

1. What is Build Up Michigan?

Build Up Michigan is our state's way of letting families know that there are services available for preschool-aged children who qualify. When we have children who are 3, 4, and 5 years old, we aren't yet connected to schools and so families aren't naturally aware that there are school services available. Build Up Michigan connects children to FREE special education services before they are even school aged – during these important preschool years.

2. What should parents be looking out for when it comes to their preschool child's development?

You know, there's a lot of variation that's normal and natural when we look at children, particularly across a three-year span, ages 3, 4, and 5.

Between the ages of 3 and 4, key questions to ask are –

- a. Are they interested in **pretend play**? (they should be),
- b. Do they have difficulty **focusing on an activity for brief periods**?

For children between 4 and 5:

- c. We also wonder if they're **interested in playing** with other children
- d. Can they understand rules of **basic preschool games**
- e. Can they **discuss basic things about themselves** such as their name and age and what they like to do
- f. Can they **let you know what they need or want** by saying "can I go outside to play" or "I want that big cookie"

3. Where are Build Up services provided?

Build Up services are special education services for young children and these are coordinated through the county-level intermediate school district. The location of services in each county varies throughout school districts but we often see that services are provided in the regular preschool classroom. We may see some

special activities or assistance in this classroom or we may see a child meeting with a teacher or therapist for individual support – but it’s helping the child to access the learning that’s going on in the classroom.

4. Are services provided for parents or other caregivers as well?

In *Early On*, birth to 3, we will see family centered services, including family training, but at this age, services and supports are focused on the child. The parents are part of the team that develops the Individualized Education Program or IEP for the child and their participation and engagement in that process is really important.

5. Should moms be concerned about their 3-5 year olds that their child will be labeled for their entire school career if they receive early childhood special education services?

This is a valid concern, but it should not deter a family from getting the services and supports their child needs to be successful in school and in life. Special education is a support system that’s really integrated into the general education system. Children who receive special education services are general education students first. And some children who receive services through *Early On* and preschool special education early “catch up” and don’t need it later in school.

6. How does the referral process work?

If a parent has a concern, they should visit BuildUpMI.org and look at the Get Connected link. There you will see your child find coordinator – you look them up by your county intermediate school district. For example, if you live in Ingham County, you’ll see that Michelle Nicholson is the Child Find Coordinator, and you can call her number listed on the site and her staff will assist you. Whomever you talk to will listen to understand your concerns and determine whether an evaluation for special education is appropriate.

7. How do we learn if a child is eligible?

There are lots of categories of eligibility – about 12 – so a child may be eligible under speech/language, physical impairment, and many others (see our website). At this young age we often see children eligible under a category called early childhood developmental delay. So when there is a concern, the child will be evaluated or assessed in the area of development that is a concern. For example with language, a team

will consider information from actually observing the child and understand performance on an evaluation tool, and if the child is in school or daycare, understand the performance in that setting, and include information from parents too. The task is to determine whether there is an issue that is getting in the way of the child's learning. That's the key for special education eligibility.

8. How are you spreading the word about Build Up?

In lots of ways – though our website, billboards, some cool new digital media, ads, displays at conferences, and through talking to you and your wonderful viewers via formats like this.

9. I've seen the Build Up billboards that say 1 in 3 children are not kindergarten ready. What is kindergarten readiness?

Because of the focus on improving education and meeting standards, you might think that it's most important for children to enter kindergarten knowing their ABCs, numbers, shapes, and colors so they can keep up with the curriculum. While teachers would love children to come in with some letter and number recognition, they don't want you to drill your kids on academic skills. There are equally — if not more — important readiness skills that set the stage for your child's learning. Raising an eager learner is the goal, and it can be achieved easily through play and day-to-day activities.

What follows are the top readiness skills that kindergarten teachers look for:

Enthusiasm Toward Learning

Solid Oral-Language Skills

The Ability to Listen

The Desire to Be Independent

The Ability to Play Well with Others

Strong Fine-Motor Skills

Basic Letter and Number Recognition

Most children are just fine and on track for school readiness – and most will NOT be eligible for Special Education, but it's our job at Build Up to make sure that everyone is aware that special education services are available for preschool aged children who qualify – just in case.

10. How will being kindergarten ready help a child throughout his or her school career?

Readiness helps lifelong – kindergarten readiness helps with behavior in school, high school achievement and graduation, study skills and with even being a good citizen.

11. Where can parents find more information about an evaluation for their preschool age child?

Visit BuildUpMI.org or the Michigan special education line at 1-888-320-8384.

12. How can the public find more information about the Build Up Michigan marketing campaign?

Visit BuildUpMi.org

The statewide Build Up campaign was developed to support Michigan in meeting the Child Find mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B (300.111) for young children, 3 through 5 years of age. Campaign efforts raise awareness among parents of preschool age children that there are supports and services available prior to kindergarten for children who are not reaching expected developmental milestones and having difficulty learning.

Build Up is managed through a contract with Clinton County RESA (CCRESA), Office of Innovative Projects. Build Up offers brochures and posters in English, Spanish, and Arabic, at no cost. Place an order today at by visiting the “Partner Info” tab of the BuildUpMi.org website.

For questions about the Build Up marketing campaign, contact Jeanne Hanses at jhanses@ccresa.org or 517.668.0185.