

Regulation

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: Policy IFA
Responsible Office: Department of Instructional Services

PREKINDERGARTEN AND KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

A. PURPOSE

To establish Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) prekindergarten and kindergarten programs to meet Maryland State Law and State Board Bylaw (COMAR).

B. BACKGROUND

State law and COMAR require that AACPS provide prekindergarten and kindergarten programs for defined populations unless students are enrolled in COMAR-approved alternative kindergarten settings, conduct kindergarten assessment, and follow COMAR-defined prekindergarten program criteria.

C. PROCEDURES

1. Pursuant to the *Bridge to Excellence Act* (codified in the Education Article, *Annotated Code of Maryland*), AACPS has provided full-day kindergarten for all students since the 2007-2008 school year.
2. Kindergarten Attendance:
 - a. Each child who resides in Anne Arundel County and is five years old shall attend a public school regularly during the entire school year unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in accordance with state requirements to children of the same age, or the child is exempted under COMAR (Level of Maturity Waiver).
 - b. A child who resides in Anne Arundel County shall attend a public or nonpublic kindergarten program regularly during the school year before entering the first grade unless the child is enrolled in an alternative program or is receiving home instruction as specified in COMAR.
 - c. A child who resides in Anne Arundel County, meets the mandatory age requirements, and attends a nonpublic kindergarten program for part of the year may transfer to a public kindergarten.

- d. Students shall be considered in attendance at school when participating in school-sponsored activities during the school day, and when that participation is approved by the Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, or their designees. Students shall be considered in attendance in an alternative program setting when participating in activities during the day sponsored by the alternative program, and when that participation is approved by the director of a licensed child care center or registered family day care home.
3. Age of School Attendance - COMAR determines the age of entry into a school for prekindergarten and kindergarten students.
 - a. Prekindergarten
 - (1) A child admitted to the prekindergarten program shall be four years old or older on September 1.
 - (2) AACPS Early Childhood Admission to Prekindergarten - Process and Guidelines allows entry into prekindergarten for three-year-olds who meet the "economically disadvantaged" criteria and are referred by the Coordinator of Preschool Special Education.
 - b. Kindergarten
 - (1) A child admitted to the kindergarten program in the public schools shall be five years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance.
 - (2) AACPS Early Childhood Admission to Kindergarten - Process and Guidelines allow entry into kindergarten for four-year-olds who:
 - (a) Will be five years old on or before October 15
 - (b) Apply between the April kindergarten registration period and May 15. Exceptions for submitting the application will be allowed for students moving into Anne Arundel County after May 15 and before the beginning of the kindergarten school year.
 - (c) Score in the eighth stanine on a nationally normed achievement test for kindergarten and a 125 or better on a nationally normed cognitive ability test.
 - (3) An appeals process is available for review of cases when early admission to kindergarten has been denied.

c. First Grade

- (1) A child admitted to the first grade shall be six years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance.
- (2) AACPS Early Childhood Admission to Grade One - Process and Guidelines allow entry into grade one for five-year-olds who:
 - (a) Apply between the April kindergarten registration period and the beginning of kindergarten.
 - (b) Attend kindergarten for 30 days to allow for classroom observation and standardized testing.
 - (c) Score in the eighth stanine on a nationally normed achievement test for grade one and a 125 or better on a national normed cognitive ability test.
- (3) An appeals process is available for review of cases when early admission to first grade has been denied.

4. Exemptions to Kindergarten Attendance Requirement:

a. Level of Maturity Waiver

- (1) A child who resides in Maryland and is five years old may be exempted from mandatory school attendance for one year if the child's parent or guardian believes that a delay in school attendance is in the best interest of the child and if the parent or guardian files a written request with the Superintendent of Schools asking that the child's attendance be delayed due to the child's level of maturity.
- (2) A written request for a one-year exemption from mandatory attendance for a five-year-old shall be filed with the Superintendent of Schools or the Superintendent's designee before the opening of school of the year in which the child becomes five years old.
- (3) After a child is enrolled in kindergarten, a parent or guardian may file a written request to withdraw the child from the program and delay attendance until the following school year if the parent or guardian believes it is in the best interest of the child.

b. Alternative Program Settings

- (1) A child may be exempted from attending kindergarten if a parent or guardian of the child files in writing their intent to place the child in an alternative setting and verifies that the child is enrolled:
 - (a) Full-time in a licensed child care center ("Full-time in a licensed child care center" means the child is enrolled in the child care center only and does not attend any other kindergarten program per COMAR); or
 - (b) Full-time in a registered family day care home ("Full-time in a registered family day care home" means the child is cared for by the family day care provider only and does not attend any other kindergarten program per COMAR).
- (2) A parent or guardian who elects to enroll a child full-time in a licensed child care center or full-time in a family day care home shall file their intent to enroll the five-year-old child in an alternative program with AACPS before the opening of school of the year in which the child becomes five years old. The parent or guardian shall verify enrollment by providing the following information:
 - Name of program;
 - Address of facility location; and
 - License or registration number and expiration date.
- (3) A parent or guardian of a child who attended an alternative program shall register the child for first grade before the opening of school of the year in which the child becomes six years old and shall provide documentation showing proof of attendance in the alternative program setting. Documentation includes:
 - Date child is enrolled; and
 - Number of days child was absent; or
- (4) Program directors/providers who enroll a five-year-old child full-time in a licensed child care center or full-time in a family day care home, shall furnish the parent or guardian with the documentation as specified in (1) above.
- (5) Non-State Residents - a five-year-old who moves into Anne Arundel County who has had a kindergarten experience in another state for part of the school year shall be enrolled in kindergarten. A six-year-old child who moves into Maryland who has not had a kindergarten experience may be enrolled in kindergarten or first grade. The school system shall determine the appropriate grade

placement of a six-year-old who moves into Maryland based on a review of the documentation provided by the parent or guardian.

5. Kindergarten Assessment will be conducted as specified by COMAR.

6. Prekindergarten programs will meet the specification of COMAR.

a. Scope and Purpose:

AACPS prekindergarten program for eligible four-year-old children has the overall goal of providing learning experiences to help children develop and maintain school readiness skills necessary for successful school performance.

b. Student Eligibility - Education Article, *Annotated Code of Maryland*:

(1) The school system shall enroll all four-year-old applicants who are from families with economically disadvantaged backgrounds or who are homeless. "Economically disadvantaged background" means a family whose income would make a child eligible for free or reduced price meals based on eligibility requirements established by the United States Department of Agriculture if the child were in kindergarten per COMAR.

(2) For vacancies remaining after compliance with this provision, the school system shall enroll four-year-old applicants who are not from families with economically disadvantaged backgrounds but who exhibit a lack of readiness in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, or physical development and health.

Regulation History: *Developed by Superintendent 4/14/10*
 Reviewed by Board of Education 4/14/10
 Issued 4/28/10
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Note previous regulation history: *Replaces IFA-RA issued 3/1/06*