

Iowa DE/AEA Early Childhood Network

Fact Sheet

on

Kindergarten Entry

and

Placement



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Kindergarten Entry and Placement

Definition:

According to the Iowa Code, **all children who turn 5 on or before September 15 are eligible for kindergarten.**

The Iowa State Board of Education and the Iowa Department of Education Position Statement (March 1995) identifies the following principles to ensure quality programs:

- All children who are five years of age by September 15 are eligible and funded for a kindergarten program.
- No program denies access to a child on the basis of a single screening or other arbitrary determination of the child's readiness.
- Education programs are age and individually appropriate for each child.
- Early childhood programs are available without regard to race, religion, national origin, sex, disability or conditions of homelessness.

Purpose for Early Registration for Kindergarten:

In the Spring of each year school districts traditionally hold Kindergarten Registration or "Round-up" activities in an attempt to project enrollment of five year old children. The purpose of early registration for kindergarten is to:

- determine numbers of children who will be entering the school system the following school year. Early registration helps districts determine staff needs, space and equipment needs, and financial requirements for the following year.
- provide the teacher and administrator with basic information about each child enrolled for the next school year including health and family information.
- provide an opportunity for parents or families to get school information. Parent handbooks, immunization requirements, schedules, and materials needs may be given to the parents at the time of registration.
- establish a rapport with parents and children making the introduction to the school a positive experience.
- ease the transition between preschool and school or between the home and school.

Kindergarten registration or round-up is **not** to:

- deny or discourage the entrance of eligible children based on screening or readiness tests.
- develop or direct children into segregated transitional classes.
- group children into homogeneous classes based on perceived abilities or experiences.
- group or segregate children by race, sex, income, background or any other circumstances.

Guiding Principles for Kindergarten Entry and Placement

In the primary program the opportunities are so rich and varied that **all** children find experiences which challenge their current level of development. (*The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland*. Guiding Principles, p.32)

The concept of school readiness, while critically important, is difficult to define and even more difficult to measure. Current assessment tools are very crude, often measuring that which matters least.... We also underscore the point that young children develop at different rates. It is extremely risky to gather information at a fixed point in time and then generalize about a child's "readiness." Further, we are deeply concerned about the increased inclination in our culture to rob children of their childhood, to impose academic expectations far too early and to ask children to conform to predetermined standards. We conclude that school entry should not be linked to the evaluation of the readiness of your children. And further we reject the idea of using assessment measures prematurely to label or track individual students. (*Goals 2000: Resource Group Interim Report on the National Education Goals*)

In *Standards for Quality Programs for Young Children (1990)*, the National Association of Elementary School Principals set the standard that "the school is ready for the children rather than expecting the children to be ready for the school." Entry level testing or screening is not used for exclusion from the program. Children are admitted to kindergarten solely on the basis of whether they meet state entrance age requirements.

In public school, there should be a developmentally appropriate place for every child of legal entry age. No public school program should deny access to children of legal entry age on the basis of lack of maturational readiness. For example, a kindergarten program that denies access to many 5-year-olds is not meeting the needs of its clients. (*Developmentally Appropriate Practices*, NAEYC, 1997)

Summary of Principles for Kindergarten Entry and Placement

1. Kindergarten teachers and administrators guard the integrity of effective developmentally appropriate programs for young children...they do not yield to pressure for acceleration of narrowly focused skill-based curricula.
2. Children are enrolled in kindergarten based on their legal right to enter...families are not counseled or pressured to delay entrance of their children for a year by keeping them at home or enrolling them in transitional programs or preschool.
3. Kindergarten teachers and administrators are informed about measurement strategies and techniques and are involved responsibly in their use...they do not defer measurement decisions solely to psychometricians and test publishers.
4. Retention is rejected as a viable option for young children...it is not perpetuated on the basis of false assumptions as to its educational benefit.
5. Any tests used at kindergarten entrance are valid, reliable, and helpful in initial program planning and information-sharing with parents...they are not used to create barriers to school entry or sort children into what are perceived to be homogeneous groups.
6. All children are welcomed — as they are — into heterogeneous kindergarten settings...they are not segregated into extra-year programs prior to or following regular kindergarten.

From: *Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement*, NAECS, 1987.



References and Resources:

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