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Dozens of Russian Regions to Pilot Patriotic Lessons in Preschools

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

At least 100 preschools across Russia and occupied parts of Ukraine will begin piloting state-backed "patriotic lessons" this fall, the Education Ministry announced Tuesday, expanding a program endorsed by President Vladimir Putin.

The classes, known as "Important Conversations," were introduced in high schools in 2022 after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Last year, Putin called for the lessons to be extended to preschoolers in order to instill patriotic values at an earlier age.

The ministry said the lessons for children aged 3 to 7 will run from September through November in 19 Russian regions and the partially occupied Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia.

Children will be taught "respect for Russian culture and history, love for the Motherland," as well as family values and traits such as kindness and honesty, according to the ministry.

Education Minister Sergei Kravtsov said the new “age-appropriate” materials would help children form “correct ideas about important life values” and grow into “responsible citizens.”

Critics have denounced the lessons as political indoctrination. In some preschools that tested the program earlier, children were dressed in military uniforms, given toy weapons and had bandages wrapped on them to simulate battlefield wounds.

The city of Vologda in northwestern Russia had already introduced the lessons for preschoolers in January.

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