

## **Billings Public Schools Procedures for Consideration of Early Entrance to Kindergarten**

A child between the ages of four and five may be ready for kindergarten despite not meeting the birth date requirement of turning five by September 10th of the kindergarten year. Billings Public Schools will consider acceptance of these children to our kindergarten upon parent request. The procedures for making such a request are outlined below. These procedures must be followed in order for the child's application to kindergarten to be considered. To apply for early entrance to Billings Public Schools, a child must be enrolled in an early childhood education environment and must turn 5 by December 1. Application must be completed and submitted to the principal by **May 10**.

A child eligible to enter school early shall be precocious in academic and social development and score at the 95th percentile on a standard individual test of intelligence, the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence administered by a licensed psychologist. Although superior aptitude is a strong indicator of extraordinary academic ability, every child with a score at the 95th percentile in intelligence may not need early admission to kindergarten. Some children could have a negative experience if the demands of a structured school day are imposed too early.

### **Step 1: Screening**

The child will be evaluated by a licensed educational psychologist using the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence. All testing will be done at parental expense. **The fee for screening is \$150.00 which will be due at the time of application.** The child must demonstrate a Full Scale IQ at the 95th percentile or higher to be considered for early entrance into kindergarten with Billings Public Schools. Parents will provide BPS with a full diagnostic report in addition to the test results from the administering psychologist, if performed by a private psychologist. This information will be taken into consideration during the determination process. This will take place in May.

The child will be evaluated by a Quest teacher using the Terra Nova for academic ability, as well as a kindergarten readiness checklist. This testing will be completed during the last two weeks of August prior to the beginning of the school year.

### **Step 2: Data Collection and Review**

In addition to all required kindergarten application materials, Billings Public Schools requires the following for consideration for early entrance to kindergarten:

- Proof of residency within the boundaries of Billings Public Schools
- If in a current preschool program, observation checklist completed by the child's current teacher (provided by Billings Public Schools)
- Observation checklist completed by parent/guardian
- Any anecdotal information that Billings Public School requests throughout the process (e.g. student observations, additional information from the child's teacher, etc. . .)
- Results from any additional testing the child has undergone

#### Step 3: Early Entrance Admission Criteria

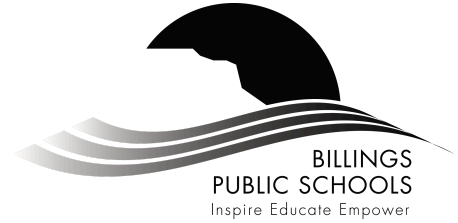
- The child will demonstrate a Full Scale IQ at the 95th percentile or higher on the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence
- The child scores at or above the 70th percentile in math and reading on the Terra Nova and kindergarten readiness checklist
- The Child will demonstrate social/emotional maturity commensurate with Billings Public Schools kindergarten expectations
- Early entrance to kindergarten is a course of action recommended for the child by his/her current preschool teacher

#### Step 4: Notification

If the child does not meet one of the requirements outlined in the steps above, the family will be notified immediately that the child is not eligible for early entrance to kindergarten the following year, the family will be encouraged to apply once the child meets the age eligibility requirements (turns 5 by September 10 of the kindergarten year).

If the child does meet the above requirements, an admission decision will be made and the family will be notified of that decision. If the child is admitted to kindergarten, before the end of the first ninety (90) days of the child's being enrolled, the principal or the parent may request that the child be withdrawn based on substantial evidence documenting that the child is not adjusting satisfactorily to the school setting.

**Billings Public Schools**  
**Application for Early Entrance to Kindergarten**  
**Evaluation**  
**Due by May 10<sup>th</sup>**



To be completed by the parent or guardian.

<b>Student's Name:</b>		
Last:	First	Middle
<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<b>Date of birth:</b>
<b>Parent/guardian name:</b>		
<b>Address:</b>		
Street	City	ZIP
<b>Home Phone:</b>	<b>Cell Phone:</b>	<b>Work Phone:</b>
<b>Email:</b>	<b>Best method of contact:</b>	
<b>List preschool experience and permission to contact:</b>		
Name of School	City	Number of years
<b>Please name the school your child will be attending:</b>		

Please enclose:

- \$150.00 non-refundable evaluation fee. Please make payable to Billings Public Schools
- Copy of child's birth certificate or passport
- Proof of residency within district attendance boundary

Please return to school of attendance or mail to:

Billings Public Schools  
 Curriculum Dept.  
 415 N. 30<sup>th</sup> St.  
 Billings, MT 59101

I give permission for my child to be tested for consideration for early entrance into kindergarten in Billings Public Schools.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

For Internal Use Only		
Date Received	Check Number	Assessment Date



## EARLY ENTRANCE TO KINDERGARTEN

### Pros and Cons

#### **BACKGROUND**

The answer to the question “When is the best time to send a child off to school”? depends on whom is asked. Proponents of starting kindergarten early believe it gives a child a valuable head start in life. Opponents argue that holding a child back until they are more mature provides an academic and social edge. Nowadays readiness rather than chronological age is often the deciding factor of when a child should start school.

According to Docett & Perry (2002), there are eight important areas that affect a child’s transition to kindergarten:

- **Knowledge**-The ability to identify numbers and letters or ideas
- **Social Adjustment**-The ability to interact with a large group of children and to respond appropriately to the teacher
- **Skills**-For example, tying shoelaces and holding a pencil properly
- **Disposition**-Attitude toward school
- **Rules**-Expectations of behavior and action
- **Physical Attributes**-For example, age and physical health
- **Family Issues**- Family interactions with school
- **Educational Environment**-What happens at schools

As parents seek to make this important decision, reviewing the commonly made arguments for and against early admission to kindergarten is imperative.

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#### **PRO: Common Arguments FOR Early Entrance to Kindergarten**

##### **1. Academic Readiness**

- Providing a challenging environment and enriching curriculum when a child is ready for the next stage of learning is very important
- Hitting the “window” of excitement and readiness by enrolling a child when they are excited and ready to go to “big school” is a positive

##### **2. Social and Emotional Maturity**

- Some children (especially the gifted) are socially and emotionally mature enough to start school early
  - They often prefer the company of older children
  - They frequently have fewer behavior problems when their classmates are older than they are

### 3. Physical Maturity

- At times, a child's physical development may lag behind their emotional and intellectual development
  - Waiting for their physical development to catch up can cause problems for them academically and socially

**Example:** *Gifted children are notorious for their poor handwriting. They can think faster than they write, which causes them to scribble things down as quickly as they can. That does not lead to neat handwriting. Waiting another year will not solve this problem.*

- There is no guarantee that waiting an extra year will make a child grow any faster.
  - Example: Holding a child back an extra year might allow him to start out the same size as the older children, but they may outgrow him in a couple of years

**NOTE:** We do not grade advance a child who is big for their age even though their size can lead to teasing. In this case, the importance of academic needs is understood.

### 4. Impact on Adolescence

- Children mature at different rates
  - A child who is the same age as his classmates may not be socially or emotionally mature enough to date. There is no way to know for sure if a child who starts early is any more or less ready than children who are a year older
  - Not all 16-year olds drive, regardless of when they started school
  - Not all children are interested in sports, so making a decision for grade placement based on a possible future desire is not necessarily valid. Additionally, some sports are not affected by physical size, track, for example

### 5. Other Influencing Factors

- Reduces costs for day care and/or preschool

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## CON: Common Arguments **AGAINST** Early Entrance to Kindergarten

### 1. Academic Research

- Studies have shown that, typically, early kindergarten entrants score 4-12 percentiles lower than the oldest members of their cohort in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The performance gap tapers to 2-9 percentiles by 8<sup>th</sup> grade; however, the data has shown that the youngest members of each cohort are less likely to attend university (Bedard & Dhuey, 2006)
- Moreover, studies have shown that academic aptitude is not the most important piece to consider when starting a student early in kindergarten; social savviness is far more important to a student's future success (Dee & Sieversten, 2015)

### 2. Academic Readiness

- When children enter school and are not ready, they may.....
  - Develop negative self-esteem that stays with them throughout their entire school careers and possibly beyond
  - Not receive the extra help they need to survive the kindergarten experience
  - Tax the system by requiring remediation in kindergarten and future grades
  - Experience negative relationships with peers
  - Take valuable time away from students who are ready

### 3. Social and Emotional Maturity

- A four-year old is not mature enough to start school  
*Typical Kindergarten Expectations: be able to pay attention to the teacher, follow directions, obey rules, sit and listen to stories, stay focused on a task, and understand the difference between work and play. Moreover, know when each is appropriate.*
  - If the child is immature emotionally, socially, or behaviorally, placing them in kindergarten early may be setting your child up for failure or frustration
  - If your child has demonstrated in preschool or day care an inability to sit and attend to a lesson, get along well with peers, or transition easily from one activity to another, they may be put in a situation for which they are not ready and it may set their entire educational experience off to a negative start
- Social immaturity can make it difficult for a child to interact appropriately with other children. If for whatever reason, your child is not developmentally ready for kindergarten, other behavioral or emotional problems may pop up

### 4. Physical Maturity

- A child may not be physically ready for school  
**Note:** *Physical readiness includes gross and fine motor skill development as well as physical size*
  - Children who start school early are typically smaller than the other children and may encounter social problems, including teasing by the other children
  - Some younger children have not yet fully developed the ability to control their bladder for the periods necessary at school. Accidents can lead to social and emotional stress
  - If a child starts school early, they may not have the fine motor skills to be able to hold a pencil properly and write well

### 5. Impact on Adolescence

- A child who starts school early may be unable to participate in sports due to small physical size
- When other teens are going to camp or participating in other summer programs, a child who started school early may not meet age requirements and will not be able to attend or participate
- Early admission has negative effects on a child's life in high school that can lead to them feeling like an outcast and a misfit
  - Your child will be the last to be eligible to drive
  - Your child will not be mature enough when his or her classmates begin dating

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## REGARDING GIFTED STUDENTS

- Parents need to consider their child's emotional and social maturity, but they need to consider it in terms of the child's chronological age. A gifted four-year-old may think like a six or seven-year-old but have the emotions and social skills of a five-year-old. This can make them look too immature for school, when in fact they would fit in with other five-year-olds, at least emotionally. Intellectually, they might still be ahead

## CONCLUSION

The decision to put a child in school early is difficult. Parents worry about which option will allow their child to fit in best with the other children and best set them up for the future. Like most things in life, there is not a simple answer. Ultimately, parents are best served when they have a clear understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of early entrance, have access to clear and useful data about their child's academic abilities, and can accurately recognize the physical, social, and emotional levels of maturity in their child.

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