

Akron Beacon Journal

EDUCATION

Akron Public Schools offering free jump start for kindergarteners



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Key Points

Akron Public Schools will offer a free kindergarten readiness program in July.

Up to 500 students can participate in the Jump Start to kindergarten program.

According to the most recent state data, only 15.4% of students were ready for kindergarten at Akron Public Schools.

Akron Public Schools is offering students [entering kindergarten](#) in August a free jump-start experience to help them feel ready for their first year of school.

[Jump Start to Kindergarten](#) is a four-week, half-day program that will begin July 13 at seven elementary sites in the Akron school district.

The classes will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and will include free breakfast and lunch. Site locations are [Barber](#), Hatton, Forest Hill, McEbright, Portage Path, Sam Salem and Schumacher community learning centers.

To be eligible, families must first [enroll their child](#) for kindergarten in Akron Public Schools. A new state law requires students to be at least 5 years old on the first day of school, which is Aug. 31 for Akron Public Schools.

The Jump Start program is funded through a state grant as part of [Ohio's Kindergarten Readiness Boot Camp initiative](#), which seeks to improve the number

of students ready for kindergarten. Roughly 37% of students in the 2024-2025 school year were ready for kindergarten, according to the most recent state data.

Akron, where 15.4% of students demonstrated readiness for kindergarten in the 2024-2025 school year, received \$607,507, the largest allocation among the roughly 70 grants awarded.

Jennifer Douglas, early learning program supervisor at Akron Public Schools, said the grant will allow the district to serve up to 500 students. As of June 25, 200 students had registered for the program.

Douglas said the program, which will be staffed with 30 teachers and intervention specialists and 50 educational assistants and speech-language pathologists, is designed to help ease the transition into a school setting. For many students, this will be the first time they've worked within a larger group of children, learned from an adult they don't know and stayed without their families in an unfamiliar setting, she said.

Participants will attend classes with fewer classmates than in a traditional kindergarten classroom, Douglas said. They also will be grouped with other students who will be attending their school in the fall, allowing them to meet potential classmates.

Teachers will focus on many of the routines the students will encounter in kindergarten, such as eating in the cafeteria, going to recess and navigating the school, Douglas said.

Teachers also will start acclimating students to academic routines, such as integrating early literacy and math skills and working in different learning groups, including large group, small group and one-on-one settings.

“This will give them more time to get comfortable and to know what to expect,” Douglas said. “It will help them alleviate that anxiety and to be more prepared for the academic instruction they will get during the school year.”

The district also has hired Red Oak Behavioral Health to provide lessons to help students with their social and emotional skills, such as sharing, taking turns and how to tell someone “no” in a socially appropriate way. Douglas said the mental health therapists also will be embedded in the classrooms to help students use the skills they learned as they interact with their peers.

For more information, visit akronschools.com/enrollment/kindergarten or contact the district at 330-761-2810.

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