



# Ready, Set, Go!

A Parent's Guide to  
Starting Kindergarten

Claremont School District



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in Claremont; one student at a time.

## Launching into an Adventure!

Starting kindergarten is an exciting adventure for kids and their families. It is a new beginning for learning, developing friendships, confidence and independence.

However, it is also normal for children and parents to feel anxious about starting kindergarten. Children often worry about what it will be like to go to the “big kids” school.

- ❖ Who will be my teacher?
- ❖ Will I make friends?
- ❖ What will I do all day?
- ❖ What will my classroom look like?
- ❖ Where will I go when I get to school?

As parents, we often have concerns too.

- ❖ I won't be able to protect my child at school.
- ❖ Who will help my child tie their shoes?
- ❖ What happens if they are teased on the playground?
- ❖ What if my child doesn't understand the teacher?

It is important that our children are excited and proud on their first day of school. We want them to walk through the classroom door ready to take their place in the “big kids” school.

The Claremont School District is pleased to provide this handbook to help parents and caregivers prepare children for a successful launch into the kindergarten adventure.



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## What is Kindergarten Readiness?

**K**indergarteners are still growing and developing. At age 5, children have lots of energy. Some are focused on running and climbing on the playground. Others like to draw pictures or play with blocks or toys.

Very few children have mastered all the readiness skills they will need when they enter kindergarten. To be most successful, children need a balance of skills in each of the four building blocks of kindergarten readiness:

- ❖ Social and emotional development
- ❖ Self-care, physical well-being and motor skills
- ❖ Language development
- ❖ Early academics

While readiness is different for every child, getting ready for school isn't only for the children. Families need to get ready too by:

- ❖ Preparing for new routines
- ❖ Planning for their role supporting their child, teacher, classroom and school
- ❖ Having a positive and enthusiastic attitude about starting kindergarten



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## What is the Right Age for Kindergarten?

Children who turn 5 on or before September 30 of the school year are eligible to enroll in kindergarten.

The youngest children will be 4 years 11 months old and there will be some children approaching their 6th birthday.

Some parents wonder if they should wait an extra year before enrolling their child in kindergarten - especially if their child has a birthday that is late in the summer or September. To help you decide what is right for your child:

- ❖ Be aware of your child's skills and see how they align with the building blocks of kindergarten readiness in this handbook.
- ❖ Talk to your child's preschool teacher and your family doctor.
- ❖ Visit the kindergarten your child will be attending. Watch what the children are doing and imagine your child in that classroom.
- ❖ Talk to parents who have kindergarteners or children in elementary school.
- ❖ Trust your instincts.

Once your child is old enough to register for kindergarten, some publicly-funded preschools may no longer continue to provide services to your child. Check with your provider if you have questions.

### Research:

Children's success in school can depend on whether they have learned certain emotional and behavioral skills before they enter school, such as expressing their own feelings and those of others, cooperating with peers and adults, resolving conflicts successfully, and controlling their own behavior.

~ Set for Success: Build a Strong Foundation for School Readiness Based on the Social-Emotional Development of Young Children. Kauffman Foundation, 2002.



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## Social and Emotional Development

### *Sharing and Caring!*

Children who can share ideas and feelings are able to solve problems.

Being ready for school also means learning how to be part of a group and follow directions.

Children who have a strong sense of self-esteem are more likely to have positive learning experiences in school.

Healthy social and emotional skills in young children include:

- ❖ Expressing empathy (the ability to understand and share the feelings of another)
- ❖ Relating well to adults
- ❖ Engaging in cooperative play with their peers
- ❖ Having the ability to recognize and label emotions
- ❖ Being curious and eager to learn
- ❖ Expressing needs and wants
- ❖ Engaging in pretend play

#### **I'm ready for school when...**

- I talk to adults and ask for help when I need it.
- I take turns, share and help others.
- I try new activities and ask questions.
- I stay focused and pay attention to 10-15 minutes at a time.
- I follow one- and two-step directions such as "Please put away your crayons and bring me your paper."
- I work and play both independently and in a group.
- I feel good about myself.
- I can calm myself down when I get frustrated.



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## Tips for Parents:

- ❑ Teach your child that all feelings are okay, but not all actions are okay. For example, it's okay to be upset, but it's not okay to hit someone.
- ❑ Set a good example for your child.
- ❑ Help your child to identify and talk about their feelings and to imagine what others are feeling.
- ❑ Set consistent limits. Your child will feel safer and more confident if they know you are paying attention and helping them to behave properly.
- ❑ Make time for playing with friends. When children play together, they learn to take turns, share and respect one another's feelings.
- ❑ Set routines. Children have an easier time cooperating when they know what to expect.
- ❑ Help your child to feel proud of their efforts and accomplishments.
- ❑ Help your child learn from mistakes. When things go wrong, help them think about what to do differently next time.
- ❑ Model appropriate manners. Remember to say "please" and "thank you" and your child will too.
- ❑ Use positive statements to teach your child appropriate behavior. For example, "I like how you shared your toy with your sister."
- ❑ Help your child find ways to calm down when they are frustrated.



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## Self-care, Physical Well-Being and Motor Skills

### *Fuel for School!*

A good night's sleep will help your child grow and be ready to pay attention during the school day. **Children of this age need 10-12 hours of sleep each night!**

When your child can take care of their personal needs, such as going to the bathroom, washing hands and dressing themselves, they are ready to learn in school.

Now is also a great time to reinforce healthy eating habits. Your child needs to have energy and be alert for school. Focus on healthy choices for breakfast and school lunches or snacks.

Make time for active play and exercise. Exercise will help your child cope with the new structure and expectations of school.

#### **I am ready for school when...**

- I am healthy and my immunizations are up to date.
- I have good oral health and have visited a dentist.
- I am well-rested.
- I can use crayons, pencils, and paint brushes.
- I can button, zip and tie or Velcro shoes.
- I can kick balls, hop on one foot and climb a ladder at the park.
- I can eat, wash hands, blow my nose and use the toilet by myself.



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## Tips for Parents:

- ❑ Provide your child healthy meals and snacks including whole grains, protein, fresh fruits and vegetables. Limit the use of fats and sugars.
- ❑ Engage your child in 30 minutes or more of physical activity each day.
- ❑ Join your child in active play such as going to the park or going for a walk.
- ❑ Limit screen time. Get outside to play.
- ❑ Help your child get enough rest every night.
- ❑ Visit your child's pediatrician and dentist at least once a year.





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## Language Development

### *Use Your Words!*

Language skills are thinking skills. The more children hear words and practice using them, the more ready they will be to learn at school.

In kindergarten the teachers will use words to describe things (smooth, red, fast), to introduce math concepts (big, bigger, biggest) and to explain ideas like telling time and rules in the classroom.

Family conversations during dinner, telling stories about your day, playing imagination games with friends and reading books to your child are all great ways to build language skills.

#### **I'm ready for school when...**

- I hear and understand the meaning of words, stories and songs.
- I use words to talk about thoughts, wants, needs and feelings.
- I speak clearly enough so that other people understand.
- I use complete sentences and connect ideas together to make longer sentences.
- I can say or sing familiar songs and nursery rhymes.

#### **Research:**

Children who were read to by their parents three to six times a week had greater vocabulary gains from fall to spring than children who were read to less frequently. Daily parent-child book reading resulted in even larger gains.

~ Reading to Very Young Children Improves Language & Cognitive Development. Raikes & Raikes, et al., 2006.



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## Tips for Parents:

- ❑ Talk to your child as often as possible. Use the time during daily activities to engage your child in conversations. For example, talk about the textures of the fruits and vegetables while grocery shopping or the colors of the clothes while folding laundry.
- ❑ Read to your child for at least 20 minutes every day.
- ❑ Get a library card and visit the library weekly so you will have lots of books to choose from.
- ❑ Ask your child questions that encourage them to describe things, events or feelings.
- ❑ Play storytelling games with your child and encourage them tell you stories.
- ❑ Play listening games. Hide a small object and then give your child directions on how to find it.
- ❑ Be a language role-model for your child. Talk with your child about many different ideas so they can learn new words.
- ❑ Listen carefully when your child is talking. Ask questions and show you care about what they are saying.
- ❑ Try to speak clearly so your child can hear how the words are meant to sound.
- ❑ Be careful about use of slang or swear words that your child may repeat.
- ❑ Sing songs and read rhyming stories with your child.



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## Early Academics

### *ABCs and 123s!*

Kindergarten is a year of much growth and development. You can help your child to be a student by playing games. It is easy and fun to use games to learn about letters, numbers, colors, shapes, patterns and solving problems.

#### **I'm ready for school when...**

- I know my full name, age, address, birthday and telephone number
- I can identify parts of my body
- I know my colors
- I can copy shapes
- I can draw a person
- I can write my first and last name
- I can count to 20
- I can count 10 objects

#### **Research:**

Children who hear many words beginning at birth do significantly better in school. The most important aspect of parent talk is its amount. Parents who talk frequently to their children expose them to 1,000 to 2,000 words every hour! Children from talkative families have heard 30 million more words and a half a million more positive encouragements by the time they are 3 years old than children whose families primarily talk to their children to tell them what to do.

~ Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children. Betty Hart & Todd R. Risely, 2005.



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## Tips for Parents:

- ❑ Offer your child lots of encouragement and praise. Children who are self-confident learn to read and write more easily.
- ❑ Look for shapes in everyday objects. Doors are rectangles, pennies are circles.
- ❑ Sing songs and play rhyming games.
- ❑ Keep pencils, crayons and paper where children can get to them easily.
- ❑ Point out letters and numbers in everyday places like cereal boxes, signs and books.
- ❑ Help your child learn how to sort, match and compare. For example, you can talk about colors, textures and sizes by matching socks by color and size while folding laundry.
- ❑ Teach your child to count. “How many chairs are at the table?” “How many steps to the bedroom?”
- ❑ Check out many books from the library.
- ❑ Remember, children learn through PLAY!

### Research:

Children who are physically active perform better in school than those who are not. Children who participated in a comprehensive school health initiative that included physical activity as a key element showed a 36% increase in reading and a 24% increase in math scores over a two year period.

~ Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2009.



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## Getting Ready

### ***Are you worried your child is not ready?***

Remember that kindergarten readiness looks different for each child. However, you know your child better than anyone. Parents are usually the first to notice if their child needs additional support in certain areas.

If your child attends preschool, speak with your child's teacher. There may be simple things you can work on at home to support your child in getting ready for kindergarten.

If you still feel your child's development is very different from other children the same age, trust your instincts, make a list of your concerns and visit your child's doctor. You can also contact the office of the Director of Special Education, Ben Nester at (603)543-4200 ex. 6001 and request a developmental assessment of your child any time after his or her 3rd birthday.

### **Talk to your child's doctor if you see a few of the following behaviors on a regular basis:**

- ❖ Frequent temper tantrums
- ❖ Difficulty with normal changes in routine or when moving from play time to quiet time.
- ❖ Overly aggressive behavior with other children or appearing very withdrawn.
- ❖ Restless behavior compared to other children and easily distracted.
- ❖ Difficulty holding a crayon or pencil or copying basic shapes.
- ❖ Trouble hearing or understanding when others are talking.
- ❖ Difficulty pronouncing simple words or if people outside your family have difficulty understanding your child.
- ❖ Difficulty walking, running or climbing.

Remember, many children have some of these behaviors. Watch to see if they happen all the time or if there are specific situations in which they are more likely to occur.



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## **My child is ready for kindergarten. What do I need to do to get my child enrolled?**

Kindergarten registration begins in April of the year your child will start kindergarten. Call the school where your child will be enrolled to register your child for kindergarten.

- Bluff Elementary School (603)543-4273
- Disnard Elementary School (603)543-4260
- Maple Avenue Elementary School (603)543-4270

If you are experiencing homelessness, a family in transition, or are unsure of which school your child should attend please call the SAU office 543-4200.

## **What documents will you need to bring to enroll your child?**

You will need to come with proof of residency, proof of child's birthdate and your child's immunization records.

## **Do you have choice of schools?**

The school your child attends is dependent on where in Claremont you live. If you are unsure which school your child should attend please call the SAU office. (603)543-4200

## **Take your child to the doctor and dentist.**

New Hampshire requires checkups before your child enters school. Before you can register, you will need to show that your child has recently had a:

- ❖ Health check up
- ❖ Up-to-date immunizations for Polio, DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus), MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), Hepatitis B and Chickenpox
- ❖ Dentist visit (not a requirement, but encouraged).



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## Research after school care options, if necessary.

There is an after school program available through the Green Mountain Child Care Center. There is also an after school program available through NIMMA.

- ❖ <https://gmccvt.org/kids-connection/>
- ❖ <https://claremontafterschool.com/>

## Eating at School

Make sure you fill out the Lunch Form to see if you qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch. You can now do this online <https://www.lunchapplication.com/>. Take a few minutes to fill this out before school starts.

There is also the option for your child to buy breakfast and lunch at school. Breakfast is \$1.75 and lunch is \$3.00. Students also have snack time during the day. This is typically a snack brought in from home. Most classrooms don't provide snack for the students. However, the schools do have a fruit and vegetable program where students can have a fruit or vegetable for snack.

## Heading Home

Make sure your child and your child's teacher knows how they are getting home of the first day of school. Keep in mind, if they are within a mile radius of the school they attend, they are considered walking students.

If you aren't sure if they should be considered a bus rider call the bus garage at (603)543-4290. If you plan on picking your child up from school, check with the school your child attends to learn what their routine is for car riders.

## I've enrolled my child. Now What?

- Talk to your child about what a typical school day will look like.
- Visit the school with your child and meet the staff.
- Help your child choose his or her own backpack to bring on the first day of school! The Claremont School District does have a Back to School Festival in August if you are not able to get a backpack for your child. However, the free backpacks are first come first serve.



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### **Make sure your child knows the following basic information:**

- First and Last Name
- Full names of parents
- How they will get home at the end of the day (who will pick them up, will they ride the bus, etc...)
- Whether they have any food allergies or food restrictions.
- To walk away and find an adult they know if approached by strangers.
- How to find the classroom, bathroom, and school office.
- If possible, teach your child your phone number.





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## Getting Ready

**R**emember that helping your child be prepared and ready to enter school is just the beginning of the adventure. As parents, you play a key role in the ongoing success of your child at school. Let your child know that you have high expectations and that their education is important.

If you are concerned about your child in any area, make sure the school and teacher know about them and are prepared to help your child succeed. Education is a partnership between parents, teachers and the school. There are many ways you can participate in your child's education. For example:

- ❖ Talk to the teacher.
- ❖ Spend time in your child's classroom as a volunteer.
- ❖ Join a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
- ❖ Help your child with homework.
- ❖ Read with your child at home.

### Research:

Parent involvement has a positive and significant effect on children's overall academic enrichment activities with their children outside of school, children demonstrate improvement in reading and math performance. ~ Approaches to Parental Involvement for Improving the Academic Performance of Elementary School Children in Grades K-6. Chad Nye, Herb Turner, Jamie Schwartz, 2006.



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## Tips for Parents:

### At School:

- You know your child best. Help your child's teacher get to know your child.
- Introduce yourself to your child's teacher and check in often.
- Ask the teacher how your child is doing and how you can help.
- If your child has special needs and an Individualized Education Plan, communicate with your child's teachers about your child's progress on a regular basis.
- Find out how you can help out in the classroom, at activities or on field trips.
- Get to know the other children and parents in your child's class. Get involved! Attend school events, parent-teacher conferences and participate in fundraisers.
- If communication with the schools is uncomfortable, find out if you can be provided an advocate.

### At Home:

- Ask your child questions about his or her day that will encourage more than a yes or no answer. What did you talk about at Morning Meeting? Who did you play with at recess? What was the most fun thing that happened today?
- Continue to read aloud with your child each day even as they begin to read on their own.
- Know whether your child has special needs and learn about services available.
- Talk to your child's teacher about homework assignments if your child spends more than 10-15 minutes a day completing the work or is feeling stressed.
- Read notes from teachers, complete all paperwork required of parents and return it promptly. Check the backpack everyday.
- Don't forget the important "fuel for school": healthy food and early bedtimes.



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## FAQs

### **What will my child's day look like?**

- The school day starts at 8:30 and students are dismissed at 3:10.
- There is usually a morning meeting where they start their day saying good morning and talking about expectations. That will last around between 15 and 30 minutes.
- Students will spend an hour on math and an hour on reading/writing.
- There will be an hour special for art, music, physical education, technology, and library.
- They will have 30 minutes to eat their lunch, and a 30 minute recess outside.
- There is not a nap incorporated into their day.

### **What is the average class size for kindergarten?**

There are typically between 14-18 kindergarteners depending on the year and need within the schools.

### **What will my child have for support in their classroom?**

Most classrooms have a paraprofessional in their classroom to provide support for children on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Some classrooms have more, but that depends on the amount of support necessary in that particular class.

### **What does it look like if my child has speech, OT, or PT?**

Typically students get pulled out of the classroom to work in small groups or one on one with their service provider. There are times when it works out for the student to receive services in their classroom but that depends on the individual student's needs.

### **What will my child learn in Kindergarten?**

- In reading students will learn their letters, sounds, rhyming, and being blending sounds together to form words. Some children, but not all, are ready to read by the end of the year.
- In writing students will learn how to correctly form letters. They will begin to put letters together to form words. Some children, but not all, are ready to start writing sentences by the end of the year.
- In math students will learn number sense. They will get a clear understanding of what numbers are from 1-20 and all of their forms. There is a lot of counting in kindergarten as well as shapes, measuring, and some data collection.



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## FAQs cont.

### **Will my child get to play?**

This is probably the biggest change for kindergarten students. They will have the opportunity to play in kindergarten, but there won't be as much free time as in preschool. There is a new NH law stating that kindergarten must be play based. This means that students will be doing play activities where learning is taking place.

### **Will my child need to take any assessments?**

Kindergarteners are all given an academic screener to find what they know when they enter school. They will also do a quick assessment for letters and sounds called DIBELS. Starting in January, they will participate in the iReady diagnostics on the computer. iReady assesses students in math and reading. Lastly, each classroom will continuously check in with students to find what they know as the year goes on.

### **What are Title I services, and will my child participate?**

Title I is an additional intervention provided in the areas of math and reading for students who are struggling. Teachers look at DIBELS data and beginning of the year screening data to decide which students will participate. Students may participate anywhere from 6 weeks to the entire year. It depends on growth and what they begin to retain.



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## Resources

Early Childhood Education Requirements:

[https://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/curriculum/early\\_learning.htm](https://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/curriculum/early_learning.htm)

Pathways: Family Centered Supports and Services for Ages 3-21

<https://pathwaysnh.org/services/support-ages-3-21/>

New Hampshire Family Voices

<http://watchmegrownh.org/>

One-4-All Center

[https://www.sau6.org/departments/federal\\_programs/one-4-\\_all](https://www.sau6.org/departments/federal_programs/one-4-_all)

### **Hospitals**

Valley Regional Healthcare	(603)542-7771
Mount Ascutney Hospital	(802)674-6711
Dartmouth Hitchcock Memorial Center	(603)650-5000
Springfield Hospital	(802)885-2151

### **Pediatricians**

Valley Regional - AIM Pediatrics	(603)542-6700
Mount Ascutney Pediatrics	(802)674-7337
Rockingham Medical Group	(802)885-2151
Sojourns Community Health Clinic	(802)722-4023

### **Dentists**

3 Stone Dental	(603)542-3225
Thomas Bacon DDS	(603)542-5197
Claremont Family Dentistry	(603)542-7100
Community Dental Care	(603)287-1300
Dunning Dental Practice	(603)542-2351
Richard Spence	(603)543-0455

### **Vision**

Doctor Sam's Eye Care	(603)543-2020
Reed Optical	(603)543-3125
InfantSEE (free infant eye screenings)	(603)543-2020
Walmart Supercenter	(603)543-1843



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## Resources Cont.

### **Counseling**

West Central Behavioral Health (603)542-5449/ (603)863-1951  
Infant Mental Health Teams of NH (603)542-4885  
Counseling Associates of Claremont (603)863-1672

### **Public Welfare**

Director Suzanne Carr [scarr@claremontnh.com](mailto:scarr@claremontnh.com)  
58 Opera House Square, Claremont, NH 03743  
(603)542-7007

- Assist in Rent, Mortgage, and Shelter
- Have food pantry/personal items
- Help with prescriptions
- Referrals to shelters and churches

### **Turning Points Network**

Amanda Mace [amanda@turningpointsnetwork.org](mailto:amanda@turningpointsnetwork.org)  
11 School St. Claremont, NH 03743  
(603)543-0155

- Preventing violence
- Support victims against sexual violence
- Free and confidential
- Support victims with dating violence
- Stop stalking and patterns of harassment
- Support victims against child sexual abuse
- Peer counseling
- Support groups
- Shelter
- Court advocacy
- Safety planning
- 24 hour crisis support line

### **Southwestern Community Services**

Terra Rogers (Energy Services) [trogers@scshelps.org](mailto:trogers@scshelps.org)  
102 Main Street, Claremont, NH 03743  
(603)542-9528

- Head start program
- Transportation
- Heat Assistance
- Lower income housing



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## Resources Cont.

### **Fiske Free Library**

108 Broad Street, Claremont, NH 03743  
(603)542-7017

- 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Club
- Books and toys for lending
- Special events during school vacation
- Summer events
- year round play groups

### **Claremont Parks and Recreations**

152 South Street, Claremont, NH 03743  
parksandrecinfo@claremontnh.com  
recreational facilities  
community special events  
programming and services

### **Claremont Soup Kitchen**

Cindy Stevens [cstevenck@yahoo.com](mailto:cstevenck@yahoo.com)  
53 Central Street, Claremont, NH 03743  
(603)543-3290

- Feeds families
- Food donated by several resources
- Families can come in and receive box from pantry
- Many volunteer position available
- Community partner

### **TLC Family Resource Center**

Maggie Monroe-Cassel [maggie@tlcfamilyrc.org](mailto:maggie@tlcfamilyrc.org)  
109 Pleasant St., Claremont, NH 03743  
(603)542-1848

- Comprehensive sexual health education
- LGBT Support and resources
- Child/parent psychotherapy
- Community visiting nursing
- Children's thrift store
- Resources to pregnant woman
- Provides free services tailored to individual needs



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## Resources Cont.

### System of Care

Trinity Early

169 Main St. Claremont, NH 03743 - (603)287-8985

[tearly@sau6.org](mailto:tearly@sau6.org)

- Promote early childhood social and emotional learning and development
- Connect families, schools and communities
- Promote mental, emotional and behavioral health
- Create safe and violence-free schools