

REGULATION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: GEA-RB, IJA, IJA-RA

Responsible Office: Deputy Superintendent of Schools

Early Entrance to Prekindergarten, Kindergarten, and First Grade

I. Purpose

To set forth guidelines regarding early entrance to prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade

II. Background

Maryland state regulation prescribes the ages of entry for prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade. These ages are presumed to be appropriate for purposes of this regulation. The Maryland State Board of Education adopted entry dates that gradually raise the age of children entering kindergarten. The gradual phase-in of entry dates for kindergarten began in the 2003–2004 school year. Additionally, the Maryland State Department of Education Regulation (JEB-EA) requires that a local board of education adopt a regulation to admit five year olds to first grade at the request of the parent, if the local superintendent or his/her designee determines that the child has demonstrated capabilities beyond expectations of the peer group warranting early admission.

III. Procedures

A. Prekindergarten Entry Age

1. A student admitted to prekindergarten must be four years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the student applies for entrance.
2. Prekindergarten is available to income-eligible families as defined by state regulation. Those seeking early entrance into prekindergarten must demonstrate a need for early education which is defined by at-risk developmental factors that critically impact potential success in kindergarten.
 - a. Prekindergarten application forms are available from the Division of Early Childhood Programs and Services. Parents will be notified that

these forms are available. Completed application forms will be accepted from February 1 through June 30.

- b. Documentation that household income meets state Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS) guidelines is required.
 - c. Additional documents supporting the application that demonstrate at-risk developmental factors that warrant early education may be provided.
 - d. Early entrance to prekindergarten will result in two years of prekindergarten education unless the child is admitted to kindergarten through the early entrance to kindergarten admission process.
3. The Division of Early Childhood Programs and Services is responsible for managing the screening process for early entrance to prekindergarten.

B. Kindergarten Entry Age

1. Beginning with the 2006–2007 school year, students must be age 5 by September 1 in order to be eligible for entry to kindergarten.
2. Parents of children whose birth dates occur within a six-week period beyond the state’s prescribed admission date, who seek early entrance to kindergarten, must submit the following documents to support their child’s application:
 - a. MCPS Form 271-6 (page 1): *Application for Early Entrance to Kindergarten Program*. Parents will be notified that these forms are available.
 - b. MCPS Form 271-6 (page 2): *Application for Early Entrance to Kindergarten Program: Parent Checklist* of the skills identified as Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) indicators.
 - c. Parental verification that the student is well and able to be assessed on the day of screening.
3. In addition, parents may wish to submit any of the following optional items as part of the application:

- a. Prior preschool attendance reports, records, and evaluations that address academic, social, emotional and physical maturity, motor development, learning skills, and capabilities warranting early admission
 - b. Formal student evaluations completed by outside professionals
 4. Applications for early entrance to kindergarten will only be accepted from February 1 to June 30.
 5. Screening process
 - a. The Division of Early Childhood Programs and Services, in conjunction with principals, is responsible for managing the screening process for early entrance to kindergarten.
 - b. Screening procedures will be used to assess academic, social, emotional and physical maturity, motor development, learning skills, and capabilities warranting early admission. Procedures to be used include standardized instrument(s), observational and MCPS primary assessments completed by staff, and information from parents.
 - c. Screening instruments must include:
 - Reading/Language Arts Assessment
 - Mathematics Assessment
 - Observational Assessment aligned with the MMSR indicators, including physical well-being and motor development, personal and social development, language and literature, and mathematical thinking
 6. No later than the end of the second week of school, parents whose children are admitted through the early entrance process will be required to participate in an early entrance conference with the school to review grade level expectations for the student and family.
- C. First Grade Entry Age

Beginning with the 2007–2008 school year, students must be age six by September 1. Children whose birth dates occur within a six-week period beyond the state’s prescribed admission date may be considered for early entrance to first grade.

1. Eligibility for Consideration of Early Entry to First Grade

In order for a student to be considered for early entrance to first grade:

- a. The student must exhibit social-emotional skills, as well as academic skills, which demonstrate above average performance and development in multiple subject areas. Such skills must meet or exceed grade level expectations for the grade in which placement is requested
- b. The student must exhibit skills in the areas of social, emotional and physical maturity, motor development, and learning skills appropriate for Grade 1
- c. The parent/guardian must request admission in writing

2. Application

- a. Form 271-1, *Application for Early Entrance to First Grade*, will be made available upon request to all parents in all elementary schools and is available on the MCPS Web site. Parents will be notified that these forms are available.
- b. The child will be required to enter kindergarten for a period not to exceed six weeks and then be considered as a candidate for early entrance to first grade.
- c. Parent initiated applications will be accepted between July 1 and Friday of the first week of school.
- d. All determinations regarding first grade placement will be made no later than October 15.

3. Screening Process

- a. The principal is responsible for managing the screening process for early entrance to first grade.

- b. Screening procedures will be used to assess academic, social, emotional and physical maturity, motor development, and learning skills. Procedures to be used include standardized instrument(s), observational and MCPS primary assessments by staff, and information from parents.
- c. Screening instruments may include:
 - Reading/Language Arts Assessment
 - Mathematics Assessment
 - Observational Assessment of Developmental Domains including Social, Emotional, and Physical

4. Evaluation and Placement

- a. The principal will schedule a review of the screening data, and any other relevant documentation provided by the parents, by the Educational Management Team (EMT) or Collaborative Action Process (CAP).
- b. No decision shall be made on the basis of performance on any single instrument.
- c. The EMT will make the decision regarding placement, and the principal or the Division of Early Childhood Programs and Services, as appropriate, will notify the parent in writing within 15 days of the screening.

D. Appeal Process

The parent may appeal the early entrance decisions in accordance with MCPS Regulation KLA-RA, *Responding to Inquiries and Complaints from the Public*.

Regulation History: New Regulation, June 1983; revised May 2, 2006.