

## Students

### Attendance

## Conditions, Standards, and Procedures for Exceptions to Age/Other Admission Requirements for Kindergarten or First Grade

### 1. Conditions and Standards for Admission

#### A. *Early Admission to 5-year old Kindergarten (5K) or First Grade Based upon Successful Completion of a Full School Year of 4-year old Kindergarten (4K) or 5K in Another School System*

If a child was previously granted early admission to 4K or 5K in another school system, and the child successfully completed a full school year of such a 4K or 5K program, the District may approve the child's early admission in 5K or first grade, as applicable, provided that the child's parent or guardian supports the early admission and the District determines that the weight of other available information (including the results of any specific assessments that may be conducted) suggests that placement in 5K or first grade, as applicable, would be an appropriate placement.

The child's parent or guardian is expected to bring such previous school attendance and early admission request to the District's attention.

#### B. *Early Admission to First Grade Based Upon Successful Completion of 5K in the District*

If a child has completed 5K in the District pursuant to the District's decision to allow early admission to 5K, the child's promotion to first grade shall be handled as a standard grade-to-grade promotion decision, and the parent or guardian is not required to file a request for early admission to first grade.

#### C. *Early Admission to 5K Without Prior Successful Completion of a Formal 4K (if student has not completed 4K as outlined in Section A).*

Under this section, the District does not accept applications for early admission to kindergarten for children who will turn five years old on or after December 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year in which the child is seeking early admission. However, the child's parent or guardian may choose to contact the District at or prior to the start of the school year in question to discuss whether the child's progress should be closely monitored during kindergarten for potential grade-level acceleration or for other curricular or program adjustments.

For children who will turn five years old between September 1<sup>st</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year in which the child is seeking early admission under this section (i.e. without prior successful completion of a 4K program, as provided in Section A), the District's decision to approve or deny the request for early admission to 5K shall be based on an individualized assessment of the child's academic and social-emotional development and overall readiness to thrive in 5K. The District will not approve a request for early admission to 5K under this section unless the District determines that the clear weight of the relevant and available information suggests that placement in 5K is a more appropriate placement than placement in 4K. In other words, exceptional circumstances must be identified.

Although the specific information that will be available and the specific consideration that will be relevant to each request for early admission will vary from child to child, the following conditions and standards reflect a common baseline for the assessment process:

1. If a child seeking early admission is an early reader, this is one relevant piece of information. However, variation in reading skills is the norm in this age group. Many children who are early readers enroll in kindergarten with their standard age-group peers, and that proves to be a sound long-term decision in regard to the child's overall welfare. In contrast, when a broader picture of the child's cognitive skills and aptitudes fall in a very-advanced range, such data tends to counsel more strongly in favor of early admission in terms of academic criteria.
2. The District's evaluation of the request shall consider whether there is evidence that the child has above-average skills, relative to other children entering 5K, in the following developmental areas:
  - a. The ability to address new situations or challenging tasks without signs of unusual levels of frustration, anxiety, avoidance, or withdrawal.
  - b. The ability to follow instructions and independently begin tasks set out by those instructions.
  - c. The ability to successfully interact and play cooperatively with other children who are of the grade being considered.
  - d. The ability to participate effectively in group-based activities.
  - e. The ability to give sustained attention to a task or project.

*D. Early Admission to First Grade Without Prior Successful Completion of a Formal 5K Program*

The District's decision to approve or deny a family's request for early admission to first grade shall be based on an individualized assessment of the child's academic and social-emotional development and overall readiness to thrive in first grade. More specifically, a child who is not six years old on or before September 1 in the year he/she seeks admission to first grade may be admitted to first grade based upon the family's request as follows:

1. If the child will turn six years old before December 1<sup>st</sup> and the child has successfully completed an educational program that the District determines is substantially equivalent to the District's 5K program, the child's parent or guardian supports early admission to first grade, and the District determines that the weight of other available information (including the results of any specific assessments that may be conducted) suggests that placement in first grade would be a more appropriate placement than 5K, then the child may be admitted to first grade. In other words, exceptional circumstances must be identified.
2. If the child will turn six years old before December 1<sup>st</sup> but has not successfully completed a 5K program or its equivalent in another school system, a request for early admission to first grade will be granted only if the District determines that the clear weight of the relevant and available information suggests that initial enrollment in 5K would be an inappropriate placement for the child. Meeting this standard is intended to be difficult and exceedingly rare. At a minimum, the child must demonstrate academic skills and aptitudes expected of a high-achieving student who is at the end of first grade.

*E. Automatic Exemption from the Kindergarten Completion Requirement Pursuant to State Law*

When a child who is otherwise eligible to be admitted to and enroll in first grade, and he/she has moved to Wisconsin from out-of-state after he/she turns five years old and before either commencing or completing first grade, state law automatically exempts the child from the kindergarten completion prerequisite if either of the following apply:

1. The jurisdiction from which the child moved has not established 5K as a mandatory prerequisite for entering first grade.
2. The jurisdiction from which the child moved exempted the child from any applicable prerequisite that the child complete 5K in order to enter first grade.

In the two situations (identified above) where state law automatically exempts a child from the kindergarten completion requirement, the District and the parent may nonetheless mutually agree to place the child in kindergarten where it is agreed that such placement is in the best educational interest of the child.

*F. Conditions and Standards for Responding to a Request for a Discretionary Exemption from the Kindergarten Completion Requirement*

The District's decision to approve or deny a family's request to exempt a child from the kindergarten completion requirement for purposes of enrollment in first grade shall be based on an individualized assessment of the child's academic and social-emotional development and overall readiness to thrive in first grade.

Where a child meets the age requirements for admission to first grade, but the child has not completed 5K, the District or the child's parent or guardian, by request, may initiate a review of the child's overall readiness for enrollment in first grade and the appropriateness of allowing a discretionary exception to the kindergarten completion requirement. Such a child may be enrolled in first grade if:

1. The child has successfully completed a program for 5-year old children that the school District deems equivalent to kindergarten, and the weight of other available information (including the results of any testing or other evaluations) suggests that placement in first grade would be at least as appropriate as placement in 5K.
2. Notwithstanding that the child did not complete an educational program deemed equivalent to 5K, the District determines that the weight of available information (including the results of any testing or other evaluations) suggests that placement in first grade would be a more appropriate placement than placement in 5K.

A request for a discretionary exemption from the kindergarten completion requirement under this section shall be denied where the District determines that the weight of the available information suggests that the student is likely to struggle to achieve and grow at least at an average level among District students relative to first-grade academic and developmental standards.

2. Procedures

Requests for early admission or for a discretionary exemption from the kindergarten completion requirement (for first grade) shall be made and acted upon in accordance with the following procedures:

- A. Requests shall be submitted to the appropriate elementary school principal by April 15<sup>th</sup> for the upcoming school year. The request shall include the rationale for making the request and the parent or guardian shall provide any academic records or other information as may be relevant to the request.
1. Families moving into the District after the deadline specified above may submit a request no later than June 15<sup>th</sup>.
  2. If a parent or guardian submits a request after the applicable deadline, the District may not be able to fully evaluate the request, and the request may be denied as untimely. The ability to evaluate a late request will depend, in part, on the extent to which relevant and determinative information is already available, such that there is no need to schedule and conduct specific new assessments.
- B. The principal or a designee shall meet with the child's parent or guardian to discuss the reasons for the request and to conduct an initial review of related student record information. If, at this meeting, the District determines that the child conclusively meets, or does not meet, the District's standards for approval of the request, the request shall be approved or denied in writing. If the District determines that additional information or evaluation is needed, the District shall obtain parent or guardian consent to continue the process, and appoint appropriate staff members to complete any evaluation(s). Any testing or evaluations of the child may be scheduled sequentially such that the assessment process will continue only if determinative information is not identified.
1. The staff member(s) completing any evaluation(s) shall meet with the building principal or other administrative designee to analyze the results of the evaluation and any other data available to determine the appropriateness of the child's admission to kindergarten or first grade.
  2. The principal or a designee shall meet with the child's parent or guardian to present the results of the evaluation(s) and the District's decision with respect to the request. A written decision regarding the request will be provided to the parent or guardian and a copy kept on file in the District.
- C. If the request is approved, the District shall inform the parent or guardian that the initial placement shall be contingent on the child's successful adjustment to the placement, with a review of the placement to occur within 30 to 60 days of the child beginning attendance. The decision to continue or change the placement shall be made by the classroom teacher, principal, and student services personnel, as necessary. Any decision to modify the child's placement shall be communicated to the parent or guardian in writing, and may be appealed to the Superintendent of Schools.
- D. If the request is denied, the notice of denial shall inform the parent or guardian of their opportunity to appeal the decision to the Superintendent of Schools. The appeal must be made in writing to the Superintendent of Schools within ten (10) days of receipt of the District's denial decision. The decision of the Superintendent shall be final.
- E. Where a family's request for early admission and/or for an exemption from the kindergarten-completion requirement has been denied, the parent/guardian is encouraged to continue to work

with the District to monitor the child's progress for potential eligibility for future grade-level acceleration or for other curricular or program adjustments.

The conditions, standards, and procedures identified are not intended to address any placement or other curricular program determinations made for a student with disabilities pursuant to an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

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**Policy Revised:**