G&T won't move until the other offers arrive. For instance, if someone receives a charter offer before their DOE offer, they're likely not going to reject the charter offer until they know more about their other options. As more rounds of offers come out, things will begin to move.

Note: You're unlikely to get teacher/class assignments until late in the summer.

If you see a message about how accepting your offer invalidates other offers, don't be concerned: It's a generic statement, and it doesn't mean that you actually have another offer at this point. Rather, it's a warning that if you get a wait-list offer at a later date, you will give up your previous offer by accepting it. This is not a decision you need to make at the time your first DOE offer comes out in April.

That said, by the end of April, some people may have both a DOE offer and a charter school offer. If that's the case for you, you'll need to decide between them at some point relatively soon. If you go through all the steps of enrolling in a charter school—including paperwork—your other DOE offer will then be cancelled.



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For questions that folks who've "been there, done that" can answer, you can always ask the Advice Group (advice@groups.parkslopeparents.com). If you receive answers that might help everyone, you can post replies to this group (that would be super nice of you!).

Registering for kindergarten

Your kindergarten offer letter will include details about where your child will go next fall and whether your child is waitlisted. To accept your offer and secure your child's seat, you must pre-register in person at the school.

- Registration times may be listed on your offer letter. If not, contact the school directly to set up an appointment to pre-register.
- Bring your child and ALL required documents to your pre-registration appointment. See the DOE's pre-registration checklist for details about what to bring. You won't be able to register without all the documents.

Reminder: Kindergarten registration is not first come, first served. There will be a deadline for registration in order to secure your child's seat, but unless you miss that deadline, there is no chance of your seat going away.

Tips from PSP parents about registering:

Fill things out ahead of time if you can. "I made my appointment yesterday and was encouraged by PS10 to pick up the paperwork ahead of time. Might be worth asking if you could do this at other schools as well." "We filled it out in advance and brought everything (and our kid) this morning, and it took all of 5 minutes for them to make the copies." *Note: Not all schools allow you to pick up forms in advance.*

Bring entertainment. "I pre-registered today. Some tips: There were a lot of forms to be filled out. It's a long time for a kid to wait—bring toys or other entertaining things."

Plan for at least an hour (be pleasantly surprised if it's less). "You need at least a half hour to fill out all the paperwork—even if you are already a student there as we are!! [Some schools] also have a medical clinic (and a dentist...they can take them out of class to get their teeth cleaned!) so there [may be] medical paperwork too."

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“We too just registered at 321. **This school is particular about what proofs of residency it will accept.** It seemed adamant on seeing both utility bills including National Grid and Con Ed. When I mentioned I also had a copy of my driver’s license, the school secretary said she doesn’t accept those (even though that was on DOE’s list of acceptable proofs of addresses).”

Other things of note:

Vaccinations are required. There is no longer a religious exemption allowed for vaccines, so you’ll need to show proof of vaccinations. If your child has a birthday later in the year, the school may need to be reminded that there will be some vaccinations missing. You’ll need to provide an updated record when they get those vaccinations.

Kindergarten welcome events. Many schools will have welcome events for incoming kindergarteners during the spring before school starts. These events are a great time to make some connections to other parents for the coming year. The school doesn’t typically give you access to the contact information for the other parents, so make sure you ask people you click with for that information.

Fraud letters. For sought-after schools, the DOE will do checks to make sure folks live where they say they live. If they question the veracity of your address in a particular school zone, they may do surprise home visits to verify residency. If they suspect that you are not living at the residence with which you registered at the school, they will send a “fraud letter” and your registration will be nullified. See [Danger: School Zone](#) for more information.

Moving before school starts. If you have been offered a spot but then have to move, note that the DOE lives in the present. If you move out of your zoned school area before school starts, you are no longer eligible to attend that school. However, if you attend the school for even one day, you are considered a student in that school and will be grandfathered in (as will any siblings).



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A word on charter school enrollment

Charter schools manage their acceptances and their enrollment differently, so you might want to clarify with the charter school you are considering. When you enroll—that is, when you decide for certain that you’re choosing them and hand in your enrollment paperwork—they will report this to the DOE, and you will be entered into the DOE’s central system. You can only be linked to one school at a time in that system. If you have enrolled in your zoned school and you then enroll in a charter school or another school where you have gotten off the waitlist, the new entry will take the place of the older one.

On the other hand, if you receive a charter school offer before you receive your DOE offer, you can accept it without affecting your upcoming DOE offers in any way. **There is no disadvantage to accepting your charter offer and waiting to see what comes next.**

Some charters take enrollment steps over the summer, and some do so earlier. In any case, you can’t keep two options open indefinitely. It’s completely understandable to take some time to make up your mind, but keep in mind that, the longer you wait, the less of a chance you have to make things easier on the school and on your neighbors who are anxiously checking on the waitlist. Ultimately, take your time, but know that you cannot and should not wait indefinitely.

Preparing your child for kindergarten

Attend kindergarten mixers and join your PSP Kid Group. Many schools host kindergarten meetups for parents and kids before school starts. This is a great chance to have your child get more familiar with the school and meet some possible new friends. These are typically in the spring, so you won’t have your child’s teacher or classroom yet. Also join your yearly group on Park Slope Parents, which discusses issues related to the kindergarten process for the upcoming year. We have a contact form that members fill out so people from different schools can meet up and get to know each other before the school year. There are typically a few meetups in the early summer and then more meetups when teacher assignments come out.

Park Slope Parents recommends that you take photos during meetups so you can refer to the photos when talking about the upcoming school year and your child’s new classmates. These photos also make for great “before” and “after” photos if you make a class yearbook.

Offer your child agency. Before kindergarten begins, spend the summer giving your child more agency to help them grow their independence and confidence. Start giving them chores (or more chores) and more responsibility. Gradually making them less reliant on you, and more

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self-sufficient, can aid in their resilience and fortitude. Give them choices in picking out the clothes they want to wear, have them help with meals (e.g., setting the table, clearing the dishes), and have them choose the route to get to school to help foster more independence.

Prepare your child for the new transition. Unlike preschool, there is no ease-in (e.g., half days for a week) to help your child adjust to the new environment. Since your child is likely to have been to preschool and Pre-K, they will have past experiences with transitions. If your child is in District 15, though, their kindergarten will not always be at the same school as Pre-K.

Discuss the new environment and changes, such as a larger school with lots of children older than them. Talk about the teacher(s) and what will happen at school. As with preschool and Pre-K, take your child with you to pick out a lunch box, a backpack, or other school supplies. Walk by the new school multiple times so the route becomes more familiar to them. Create a goodbye ritual for drop-off and practice it so they know what to expect. This could be hugs, high-fives, secret handshakes, a song, a dance, etc.

As the first day approaches, you can use a countdown calendar (mark the days off) to “Big Kid School.” Or, another lovely idea from a PSP parent is to make a paper chain together with colored or decorated construction paper for the number of days until the big one and ceremoniously cut one link off every day.

Other ideas from PSP parents to help prepare for and ease the transition include:

- Set up a “desk” (chair with table) at home. Let your kid decorate it and use it to practice sitting at their desk at school—they can color, do an art project, or take meals there. Point out: “Wow, you’re sitting like you will in kindergarten! How does it feel to sit at a desk?”
- Let them pick one or two favorite stuffies or small toys to keep in their backpack for the first few weeks so they have something familiar in the new environment. Or, send them in with a family photo to have as a touchstone.
- Run a bath or walk to a body of water and let them hold some rocks. Have them say what they’re excited about for the new school year and throw a rock in for each item (new friends, new pencils, recess, etc.). Then let them dunk in a body part or their whole body to immerse themselves in that excitement. You can then tie a string around their wrist sealing in those exciting thoughts and let them keep it on through the first days of school.
- Read [*The Kissing Hand*](#) by Audrey Penn, known as one of the best books on separation anxiety.

While typically meant for younger children, these **resources on Park Slope Parents** can also help with the transition to kindergarten:

- [12 Tips to Help with Separation Anxiety](#)

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- [Tips for the First Day Of School - Are you more nervous than your child?](#)

Give your spot to help other folks out. If you're not taking a spot at a school (maybe you're moving, your child received a charter school placement, you've decided on keeping your child where they are, it's too far to schlep, etc.) PLEASE LET THE SCHOOL KNOW as soon as you've decided. There are folks who are still in limbo, and if you're not going to send your child, let's make room for another kid and help a fellow parent exhale.



Final thoughts

Even though the NYC DOE currently has over one million students, we've heard that the kindergarten classes that Park Slope Parents families attend are warm, welcoming, and make children feel secure. We hope that your child receives placement in the school you feel is best for your family. As always, if you have questions, ask on Park Slope Parents!

Was this guide helpful? How could it have been more helpful? Let us know!

♥ [PSP Guides Feedback Form](#) ♥

Your anonymous review will help us improve our resources and offer better support to parents in Brooklyn and beyond. Thank you!

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Appendix: Sample kindergarten offer letter

April 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you for applying to kindergarten! We are pleased to offer your child a kindergarten seat for the 2020-2021 school year at:

[SCHOOL]

[ADDRESS]

[PHONE NUMBER]

Next Steps

Please accept this offer by the end of June, in one of the following ways:

If you applied online, you can accept your offer online at MySchools.nyc. If you applied by phone or in person, you can accept your offer:

By phone at 718-935-2009 or

By emailing EEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov.

We encourage you to accept this offer! Doing so will secure your child's seat at this school. Accepting this offer will NOT prevent you from receiving or accepting a waitlist offer, Gifted & Talented offer, or placement in a specialized school or program if recommended on your child's IEP. To learn more about waitlists, visit schools.nyc.gov/Waitlists.

Questions? We're here to help. Call us at 718-935-2009

Request support from Family Welcome Center staff—learn more at schools.nyc.gov/WelcomeCenters

Sincerely,

The Kindergarten Admissions Team

Kindergarten Registration Checklist

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Once you have accepted your offer, you will need to register before the first day of school. Your child's new school will follow up with you directly about registration information and next steps.

To register, please provide the following:

- This offer letter
- Proof of your child's age (child's birth certificate, passport, record of baptism, or other official document of age)
- Your child's immunization records, (if available)
- Two documents (examples of accepted types listed below) to verify your address

Proof of Address Documents

- Lease agreement, deed or mortgage statement for the residence
- A residential utility bill (gas or electric) in the resident's name issued by a utility company (e.g., National Grid or Con Edison)—must be dated within the past 60 days
- A bill for cable television services provided to the residence; must include the name of the parent and the address of the residence and be dated within the past 60 days
- Documentation or letter on letterhead from a federal, state, or local government agency, including the IRS, the City Housing Authority, the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Human Resources Administration, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), or an ACS subcontractor, indicating the resident's name and address—must be dated within the past 60 days
- A current property tax bill for the residence
- A water bill for the residence—must be dated within the past 90 days
- Rent receipt which includes the address of the residence—must be dated within the past 60 days
- State, city, or other government issued identification (including an IDNYC card), which has not expired and includes the address of residence
- Income tax form for the last calendar year
- Official NYS Driver's License or learner's permit, which has not expired
- Official payroll documentation from an employer issued within the past 60 days, such as a pay stub with home address, a form

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submitted for tax withholding purposes, or payroll receipt (a letter on the employer's letterhead is not adequate)—must include home address and be dated within the past 60 days

- Voter registration documents, which include the name of the parent and the address of residence
- Unexpired membership documents based upon residency (e.g., neighborhood residents' association), which include the name of the parent and the address of residence
- Evidence of custody of the child, including but not limited to judicial custody orders or guardianship papers; documents must have been issued within the past 60 days and include name of child and address of residence

Please note, students in temporary housing do not need to provide documentation to register.

If you and your child do not currently live at the address used in your kindergarten application, this offer may no longer be valid. Please call us at 718-935-2009 or contact Family Welcome Center staff for support—learn more at schools.nyc.gov/WelcomeCenters. Your child is guaranteed a kindergarten placement.

WAITLIST/RIGHT TO RETURN INFORMATION

As you begin to plan for next year, please know that your child has been placed on the waitlist for the school(s) below. You ranked this school, or schools, higher on your kindergarten application than the school where your child received a kindergarten offer:

[SCHOOLS/ADDRESSES/PHONE NUMBERS]

If a seat becomes available for your child, the school(s) above will contact you directly. Waitlist offers are based on the same admissions priorities used for kindergarten offers, as published in the 2020 Kindergarten Admissions Guide and MySchools.

We encourage you to accept the enclosed kindergarten offer—doing so will not harm your chances of getting a waitlist offer. If you would like to remain on a waitlist, no further action is needed.

If you are waitlisted at your zoned school and do not get an offer to that school by October 2020, the school will contact you in the spring to learn if you wish to enroll at your zoned school for first

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grade in 2021. First grade assignments will be made based on schools' seat availability and students' order on kindergarten waitlists.

If you have questions, please call us at 718-935-2009.

Sincerely,

The Kindergarten Admissions Team

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