Getting Ready for Kindergarten

A family guide from Minneapolis Public Schools
Important Phone Numbers

Early Childhood Education .................. 612.668.2140
Web: http://ece.mpls.k12.mn.us

Early Childhood Screening .................. 612.668.3715
Email: earlychildhoodscreening@mpls.k12.mn.us

Early Childhood Family Education .......... 612.668.2127
Email: mpls.ecfe@mpls.k12.mn.us
Web: http://ecfe.mpls.k12.mn.us

Early Childhood Special Education ........ 612.668.5100
Web: http://ecse.mpls.k12.mn.us

HotShot Line ................................ 612.668.0870

Language Support
Hmoob ........................................... 612.668.1836
Soomali ......................................... 612.668.3704
Español ......................................... 612.668.3702

Minneapolis Kids ............................... 612.668.3890
Childcare Program

New Families Center .......................... 612.668.3700
(For families who speak a language other than English)

Open Enrollment ............................... 612.668.0033

Minnesota Department of Education ....... 651.582.8200
Web: http://www.education.state.mn.us

Student Placement Services .................. 612.668.1840
Email: sps.department@mpls.k12.mn.us
Web: http://schoolchoice.mpls.k12.mn.us

Teen Parent Services= ....................... 612.668.4757

“The Choice is Yours” Program ............. 612.668.0033

In This Booklet

At Minneapolis Public Schools, we share your eagerness to make your child’s kindergarten experience a positive one and we believe the key is teamwork. A close partnership between family and school can make a big difference in how well your child does in school. To help build a strong partnership, this booklet was prepared to answer many of your questions:

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Dear Families,

Kindergarten is an important first stage of elementary school, providing the foundation for success throughout a child’s education. Minneapolis Public Schools’ (MPS) kindergarten programs create a warm and welcoming environment where children at all levels of development will learn and achieve.

In the classroom, children will meet the school district’s expectations for kindergarten students in reading, mathematics and writing, while growing physically, socially and emotionally. Using best practices, kindergarten teachers:

- Build on children’s home and preschool experiences.
- Help children acquire knowledge and skills in reading and mathematics.
- Engage children in hands-on activities.
- Offer a balance of small group, large group and individual activities.
- Assess children’s progress through teacher observation and looking at student work.
- Help children to interact with other children and adults.
- Develop children’s social skills, including conflict resolution strategies.
- Involve families in their child’s education.

If any of your questions are not answered in this booklet, please call the MPS Early Childhood Education Department or Student Placement Services. Families who speak a language other than English should contact the New Families Center.

Phone numbers are listed on the inside of the front cover of this booklet.

Welcome to Kindergarten!

Getting Ready for Kindergarten

The following tips provide ideas of what you can do to help your child get ready for kindergarten:

1. At age 3, call 612.668.3715 or email earlychildhoodscreening@mpls.k12.mn.us. For more details, see page 5.

2. Consider enrolling your child in a pre-school program such as High Five, Head Start, an Early Childhood Family Education class, quality childcare programs or community education programs.

3. The year before kindergarten, attend the MPS School Information Fair, which is typically held in early winter. For exact dates, contact Student Placement Services in the fall.

4. Visit and tour potential schools in your neighborhood or schools that interest you.

5. Select a school for kindergarten. Mail your school request card before the school choice deadline, which is usually 4 to 6 weeks after the School Information Fair.

6. Gather the following documents for school registration:
   - Record of preschool screening. Call 612.668.3715 or email earlychildhoodscreening@mpls.k12.mn.us or ask your health care provider for a copy.

7. Once your child has been placed at a school, make sure to complete the registration process at the school. This usually happens in the spring. Doing this secures your child’s place in kindergarten as well as on the school bus.

Phone numbers are listed on the inside of the front cover of this booklet.
Early Childhood Screening, Ages 3-5*

MPS recommends that children be screened at age 3, but call at any time if you are concerned about your child’s growth and development – screening can be done before age 3.

Three Reasons to Screen at Age 3*

1. Screening can assist your child to be ready for school.
2. Any health or developmental concerns may be found earlier and that allows us to provide help sooner.
3. Because screening is free, it’s easy and good for your child!

When Your Child Turns 3 Years Old

1. Call 612.668.3715 or email early childhood screening at: screening@mpls.k12.mn.us to set an appointment.
2. Complete the health forms that you receive in the mail.
3. Bring your child to the screening appointment, where trained staff will check your child’s:
   - Vision and hearing
   - Growth and development
   - Immunizations and family history
4. Bring your child’s birth and immunization records to the screening.
5. Screening is preferred at age 3, but may be done at age 4 or 5.

Early Childhood Screening helps:

1. You understand how your child is doing.
2. Connect you with early childhood programs and services.
3. Answer your parenting questions.

Contact Information

Phone: 612.668.3715
Email: earlychildhoodscreening@mpls.k12.mn.us
Website: http://ece.mpls.k12.mn.us/early_childhood_screening

Enrollment Process: Call or email for an appointment
Fees: Free

*State law requires all children to be screened before entering kindergarten.

Immunizations

Directions:

- Find the child’s age/grade level and read across to the right.
- Look to see whether the child has had the number of shots shown by the checkmark(s) under each vaccine.

Note: Each row is meant to be read separately, so don’t add up the columns of checkmarks under each vaccine.

Example: A preschooler needs 4 DTaP, then to enter kindergarten he or she needs 1 more DTaP, for a total of 5 (not 9).

Visit http://health.mpls.k12.mn.us/immunizations_needed_for_school, for more detail.

To go to school in Minnesota, students must show they have had these immunizations or file a legal exemption with the school. Parents may file a medical exemption signed by a healthcare provider or a conscientious objection signed by a parent/guardian and notarized. Other immunizations recommended for school children, but not required by the School Immunization Law:

- Influenza (Flu) – each year for children age 6 months through 18 years – especially those with risk factors like asthma and diabetes.
- Meningococcal for age 11-18.
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) for girls age 11-18.
- Hepatitis A
- Varicella* (Chickenpox)

* Varicella shot(s) not required if a child’s doctor signs a form saying the child has already had chickenpox disease.
** First-grade students who are 6 years old and younger must follow the polio and Tdap/DTaP/Td schedules for kindergarten.
*** An alternate 2-shot schedule of hepatitis B may also be used for children ages 11 through 15.
**** If a child received a Td at age 7-10 years they do not necessarily need another one at age 11-12. However, they must receive another shot of Td or Tdap 10 years after their last one.
- Hib – an additional 2 to 3 doses (depending on the product used) are recommended in addition to the 1 dose at or after 12 months of age required for school.

Directions:

- Find the child’s age/grade level and read across to the right.
- Look to see whether the child has had the number of shots shown by the checkmark(s) under each vaccine.

To go to school in Minnesota, students must show they have had:

- Hep B
- Hepatitis B
- Tdap/DTaP/Td
- Polio
- MMR
- Hib
- Varicella* (Chickenpox)
- Hepatitis A
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) for girls age 11-18.
- Influenza (Flu) – each year for children age 6 months through 18 years – especially those with risk factors like asthma and diabetes.
- Varicella* (Chickenpox)

Visit http://health.mpls.k12.mn.us/immunizations_needed_for_school, for more detail.
What Happens in High Five?

High Five is a preschool program for Minneapolis children who turn four by September 1 and who will start kindergarten the following fall. Priority is given to children who qualify for free and/or reduced-price meals.

High Five is a program that prepares children for kindergarten by focusing on the whole child. The program uses research-based and age-appropriate curricula based on the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress:
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Language and Literacy Development
- Creativity and the Arts
- Cognitive Development
- Physical and Motor Development

The High Five curriculum is organized around three fundamental elements:
1. **Community Circle**: Creates a sense of belonging to a community of learners and emphasizes being responsible, listening, talking with others, asking questions and taking turns. Includes language, literacy, math, science and social studies activities.

2. **Active Learning**: Young children learn best through hands-on experiences with people, objects, events and ideas. Children are encouraged to construct deeper knowledge through independent and small-group experiences.

3. **Review**: Closing meetings gather children to share experiences and ideas and to reflect on the day’s learning. Often, this is a time for rereading a story or sharing a second reading aloud.

For a complete list of High Five programs, contact Student Placement Services. High Five is a fee-based program with a sliding scale available for qualifying families; nobody will be turned away because of their inability to pay.

What Happens in Kindergarten?

Kindergarten students learn best by active, hands-on exploration, testing and discovery. Through their senses, they are ready to expand their world beyond their homes and classrooms to the larger neighborhood or community. These experiences help them grow socially and intellectually. The following core content areas show what kindergarten students experience in their first year at school.

**English Language Arts**
- Hear, say and blend sounds
- Build reading and writing concepts
- Learn and use new words
- Communicate needs, feelings and ideas

**Mathematics**
- Read, write, compare and order whole numbers
- Use multiple counting strategies
- Identify, copy and continue simple patterns
- Sort objects by shape, color or length

**Science**
- Find out about organisms’ basic needs
- Learn about the world by making observations and asking questions

**Social Studies**
- Place and geography: Where in the world?
- Chronology/time in order: When in time?
- Universals of culture: In what ways and why do cultures differ from one another?

**Arts Education**
- Explore materials to discover and play with basic elements of visual art
- Experiment with music and sound using rhythm instruments

**Health**
- Discuss feelings
- Demonstrate proper techniques for hand washing and brushing teeth
- Recognize the nutritional categories of food

**Physical Education**
- Experience the joy of play
- Share equipment, cooperate and show respect to others
- Develop body control and use personal space safely

**World Languages**
- Participate in age-appropriate cultural activities (e.g., songs, stories)
- Recognize and imitate familiar words
- Identify and label familiar items

**Instructional Media and Technology**
- Select appropriate books; check out and care for them
- Examine how pictures, charts and graphs help tell a story or relate facts
- Use appropriate computer applications for certain tasks
How to Choose a School

Choosing a school is a big decision. The points outlined below will help you think about the school you are visiting; look around, listen, ask questions and take notes. Compare what you see with what you want for your child and family. Use one of these forms for each school that you visit. How to Choose a School forms can be downloaded at:

http://schoolrequest.mpls.k12.mn.us/find_your_school

Directions: Using a scale of 1 to 3, mark the box that best represents how important particular factor is to you. When you add up the points for a grand total, you will be able to compare the ratings of different schools and evaluate how they compare.

1 = Not important 2 = Somewhat important 3 = Important

School Name: Meadowlane Elementary School

Factors to Consider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Some Questions to Ask Yourself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School building</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Large or small? Located near a park, a shopping area? Busy or quiet street?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School location</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Close to your home, work or child care?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transportation to school</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Walking distance or will need to ride bus? Long or short bus ride?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. After-school activities at the school</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>After-school child care, Community Education activities, homework help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cultural composition</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diverse languages and cultures represented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reputation</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>What do you hear about this school from neighbors, friends or the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Will your child be with school friends from your community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parent involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do you feel respect for you as a parent? What are the opportunities for you to be involved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Academics</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the test scores? Are there special programs in science, art, technology, language? What do the students and teachers do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Climate: student and teacher interactions</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are students and adults respectful in classrooms, hallways and the lunchroom? Are conflicts handled in a positive way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Full-day vs. half-day kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Does the school offer half-day kindergarten only or are there full-day kindergarten options?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add up the number of points under each rating; then add the numbers across for a grand total

2 8 15 GRAND TOTAL: 25 points for this school

Contact Student Placement Services for more information on the following resources:

- Minneapolis Public Schools Pre-K-8 Guide
- Annual School Information Fair
- School open houses
- Individual schools' reports to the community and school brochures
- MPS School Request website: http://schoolrequest.mpls.k12.mn.us
- Minnesota Department of Education

Refer to the MPS Pre–K-8 Catalog for a complete list of schools, program descriptions, addresses and telephone numbers.
Things to Look for When Visiting a School

- Are the teachers genuine and enthusiastic about their school and students?
- Do the children look happy and engaged?
- How does the school learning environment feel to you?
- Are the staff members open to answering your questions?
- Did you feel welcome?
- How active are the parent organizations?
- Are the opportunities for parent involvement stated clearly?
- Are the educational goals of the school clearly stated and do they fit with your beliefs?
- Is the school-based discipline policy clearly stated?
- Does the school offer the following: art/music specialists; talent development and gifted education; after-school activities; special education; before- and after-school child care (e.g., Minneapolis Kids)?

Registration Information

Age
Your child must be 5 years old on or before September 1 to enter kindergarten in the fall.

Registration
In order to enter kindergarten, all families must fill out a school request card through Student Placement Services. Once your child has been placed at a school, you must contact the school to finish the registration process. You will need to bring three things to the school office before your child can officially be registered at that school:
1. Birth record.
2. Proof of required immunizations (see page 6). To obtain a copy, contact your health care provider.
3. Early Childhood Screening report. For more information or to schedule a screening, call 612.668.3715 or email earlychildhoodscreening@mpls.k12.mn.us

A physical examination is not required, but highly recommended and encouraged. It could alert us to conditions that may affect learning. If your child has any special needs, we will want to plan accordingly.

Birth Records
A birth record is required for registration. Documents that are accepted by MPS to verify the date of birth include:
- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Baptismal record
- Immigration card

If you do not have your child's birth certificate, contact the county in which the child was born to obtain those records.

Early Admission to Kindergarten
While MPS does not recommend early admission to kindergarten, some parents may feel their child should start kindergarten earlier than the recommended age. The school district's policy is that if your child will turn 5 years old between September 2 and October 31, your child is eligible for consideration for early admission into kindergarten.

Children must complete an early childhood screening and other assessments before your request for early admission is accepted or sent to the school. Contact Early Childhood Screening to schedule a screening. If you are interested in early admission for kindergarten, please call Student Placement Services for more information on the procedures for early admission. MPS also has quality pre-kindergarten programs you may want to consider for your child; see page 16 for a program list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Overall Impression of the School</th>
<th>Other Notes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Activities to boost learning for parents with children **BIRTH TO 2 YEARS old**

Here are some fun and easy things that parents and caregivers can do to help their child get ready for kindergarten starting at birth.

**Language**
- Talk, talk, talk to your child.
- Respond to your child’s sounds and encourage him or her to make more sounds.
- Talk and sing with your child during daily routines. Describe what you and your child are doing, seeing and feeling.
- Read picture books.
- Ask questions and respond.
- Listen to your child.

**Social and Emotional Growth**
- Show affection with hugs and kisses.
- Be aware of feelings (both your child’s and yours) and name them out loud.
- Encourage independence.
- Get your child’s attention by making eye contact.

**Movement**
- Provide plenty of supervised playtime on a blanket or carpet.
- Make sure the environment is safe for exploration. Protect children from sharp edges and keep electrical cords and window blind cords out of reach.
- Encourage your child as he or she develops a new skill. Help your child experience success.

**Self-Help Skills**
- Establish hand washing as part of a daily routine. Sing songs while hand washing: “This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, wash our hands…”
- Allow time for your child to practice new skills (eating, dressing, toileting, cleaning up, etc.).
- It is easier for children to take off their clothes than to put on their clothes. Begin with your toddler helping you undress him or her.

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Activities to boost learning for parents with children **3 TO 5 YEARS old**

Here are some fun and easy things that parents and caregivers can do to help their child get ready for kindergarten from 3-5 years old.

**Language**
- Talk, talk, talk to and with your child.
- Help your child learn new words every day.
- Encourage your child to speak in complete sentences.
- Ask your child lots of questions throughout the day.
- Listen to your child.
- Have conversations with your child.

**Reading**
- Read aloud to your child daily.
- Sing or say nursery rhymes or songs with your child.
- Help your child learn the alphabet and point out letters throughout the day.
- Teach your child the letters in his or her name.

**Math**
- Count objects around the house such as toys, shoes, fingers, food items and chairs.
- Ask your child to match and fold socks or match shoes and place them in order from smallest to biggest.

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**Writing**
- Play games together like puzzles, cards and board games.
- Encourage your child to scribble, draw or paint.
- Let your child watch you as you write out checks, lists, notes or letters.
- Invite your child to trace letters or numbers with crayons. Encourage them to say the letter or number out loud.
Transition to Kindergarten

There are many things that you can do to help your child adjust to kindergarten and be prepared for learning every day. Suggestions are listed below of how you can be involved in your child’s learning and help him or her do well in school.

Help Your Child Adjust to Kindergarten

- Visit the school or attend the open house (usually a few weeks before school starts) with your child so that he or she can get familiar with staff and the building.
- Talk about going to kindergarten in positive ways; share your own fun memories of kindergarten.
- Read books about going to kindergarten: *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*, by Ashley Wolff; *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come*, by Nancy Carlson; *8IFO:PV(P*, by James Howie and Betsy Inersheen.
- Put a special picture or a note from you in your child's backpack.
- Review the bus safety rules with your child.

How to Help Your Child Do Well in School

- Help the teacher know your child; visit the school and make a point of meeting the teachers and principal.
- Share your child’s preschool portfolio with the kindergarten teacher so he or she can become better acquainted with your child’s learning progress.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences; talk with the teacher or send a note to school if you have concerns about your child’s learning or if you are pleased with what your child is learning.
- Make sure your child is well-rested and has a set bedtime every night.
- Make sure your child is in school every day and on time unless he or she is sick. Establishing this routine early will ensure he or she attends school regularly. Call the school to explain an absence or tardiness.
- Each day, check your child’s backpack and review with your child any special notes that have been sent home from the principal or teachers.
- Provide your child with clothing suitable for the weather and active play.
- Notify the school immediately if there are any changes in your address, phone number or workplace. If there are any changes, emergency cards at the school will need to be updated.

Glossary of Terms

Charter Schools are independent public schools that are sponsored by a school district, university, the state or a non-profit organization. Charter schools operate under a contract with the sponsor.

Community Schools are schools with an attendance area that draws most of its students from the surrounding community. Community schools reflect the interests of the families in the school. Attending a community school makes it easier for families to get involved with their child’s education, allows for shorter bus rides and makes it easier to develop a sense of pride and community in the neighborhood.

*Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)* is a program for families with children ages birth to 5. Through classes, ECFE helps parents provide their child the best possible environment for learning and growth. Sample of classes: New Parent Connection/Infant Massage; Incredible Infants; Early Ones; Toddlers; Focused Parent Discussions; Daddy & Me; Play & Learn; Adventures in Parenting. A sliding fee scale is available; nobody will be turned away because of their inability to pay.

*High Five* prepares children for kindergarten by focusing on the whole child. High Five teachers prepare activities and lessons that focus on multiple areas of a child’s development such as language and literacy skills, physical activities, personal and social skills and how to take care of personal needs. Students must meet certain requirements to be eligible for entrance into the program. High Five is offered as a half-day (3 hours) program. A sliding fee scale is available; nobody will be turned away because of their inability to pay.

*Prekindergarten program*
**Glossary of Terms**

**Kindergarten** is offered both as a full-day (6 hours and 15 minutes) or half-day (3 hours) program. To enter kindergarten, children must turn 5 on or before September 1. Parents must fill out a school request card through Student Placement Services or New Families Center. Cards must be postmarked by the due date (date subject to change; call Student Placement Services for exact date) to be included in the first round of school assignments for the following school year. Parents can still request a school after the due date, but choices may be more limited.

**Magnet Schools** are schools with a distinct, unifying principle or instructional delivery system that draws from a larger attendance area than a community school. Some magnets are organized around a philosophy of teaching, such as Montessori or Open, while others use a theme to connect subjects, such as the arts, technology, language or the environment.

**Minneapolis Kids** is a year-round program that offers fun, high-quality child care during a variety of times (before and/or after school; before and after High Five and half-day kindergarten; during winter and spring break and on school release days; during summer vacation). Skilled child care staff carefully plan supervised activities that complement the school experience, including a wide variety of activities such as crafts, music, art, computers, sports, cooking, storytelling and drama. This is a fee-based program.

**Open Enrollment** refers to the Minnesota law that allows students to attend a school outside of the school district in which they live (e.g., if you live outside of Minneapolis and want your child to attend MPS or if you live in Minneapolis and want your child to attend a public school outside of Minneapolis). See page 18 for more information.

**Teen Parent Services** provides high-quality early child care services for the children of MPS high school students. TAPP provides on-site child care, transportation, parenting education and support services for adolescent parents and their young children.

**“The Choice is Yours” Program**

Through an expanded choice program called “The Choice is Yours,” Minneapolis families who qualify for free or reduced-price meals qualify for priority placement in certain identified magnet programs in Minneapolis. Space availability varies at each school. Priority is limited to families who submit a School Request Card by the due date (call Student Placement Services for the exact date).

In addition to the magnet school options in Minneapolis, families may also qualify to apply to attend school in one of 10 suburban school districts. Transportation to and from school is provided by the state of Minnesota. Students who live on the north side of Minneapolis (north of I-394) may apply for schools in: Columbia Heights Public Schools, Hopkins School District 270, Robbinsdale Area Schools, St. Anthony-New Brighton Schools, St. Louis Park Public Schools and Wayzata Public Schools. Students who live on the south side of Minneapolis (south of I-394) may apply for schools in: Eden Prairie Public Schools, Edina Public Schools, Richfield Public Schools and St. Louis Park Public Schools.

The open enrollment application for the suburban option is due in the winter; call Student Placement Services for the exact date. You can request an application by calling the Open Enrollment office or by contacting Student Placement Services. If you have specific questions about the suburban school programs and/or space availability, please call the specific school district or the Minnesota Department of Education.

**Minnesota State Programs**

**Open Enrollment**

State law allows students to attend a school outside of the school district in which they live (e.g., if you live outside of Minneapolis and want your child to attend MPS or if you live in Minneapolis and want your child to attend a public school outside of Minneapolis). There are three requirements:

1. There must be space in the school you are requesting.
2. Transportation must be provided by the family.
3. You must complete the open enrollment application form. For information, call Student Placement Services.

**“The Choice is Yours” Program**

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WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN!

The Year Before Kindergarten:

- January - Attend the School Fair Showcase
- Early February - Tour Schools
- Late February - Request Cards Due
- Early April - Placement Letters Mailed
- Mid-April - Early Kindergarten Admission Deadline
- Early May - Citywide Kindergarten Registration Day
- August - Attend Open House and Bus Stop Postcards Mailed