

EARLY ENTRANCE TO KINDERGARTEN GUIDELINES

The intent of early entrance is to identify highly able children who miss the regular September 1 cutoff for kindergarten entrance by no more than 45 days. Early entry is specifically geared for children whose curriculum achievement level far exceeds the norm. In order to be considered for the early entrance exception, the child must exhibit advanced skills in language arts and mathematics. In addition, information from prior experiences may be gathered to verify the child's social and emotional strengths.

1. What are the steps that a parent must take, in order to apply for early entry to kindergarten for their child?
 - Parents should contact their child's home school, and make an appointment to meet with the principal to discuss expectations for students entering kindergarten.
 - Parents must get an application packet at the school, which includes:
 - i. Application to be completed by the parent(s)/guardian(s). This should also include a short note (can be written on the bottom of the application, or a separate letter attached) explaining why their child should be accepted for early entry to kindergarten.
 - ii. Pre-Kindergarten Recommendation Form – This form is for children who have attended a pre-school program in the last twelve months. This is to be completed by the child's pre-school teacher, and sent directly to the Office of Early Childhood Education. It is the responsibility of the parent to follow-up with their child's teacher, to ensure that the recommendation has been completed and forwarded as required. It is also important for the parent to communicate the importance of the May 31 deadline for all documentation to be submitted to the Office of Early Childhood Education.
 - iii. If a child has not attended a pre-school program in the last twelve months, an assessment will be done at the school by a reading specialist or principal designee. This can be done at the same time the principal meeting is held.
 - **All completed applications must be returned to the Office of Early Childhood Education by May 31.**

2. What information should parents know as their child goes through the early entry process?
- A window of 1-1.5 hours will be scheduled for each assessment. The assessments are one on one with the assessor and child. Parents will be placed in a waiting area until the children complete the assessment.
 - The assessments are chosen by the Language Arts and Math Specialists, and are geared to identify children who are highly able.
 - If a child is ill, or there is an emergency situation, a parent must notify the assessors in advance. If testing is cancelled by the parent for a second time, the parent must provide a doctors note or proof of an emergency situation.
 - Maximum opportunities for assessment will be three.
 - All assessments will be completed by the week of June 15.
 - All acceptance letters will be sent out no later than the first week of July.
 - i. Acceptance into early kindergarten is based on a forty five day probationary period. If there is a question or concern regarding placement during that time, the school will communicate that concern to the parents.
 - ii. All inquiries about the assessment must be communicated to the Office of Early Childhood Education no later than one week after receiving the assessment results.
 - All denial letters will be sent out no later than the first week of July.
 - i. Parents will receive their child's score in the letter.
 - ii. All inquiries about the assessment must be communicated to the Office of Early Childhood Education no later than one week after receiving the assessment results.
 - Parents who wish to appeal the results of the testing must do so no more than one week after communicating with the Office of Early Childhood Education.
 - i. A letter of appeal must include additional information about the child that was not shared through the application process.
 - ii. The Early Childhood Education Specialist will share the appeal letter and assessment results with the math specialist or his/her designee, the language arts specialist or his/her designee, and one of the three area directors.
 - iii. A final appeal decision will be made based on a majority decision of the parties listed above.

3. What are guidelines that the Early Childhood Education Assessment Committee follow, in order to determine early entry to kindergarten?
- All completed applications are reviewed by the Early Childhood Education Assessment Committee. The committee checks to make certain that all required documentation has been received. If complete, the committee will then contact parents in regards to scheduling dates and times for the assessment. Please note the following:
 - i. All children must score at least an 80% on both the Language Arts and the Math section of the assessment. If a child scores an 80% on one section of the assessment, but misses on the other section by one point, that child is allowed to slide in and be accepted.
 - ii. Social/Emotional skills will be taken into consideration throughout the testing. If there are questions about a child's maturity to attend kindergarten, the early childhood specialist will communicate with the parent about said concern.
 - iii. If upon review the committee feels that a child is not ready for kindergarten based on the information provided in the application packet, a letter will be sent to the parent(s)/guardian(s) stating that the committee does not feel that testing is in the child's best interest at that time.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- A. What is the cutoff date for early entrance applications?
- a. The cutoff date for applications is May 31. All information must be submitted to the Office of Early Childhood Education by that date.
 - b. If a child has moved to the county after the May 31 deadline, applications will be accepted through August 28. Proof of the move must be shown at the time of the late entry application. Only children whose date of birth is within forty five days of September 1 (September 2 through October 16) will be allowed to apply.
- B. What is the appeal process if a child does not gain entry?
- a. Appeals must be based on concerns that staff failed to follow systematic procedures/regulations. Appeals to alter the assessment procedure may not be considered.
 - b. The parent/guardian must write a letter within **ten days** of receiving word that the child has not been accepted into early entry. The letter must add new information as to why the assessment process was incomplete or inaccurate in its findings.

- c. The appeal committee, comprised of an area director, the language arts curriculum specialist or his/her designee, and the mathematics curriculum specialist or his/her designee will meet no later than **ten days** after receipt of the appeal letter to review all new and old findings.
 - d. The decision of the appeals committee is forwarded to parents through the office of Early Childhood Education. For more information, please refer to [Regulation 400-89](#).
 - e. There will be no reassessment unless the committee finds extraordinary circumstances. A child's illness prior to the assessment, for example, will not be considered an extraordinary circumstance. It is the parent's responsibility to reschedule the assessment when he/she believes that the child's personal situation may preempt the ability of the assessors to gain an accurate assessment score.
- C. What happens if a child is attending an out of state **public** kindergarten program whose cutoff date is later than September 1? If they move to Frederick County, will they be allowed placement in kindergarten?
- a. The child will be accepted into Frederick County's kindergarten program. There is no stipulation as to how long the child has to be in the state program, and no stipulation as to the child's birth date being within the 45 day early entry period.
 - i. (COMAR 13A.08.01.02-2C)
- D. What if a child is attending a non-public kindergarten program in Maryland and wishes to attend Frederick County Public Schools **before** the year is complete?
- a. If a child is **age eligible** and attending a licensed and MSDE non-public approved private kindergarten program, the child may be enrolled in kindergarten (COMAR 13A.08.01.01C). Children who are not age eligible under the September 1st cutoff may only be accepted into public kindergarten if they meet an early entrance assessment. Any child who has been assessed one time will not be eligible for re-assessment. The parents/guardians must provide a certified letter that the school the child attended is certified and approved by the State of Maryland and that the child is experiencing success in the program.
 - b. COMAR 13A.09.10 - [Http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/nonpublicschools/nplegal/comar13a_09_10.htm](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/nonpublicschools/nplegal/comar13a_09_10.htm)

- E. What if a child is born after September 1st and is enrolled in a **private** kindergarten program **outside** of Maryland and wishes to attend Frederick County Public Schools before the year is complete? May that child attend?
- a. No, the child would not be accepted into kindergarten if the September 1st date of birth cutoff is not met or the early entry process was not successfully completed.
- F. What if a child completes a **public** kindergarten in another state, and that state's date of entry differs from that in Maryland? Must that child be enrolled in first grade?
- a. Yes, the child will be accepted into first grade. As is true for all county students, if the child does not meet first grade entrance criteria, a decision between parents/guardians and school administrators will be made on behalf of the child's best interest.
- G. What if a child who is not age eligible completes a **private** kindergarten program which is licensed and holds a certificate of approval in the state of Maryland? Will that child be eligible to enter first grade?
- a. If the child's date of birth is within the forty five day window of the September 1 age deadline set by MSDE, the parents may request placement in first grade. At the time of request, the parent/guardian must present a certified letter from the private school stating that the child has satisfactorily completed their program. Verification must be made that the private school the child attended was licensed and approved by MSDE and had a written procedure in place for assessing children for early entrance. The parent/guardian must also share information and work samples from the school that indicate that the child has been successful in the private program. This information can be gathered through report card data, as well as assessment results and portfolios. FCPS will complete an assessment of the child, to determine if placement in first grade is in the child's best interest. A probationary period of 45 days will be given to the child if first grade becomes the placement and appears to be in the child's best interest. If it is not, after discussion with the parent/guardian, the child will be placed in kindergarten.
- H. What constitutes an acceptable Maryland private kindergarten for the sake of early entry discussion?

- a. The school must be licensed and receive a certificate of approval from the Maryland State Board of Education. The list of approved schools can be found by going to the non-public school approval branch.