



**Frequently Asked Questions
about
Early Admission
to Kindergarten and First Grade
2012-2013**

What is the mandatory age of school attendance for kindergarten in the state of Maryland?

According to the Code of Maryland (COMAR) 13A.08.01.02, the age for mandatory school attendance is as follows:

- A child admitted to kindergarten in the public school must be five years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance.
- All non-public schools (including those holding a Certificate of Approval and those registered as “church-exempt”) must establish September 1 as the date by which a child must be five-years old to be age eligible to enroll in kindergarten.

(See Maryland State Department of Education website for more information at:)

www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/nonpublicschools/

What is the process for applying for early admission to kindergarten?

Early admission to kindergarten is **open only to children whose birthday falls between September 2nd and October 15th, inclusive.**

Applications for early admission can be obtained at any Howard County elementary school, on the Howard County Public School System’s website (www.hcpss.org), or from the Office of Early Childhood Programs at 410-313-5693.

Applications for the 2012-2013 school year must be postmarked **no later than March 31, 2012**. No exceptions will be made. (However, a family who moves to Howard County from out of state or out of the country after the deadline of March 31 can request an assessment.)

During the school year, can a child who did not turn five years old by September 1 be enrolled in the kindergarten program if he or she is attempting to transfer?

- If an underage child is transferring from a kindergarten program in a public school in Maryland, the Howard County Public School System will verify that the child was enrolled through early admission procedures. After verification through school records, the child may continue in a HCPSS kindergarten.
- If an underage child is transferring from a public kindergarten in another state, the child may continue in kindergarten pending receipt of school records. In either circumstance, close monitoring of the child’s progress will occur.

- If an underage child is transferring from a non-public school kindergarten, the child will **not** be allowed to enroll in a HCPSS kindergarten.

What is the timeline for early admission to kindergarten?

Procedures	Date/s
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) submit application documents (including Developmental Checklists)	February 1 - March 31, 2012
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) receive notification regarding testing appointment	February 17 – April 20, 2012
Children take assessments	February 27 – May 4, 2012
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) receive decision letters	Will be mailed on May 25, 2012
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) register children accepted for early admission	As soon as possible following receipt of the acceptance letter
Children undergo a 30-day trial period	August 27 – September 28, 2012

What happens during the 30-day trial period?

Teachers observe the early admission students using an established set of school readiness indicators, and make recommendations regarding the child’s continued enrollment based on successful performance on the indicators and general productive classroom functioning. Throughout the trial period, teachers will notify parents of any concerns and discuss with them the specific nature and possible solutions.

Are all children eligible to apply for early admission to kindergarten?

According to Maryland law, children who turn five on or before September 1 are age eligible and are entitled to enter kindergarten. Per state guidance, a child whose birth date falls between September 2 and October 15 may be considered for early entrance. No consideration will be given for children with birthdays beyond October 15.

How will the school system determine if a child is developmentally ready for early admission?

As stated in the Howard County Public School System *Policy 9000 (Enrollment, Residency, Student Assignment and Admission)*, children accepted for early admission must demonstrate a high level of social and emotional and academic development. An assessment of academic skills, as well as a developmental checklist of non-academic competencies, determines this level.

What kind of test is used for early admission and who will test the children?

The Office of Early Childhood Programs uses a criterion-referenced standardized assessment. The test, which takes approximately 45 minutes to administer, includes mathematics, reading/language, and general knowledge for kindergarten. A certified early childhood teacher administers the assessment individually to each child.

How should children be prepared for the test?

Parents/Guardians should ensure that their child has rested adequately and had sufficient nourishment to participate in the testing. Children do not need any type of special preparation. Children who already possess the needed skills will have an opportunity to show them during the assessment. The *Developmental Checklists*, which are an evaluation of how the child typically performs, are to be completed prior to the testing session by the parent and a preschool teacher or another adult.

If my child is not accepted for early admission, does it mean that he or she is behind their peers academically and socially?

No, not at all. The qualifications for early admission include the demonstration of exceptional skills and competencies. The testing is not meant to assess “readiness”, but rather exceptionality that would warrant advanced placement of your child.

What is the mandatory age of school attendance for first grade in the state of Maryland?

According to COMAR 13A.08.01.02, a child admitted to the first grade in the public schools must be six years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance.

What is the process for applying for early admission to first grade?

- Since kindergarten is a mandatory grade, a student must first enroll in kindergarten (the appropriate grade for his/her age). During placement in kindergarten, the student will be observed and assessed to determine if the request for acceleration to first grade will be granted. This process complies with acceleration procedures found in HCPSS Policy 8010.
- If an underage student already fulfilled the kindergarten requirement through attendance in a public school in another state, the parent must provide records that demonstrate the child’s successful yearlong participation in that program.
- If an underage student already fulfilled the kindergarten requirement through attendance in an approved non-public school kindergarten program, the parent must provide records that demonstrate the child’s successful yearlong participation in that *MSDE-approved* non-public kindergarten program. (see <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/nonpublicschools/> for information).

Considerations Regarding Early Entrance to School

- All Howard County public schools have full-day kindergarten programs.
- Your child will be the youngest in his or her class, often a year younger than many peers.
- Entering school early is a decision that will have long-term effects on your child. The potential social/emotional impact on your child as he/she progresses through elementary, middle, high school and beyond is not predictable.
- Young children are emotionally vulnerable and may become stressed and anxious when adult expectations for their performance exceed their developmental capabilities.
- All children tend to learn best when they are appropriately challenged at a level for which they are ready.
- Although a capable young child needs to be challenged, those challenges should be closely aligned with his or her social and emotional development.
- When your child's peer group reaches adolescence and is old enough to date, drive, and assume other young adult privileges, the same rights will be denied your child who is chronologically younger.
- There is evidence that children carefully selected for early entrance to school tend to do very well, academically and socially.