

**Administrative Procedures
Policy # 600-18**

Procedures & Guidelines For Determining Early School Admission Eligibility

I. Overview

COMAR 13A.08.01.02.A(3) requires that a child be admitted to the prekindergarten program in the public schools shall be 4 years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for admission. However, there may be 3 year old children who demonstrate educational needs warranting early admission into the prekindergarten if they meet certain criteria.

COMAR 13 A.08.01.02.B (1)-(2) states that a child admitted to a kindergarten program in the public schools shall be 5 years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance. COMAR 13A.08.01.02B.(3) requires a local board of education to adopt a regulation permitting a 4 year old child, upon request of the parent or guardian, to be admitted to kindergarten if that child has demonstrated capabilities warranting early admission.

COMAR 13 A.08.01.02.C (1)-(2) states that a child admitted to the first grade program in the public schools shall be 6 years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance. COMAR 13A.08.01.02C.(3) requires a local board of education to adopt a regulation permitting a 5 year old child, upon request of the parent or guardian, to be admitted to first grade if that child has demonstrated capabilities warranting early admission.

The Somerset County Public Schools recognized this resolution and supports the intention that in rare instances a child may demonstrate such superior and exceptional abilities and/or potential that he or she may best be served in the public schools through early admission into kindergarten or the first grade. It is recognized that early school admission is not intended for the majority of children,

Consequently, all children whose parent(s) or legal guardians request early school entrance will be thoroughly screened. Children will only be considered for early entry if they will turn five years of age on or before October 15 of the kindergarten year or 6 years old for first grade and who have demonstrated outstanding or exceptional capability will be granted early school admission.

The prekindergarten program is a state funded program for four year old children who are potentially at-risk of having difficulties in school. The overall goal of prekindergarten is to provide learning experiences to help children develop and maintain the basic skills necessary for successful school performance. Eligibility is established in two tiers. Tier I- is income eligibility (would qualify for FARMS (Free and Reduced Meals Status based in income. Tier II-demonstrates other identified risk factors (see prekindergarten criteria registrations form). Early admission into prekindergarten will only be considered for early entry if they meet the following criteria:

- The child turns four years of age on or before October 15 of the year they are requesting early entry.
- The child is from an economically disadvantaged background (i.e. eligible for the FARMS program) or is homeless.
- There is evidence of lack of school readiness and the child is toilet trained.
- The child lives within boundaries of the school at the time the request for early admission is made. Residency must be verified by the home school.

Early entry placements for prekindergarten, kindergarten, or first grade will only be made if space is available at the child's home school.

II. General Procedures

A. Application for Early School Admission

An application for Early Admission (Form 1) should be completed by those parents(s) or guardians who feel that their child demonstrates sufficient physical, emotional, as well as academic potential to warrant early school entrance. This application must be completed by, all parents or guardians who are requesting early admission for their child into either prekindergarten, kindergarten or first grade. All applications for early admission must be submitted to the school principal where the child will be attending on or before the first day of the June, unless the family is new to the area.

Upon the receipt of the completed application, the school principal will review the procedures and criteria for determining early admission eligibility with the parent(s) or guardians and initiate the formal screening process. Additionally, the parents will be given the Parent Behavioral Checklist (Form 2) which they will be asked to complete and return to the school within two weeks following the application for early admission.

B. Evaluation

All children who are being considered, for early school admission in either pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, or first grade will be carefully screened. The purpose of this screening is to assist school personnel in determining the child's potential for success if early admission is granted. Since this decision is of long-term importance to the future education of the child, this screening should be comprehensive. Therefore, the actual assessment procedure will involve three basic components

- (1) Temporary Evaluative Classroom Placement - All children being considered for early school admission will be initially enrolled in the public school classroom which they would normally enter, based on their chronological age whenever possible.
- (2) This placement will be for a period of no longer than one month or 20 school days. Typically, the evaluative placement will occur during the first four weeks of the school year in which early admission is requested.
- (3) Individual Assessment - During the period of the initial classroom placement, the child will receive a comprehensive individual evaluation. This evaluation will be accomplished jointly by the classroom teacher and at least one other qualified person. At a minimum, the assessment must include at least one objective or informal measure in each of the following areas:
 - (a) Learning potential - An individual assessment of intellectual ability conducted by or under the supervision of the school psychologist.
 - (b) Language and communication skills - Objective assessment of both receptive and expressive language skills, conducted by or under the supervision of the speech, hearing and language therapist or school psychologist.
 - (c) Social-Behavior development - Completion of Parent Social-Behavioral Checklist (Form 2).

A written statement describing the child's social behavioral skills by the evaluative classroom teacher, which is based upon the observations reported on - the Teacher Behavioral Checklist (Form 3a or 3b). Form 3a will be completed on those children who are, being considered for early kindergarten entrance. Form 3b will be completed on those children who are being considered for early 1st grade entrance.

- (d) Academic Achievement Test Level II, by the classroom teacher.
- (e) Physical development - School administered vision and hearing screening tests.

C. School Early Admission Review Committee

At the completion of the evaluative classroom placement period, the results of the individual assessment will be reviewed by the School Early Admission Review Committee.

This committee will consist of:

- (1) The school principal or designee
 - (2) Child's parent(s) or guardians
 - (3) Evaluative teacher
 - (4) Proposed classroom teacher
 - (5) Early childhood supervisor or designee
 - (6) School psychologist
 - (7) Any other persons whose services may be utilized
- (a) This committee will be chaired by the school Principal. The school principal is responsible for arranging the conference and ensuring that all procedures have been properly followed and all forms have been completed.
 - (b) The parent(s) or guardians must be notified in writing of the date and time of the early admission conference at least five days in advance.
 - (c) In all cases, every reasonable effort should be made to ensure the specified date and time are convenient to the respective parent(s) or guardian(s).
 - (d) A record of the conference proceeding and committee recommendations concerning Early Admission shall be kept using (Form 4).
 - (e) Based on a general report of the child's overall school adjustment and the results of objective and informal assessment, the committee will then judge the appropriateness of an early school admission. In making the decision, the committee will adhere to the following criteria:

No child will be granted early school admission who has not demonstrated substantially advanced or exceptional:

- Learning Potential - Documentation of A superior intellectual ability as determined by the school psychologist on the basis of the individually administered intelligence test.
- Language and Communication Skills - Documentation that both receptive and expressive language skills equal or exceed the age equivalent of a typical child in the grade where placement is requested.
- Social-Behavior Development - Demonstration of positive social-behavioral skills, as determined by the results obtained on both the parent and teacher behavioral checklists. At a maximum, no more than two items on either the parent or teacher behavioral checklists can receive a seldom or never rating.
- Academic Achievement - A total score that equals or exceeds the 95th percentile.
- Physical Development - Must pass both vision and hearing screening.

- (f) Upon reaching a joint decision, the school early admission committee will notify the superintendent of schools of its formal recommendation using Form for consideration. Within five days, the parent(s) or guardians will be notified in writing by the superintendent of his or her official placement decision. The school will then abide by the official placement decision.

D. Follow-Up

- (1) In those cases where early admission is granted, a follow-up conference will be held within six weeks of placement. This follow-up conference will include:
 - (a) School Principal
 - (b) Parent(s) or Guardian(s)
 - (c) Classroom Teacher
 - (d) Any other personnel whose services may be utilized.
- (2) During this conference the committee will discuss the child's overall adjustment since early admission was granted. Based upon the reports of the child's progress, the committee will consider the need for adjustments in the child's placement or academic program. No adjustments can be made without the follow-up conference with the parent(s).
- (3) A record of the follow-up conference will be kept using Form 5. The parent(s) or guardian(s) must be notified of the date and time of the follow-up conference in writing at least five days in advance. Every reasonable effort should be made to ensure that the date and time specified are convenient to the child's parent(s) or guardian(s).

E. Recordkeeping

- (1) A folder will be kept on all students whose parent(s) or guardian(s) have applied for early admission. This folder will be labeled Confidential and kept in a locked file separate from his or her permanent cumulative folder at the school. However, a 3x5 card will be attached to the cumulative folder indicating that early admission was requested and a confidential file is available.
- (2) Within this file will be kept the application for early admission, all assessment results, minutes, correspondence, and related data. Only those persons directly involved in the education of the child will be allowed access to the confidential folder. No person or agency outside of Somerset County Public Schools will be allowed access to the confidential folder without the expressed written consent of the child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

F. Appeal

- (1) All parents(s) or guardian(s) have a right to appeal the decision of the superintendent of schools. An appeal hearing before the Somerset County Board of Education will be granted within 30 days of receiving a written request from the parent(s) or legal guardian(s). This request must be received by the superintendent of schools within five working days of his or her notification that early admission has not been granted.
- (2) The parent(s) or guardians will be notified in writing of the date and time at least five days before the appeal hearing.
- (3) The decision of the Somerset County Board of Education will be final.