

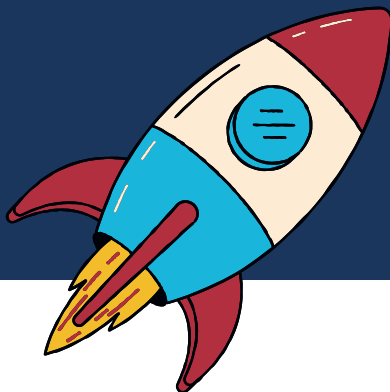


# 2025-26 Junior Kindergarten

# FH

FOREST HILLS  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Cultivating Possibility*



# Launching Possibility

## What is Junior Kindergarten?

Junior Kindergarten bridges the gap between a preschool program and Kindergarten to help ensure children are developmentally ready across all domains, not just traditional school readiness skills. This means there is an intentional focus on social and emotional development, allowing children to develop organically through play and exploration. Junior Kindergarten, followed by a year of Kindergarten, will enable students to grow and learn over an extended range of time. Any incoming kindergartner is eligible for Junior Kindergarten. However, Junior Kindergarten is a program that offers children who primarily are four years old and will turn age five between July 1 and December 1 the chance to develop school readiness skills and a love for school. Junior Kindergarten offers children a chance to:

- Interact with the curriculum and build skills at an age-appropriate pace
- Develop independence and self-regulation skills alongside academic skills
- Become confident communicators and build vital social skills
- Develop socially and emotionally while building academic skills



Junior Kindergarten is a tuition-free, full-day program staffed by Forest Hills Public Schools' teachers. Participation in Junior Kindergarten is ultimately a family's decision. Still, research shows that for many of our youngest learners, this is the best pathway to beginning their elementary school experience. Junior Kindergarten is the first year of a two-year Kindergarten experience. Students will go to traditional Kindergarten after completing Junior Kindergarten. The goal of this program is to improve the Kindergarten readiness skills of children, and it is specifically designed for students who need the gift of extra time to develop their emotional, social, physical, cognitive, and creative skills further.



# Program Highlights

- Five full days a week: 8:45 a.m.-3:45 p.m.
- Junior Kindergarten has the same number of hours per day as Kindergarten and follows the elementary schools' bell times.
- No cost to families of eligible students.
- The school week includes enrichment classes such as art, music, physical education, library/story time, and more.
- Before- and after-school care is available at a cost (based on space availability).
- Junior Kindergarten has a unique learning day compared to traditional Kindergarten with more intentional play time.
- Junior Kindergarten follows the FHPS school year calendar regarding days in session and holidays/breaks.
- Ada Elementary, Collins Elementary, and Knapp Forest Elementary are the anticipated Junior Kindergarten locations for the 2025-26 school year, yet Junior Kindergarten is open to all FHPS residents no matter what part of the district you reside. Students who attend Junior Kindergarten at a school other than their home school, based on place of residency, will return to their home school for Kindergarten during the 2026-27 school year.

## Grade Progression for FHPS Junior Kindergarten Students



Year 1: Junior  
Kindergarten


Year 2: Kindergarten

Year 3: First Grade





# How to Register for Junior Kindergarten



Registration for Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten will open sometime in February/March. Registration information will be available on our district homepage under the “enrollment” button on our website, [www.fhps.net](http://www.fhps.net). The 2025-2026 school year will be the first year of implementing a full-day, elementary school-based Junior Kindergarten setting. Additional sections may be opened if there is an overwhelming response to our Junior Kindergarten program.

Junior Kindergarten will provide an additional year of academic growth for those interested and will provide a strong foundation for children as they begin their educational journey with Forest Hills Public Schools. Talking with your student’s preschool teacher or current care provider about their development may be helpful. Finally, in helping our families make the right choice for their student, there will be a time in April/May when the district will hold Kindergarten screenings with an informational night. More about Kindergarten screening will be communicated at a later date.





# Program Eligibility

## If your child will be five years old between

## General Recommendations

Dec. 2, 2024 - Sept. 1, 2025

Your student is eligible for Kindergarten for the 2025-2026 school year. To enroll in Kindergarten in Michigan, a child must turn five-years-of age by Sept. 1, or a signed waiver is needed.

July 1, 2025 - Sept. 1, 2025

Your student is eligible for Junior Kindergarten **OR** Kindergarten, but families should consider the benefits of Junior Kindergarten. If your student has no previous school experience and would benefit from learning self-advocacy skills with more social interaction with peers, Junior Kindergarten may be a better fit.

Sept. 2, 2025-Dec. 1, 2025

Your student is eligible to enroll in Junior Kindergarten or Kindergarten with a signed waiver. Families **should consider** our Junior Kindergarten program or one of our preschool offerings.

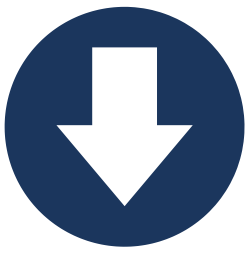
After Dec. 1, 2025

Your student is not eligible for Kindergarten or Junior Kindergarten per Michigan School Code, and we encourage you to visit our preschool offerings.

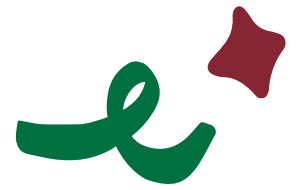
*In Michigan, families need to sign a waiver to register a child for Kindergarten if the child is not yet five years old on September 1, but will be by December 1. Students who turn five after December 1, 2025, are not eligible for Kindergarten or Junior Kindergarten for the 2025-2026 school year. Forest Hills Public Schools has many early childhood opportunities for young children. Please explore our Great Start Readiness and preschool options for the 2025-2026 school year.*

*Additionally, while toilet training is not a legal requirement for school entry in Michigan, it is generally expected and beneficial for a child's successful integration into the school setting. Parents/guardians are encouraged to work on developing this skill with their child before they start school and to engage with school officials to address any concerns or special requirements.*





# Key Dates



- **January 22, 2025:** Presentation/Q&A for parents/guardians interested in the Junior Kindergarten program at the Fine Arts Center. Time: 6 p.m.
- **February 20, 2025:** Tours for parents/guardians of the three *initial Junior Kindergarten* locations: Knapp Forest Elementary, Ada Elementary, and Collins Elementary schools. Time: 6:30 p.m.
- **February/March:** Registration window opens for Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten for the 2025-2026 school year. (Date will be announced online.)
- **April-May 2025:** Informational presentations at your student's elementary building and Kindergarten screening. It will be a time for parents/guardians to learn more about our Kindergarten options, and incoming students will be given a Kindergarten screening assessment in a fun, interactive, and engaging way.
- **May:** Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers, and elementary educators will collaborate regarding student placements and recommendations for families.
- **Week of May 18, 2025:** Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten recommendation/placement letters will be mailed to families.
- **Early-August 2025:** Final teacher assignments will be communicated to Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten parents/guardians.
- **Early August 2025:** Junior Kindergarten Let's Go! will be held at your student's Junior Kindergarten location. The purpose of this event is to give incoming students/families a look at their elementary building and classroom, meet their teacher, and ride a school bus. Students are encouraged to attend! Additional details will be shared in August.
- **August 20, 2025:** First Day of School.



Some dates/times are subject to change.





# Junior Kindergarten FAQs

## What is Forest Hills Public Schools' Junior Kindergarten Program?

Junior Kindergarten is an educational program primarily for children who turn five years old between July 1 and December 1. It bridges the gap between preschool and Kindergarten, providing an additional year of preparation for children who may benefit from more time before Kindergarten.

## What is the purpose of Junior Kindergarten?

The primary purpose of Junior Kindergarten is to provide children with an additional year of social, emotional, and academic preparation before entering traditional Kindergarten. It offers a developmentally appropriate curriculum focusing on building essential skills such as language, literacy, numeracy, fine and gross motor skills, and social interaction.

## How does Junior Kindergarten differ from traditional Kindergarten?

Junior Kindergarten has a more play-based curriculum, a lower student-to-staff ratio, and a greater emphasis on social development than traditional Kindergarten. The pace of learning is age-appropriate, allowing children time to master foundational skills before moving on to more advanced concepts.

## Who is eligible for Junior Kindergarten?

While any incoming kindergartner is eligible for Junior Kindergarten, families may want to consider Junior Kindergarten, especially for students who will turn five years of age between July 1 and December 1. If your student will not turn five until December 2 or after, they are not eligible for this program. Please see our preschool offerings to start your student's educational journey.

## How does a child benefit by enrolling in Junior Kindergarten?

- Builds a strong foundation for future school success by focusing on essential skills and concepts at an age-appropriate pace.
- Supports social and emotional development through play-based learning and interaction with peers.
- Significantly reduces the likelihood of children needing additional support in later grades.
- Provides an additional year of preparation for children who would benefit from this developmentally-appropriate option.



# FAQs Continued

## How does Junior Kindergarten prepare children for traditional Kindergarten?

Junior Kindergarten prepares children for traditional Kindergarten by focusing on critical areas of development, including:

- Language and literacy skills: Recognizing letters, letter sounds, and essential sight words.
- Numeracy skills: Counting, number recognition, basic addition and subtraction concepts.
- Social skills: Sharing, taking turns, following directions, learning school routines, and resolving conflicts.
- Emotional skills: Expressing feelings, managing emotions, and building self-confidence.
- Fine and gross motor skills: Developing hand-eye coordination and experiencing a play-based environment.

In addition, staff teaches a curriculum that supports shorter attention spans. Students' curiosity is engaged through high-interest themes. An emphasis on play-based learning using games, toys, and art activities helps Junior Kindergarten students develop skills in fine motor control, independent problem-solving, and communication.

## Is Junior Kindergarten mandatory?

Junior Kindergarten is not mandatory in Michigan. Participation in Junior Kindergarten is optional. However, parents/guardians are encouraged to consider the benefits of the program and discuss their student's readiness for formal schooling with educators and other professionals. We are happy to assist you in determining if this is the best option for your student. Upon registration, expect to receive additional communication from the elementary school regarding important Junior Kindergarten events.



## How do I register my student?

Enrollment will begin no later than March 1. Visit the district's website, [www.fhpsnet](http://www.fhpsnet), for more information, and click on the "Enrollment" tab.







# FAQs Continued



## **Will Junior Kindergarten students attend a full day, Monday-Friday?**

Yes. Junior Kindergarten is a full school day and will follow the elementary school schedule, including start and end times. There is not an option for half days or fewer days.



## **Will Junior Kindergarten students eat lunch at school?**

Yes, they will eat lunch at school and have the option of school-provided meals or bringing their own lunch.

## **How can I learn more about Junior Kindergarten?**

In addition to the materials on our website, the district will host an information night in January, and our elementary schools will hold an event in April/May. This spring event will provide additional details about Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten and issue a Kindergarten screening assessment to incoming students. If you are unsure of the best choice (Kindergarten or Junior Kindergarten) for your student, please contact the school where your student will attend Kindergarten next year. The principal, our Kindergarten teachers, and other elementary professionals will be available during the spring event, or you can schedule an appointment with them to help make an informed decision.



## **If my student attends Junior Kindergarten, does he/she enter first grade the following year?**

No. The pathway is designed for Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and then first grade. Children will join their FHPS attendance area school and Kindergarten program the year following Junior Kindergarten. The Junior Kindergarten learning experience does not replace the Forest Hills Public Schools' Kindergarten program. Students in Junior Kindergarten will be exposed to elements of the Kindergarten curriculum coupled with play-based experiences meant to reinforce social and academic school development. While individual needs are always taken into account, this program is not intended to build a student's readiness for first grade, but rather an additional year of growth with early Kindergarten literacy, math, and social skills.





# FAQs Continued



## Which schools will have a Junior Kindergarten?

Tentative locations for the 2025-2026 Junior Kindergarten will be Knapp Forest, Collins, and Ada elementary schools. Depending upon registration and interest, at least one Junior Kindergarten classroom will be located within each attendance area, and additional Junior Kindergarten classrooms may be added. As a reminder, all students will return to their attendance area school for Kindergarten during the 2026-27 school year.

## When will I be made aware of the school my student will attend?

All families will receive notification/confirmation of placement in May. When placements are made, each student's attendance area/home school will be considered.

## When will I be made aware of my student's teacher?

Teacher placements and all other elementary-grade teacher assignments will be shared in August.



## Will transportation be provided?

Yes. Transportation will be available for families who reside within the FHPS district. While we are still working on the logistics of Junior Kindergarten transportation, families wanting it will have the opportunity to register for transportation when they enroll their student. Transportation will be on an FHPS school bus. Families who register for transportation will receive additional details and bus stop information in August.

## What if my student has an IEP? What do we need to do?

Make sure you register for Junior Kindergarten or Kindergarten and the school principal and special education director will reach out to families of students with IEPs prior to the start of school.



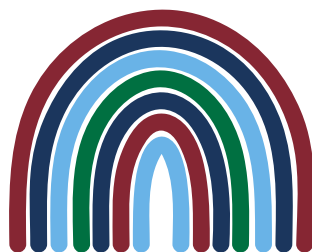


# FAQs Continued

## Is Junior Kindergarten placement only determined by birthdate?

No. While birthdate is a factor, students turning five years old between September 1 and December 1 may benefit most from an additional growth year while developing:

- Oral language development
- Confidence
- Social skills
- Motor skills
- Attention span
- Independence
- School readiness



The Kindergarten screener will also help determine a child's readiness. However, as a parent/guardian, you know the child best, and we are here to partner with you to set all children on a successful educational journey.

## Can a child attend Junior Kindergarten if it is recommended that the child attend Kindergarten, and vice versa?

If a child is eligible for Kindergarten, they are eligible for Junior Kindergarten. Ultimately, the final decision is up to the parent/guardian as to whether their student will attend Junior Kindergarten or Kindergarten. Our educational staff will help you at every step of your decision process to ensure your student is happy and will thrive and grow.



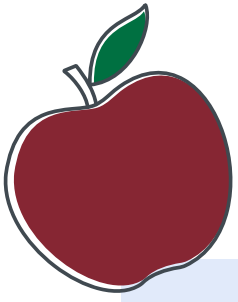
## Is there a lottery system to get into Junior Kindergarten? Is there a maximum number of students you will take for Junior Kindergarten?

There is no lottery and there is no maximum number of students the district will take. Again, our staff will work with families on the best placement for each child. When registration opens in February/March, families can select Junior Kindergarten or Kindergarten.

## Is there a Junior Kindergarten language immersion option?

No. Our language immersion programs, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish, begin in Kindergarten. If your student attends Junior Kindergarten their first year, and you are interested in a language immersion Kindergarten the following year, families will have that opportunity to explore the language immersion Kindergarten programs the following year.





# What if I still have questions?



1

Discuss this opportunity with others, such as your child's preschool teacher, pediatrician, or other child care provider. Remember, you know your child the best.

2

Attend the information session on January 22, 2025, at 6 p.m. Join us at the Forest Hills Fine Arts Center for a presentation/Q&A for parents/guardians interested in the Junior Kindergarten program.

3

Tour one of the three elementary schools: Knapp Forest Elementary, Ada Elementary, or Collins Elementary, on February 20, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. The tour is designed for parents/guardians.

4

Register for Junior Kindergarten or Kindergarten beginning around February/March. (Visit [www.fhps.net](http://www.fhps.net) for a specific date TBD.)

5

Attend the informational presentation and Kindergarten screening event at your student's elementary building. It will be a time for parents/guardians to learn more about our Kindergarten options, and incoming students will be given a Kindergarten screening assessment in a fun, interactive, and engaging way. Dates and times will be communicated on our district's website: [www.fhps.net](http://www.fhps.net).

6

Schedule an appointment with one of our elementary instructional team members, by calling, 616-493-8806.





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