



Tip Sheets for Families

# Welcome to Public School in Massachusetts

## What Does a Massachusetts School Look Like?

Each school year is called a grade. Most communities offer Kindergarten for children starting at age 5 (in some cases, even younger). Students need to meet state and local requirements to receive a high school diploma.

The school year begins in late August or early September and ends in June. Schools take a short break in December (winter break) and again in February and April (one-week breaks) as well as an extended break over the summer. Check with your school if your student will be missing more than a few days of school.

Schools use a combination of tests, homework, and classwork to decide if a student is ready to move to the next grade. Families are welcome to ask questions and work with teachers to support their students.



**This resource covers free local and charter public schools. Other options include teaching your student at home under a plan approved by the public school or enrolling in a private or religious school which may require payment by the family.**

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## How to Enroll in a Massachusetts School

All children must attend school from age 6 to age 16. Families can register for school in the city or town where they live. Talk with your school about how to register. Proof of residency may be requested but if you are living with friends or in a shelter, you will still be able to send your child to school. Children must have proof of certain vaccination status. School districts cannot ask a family about their immigration status.



## Is there a cost to attend public school?

There is no cost to attend public school. All children who live in the United States have a right to a free public education.

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## Families' Role

Families and schools need to work together for student success. Families can join local school groups to get answers to their questions and learn about the school community. Families should ask about school supplies like notebooks, pencils, and clothing. Many school districts offer free lunches.

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**Take a first step - talk with your local school about your student.**

## What if English is not my First Language?

Schools should communicate with families in a language they can understand. Families can ask to receive information in their preferred language and have an interpreter when they talk to the school. Students who do not speak English must be given language support to learn English.

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**Remember: As a parent or caregiver, you are the expert on your child, and it is OK to ask questions.**