

REGULATION

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: IFA, JB, JB-RA

Responsible Office: DIVISION OF CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS

PREKINDERGARTEN AND KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

A. PURPOSE

To establish Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) prekindergarten and kindergarten programs in accordance with State law and the Code of Maryland Regulations (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. AACPS is also required to conduct a kindergarten assessment and follow COMAR-defined prekindergarten program criteria. Pursuant to the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002*, AACPS has provided full-day kindergarten for all students since the 2007-2008 school year.

C. DEFINITIONS

1. ***Economically Disadvantaged Background*** – 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.
2. ***Enrolled in a Full-time Licensed Childcare Center*** – the child is enrolled in the childcare center only and does not attend any other kindergarten program.
3. ***Enrolled in a Full-time Registered Family Day Care*** – the child is cared for by the family day care provider only and does not attend any other kindergarten program.

D. PROCEDURES

1. ***Kindergarten Attendance***
 - a. Each child who resides in Anne Arundel County and is 5 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 for children of the same age, or the child is exempt under COMAR via a *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 in accordance with 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 program.
- 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, the 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, registered family day care home, or Head Start 5-year old program.

2. *Age of School Attendance*

COMAR determines the age of entry into a school for prekindergarten and kindergarten students.

a. *Prekindergarten*

- i. A child admitted to the prekindergarten program shall be 4 years old or older on September 1.
- ii. AACPS Early Childhood Admission to Prekindergarten process allows entry into prekindergarten for 3-year-olds who are economically disadvantaged and are referred by the Senior Program Manager for Birth to Five Services.

b. *Kindergarten*

- i. A child admitted to the 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.
- ii. AACPS Early Childhood Admission to Kindergarten process allows entry into kindergarten for 4-year-olds who:
 - a) Will be 5 years old on or before October 15;

- b) Apply between the April kindergarten registration period and May 15. Exceptions for submitting the application shall be allowed for students moving into Anne Arundel County after May 15 and before the beginning of the kindergarten school year; and
 - c) Demonstrate capabilities warranting early admission.
 - iii. An appeals process shall be available for the review of cases when early admission to kindergarten has been denied.
- c. ***First Grade***
- i. A child admitted to the first grade shall be 6 years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance.
 - ii. The AACPS Grade Acceleration process may permit acceleration to grade one for 5-year-olds who demonstrate capabilities warranting grade acceleration.
 - iii. An appeals process shall be available for the review of cases when grade acceleration to first grade has been denied.

4. Exemptions to Kindergarten Attendance Requirement

a. ***Level of Maturity Waiver***

- i. A child who resides in Maryland and is 5 years old may be exempted from mandatory school attendance for 1 year if the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) believes that a delay in school attendance is in the best interest of the child and if the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) files a written request with the Superintendent asking that the child's attendance be delayed due to the child's level of maturity.
- ii. A written request for a 1-year exemption from mandatory attendance for a 5-year-old shall be filed with the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee before the opening of school of the year in which the child becomes 5 years old.
- iii. After a child is enrolled in kindergarten, the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) may file a written request to withdraw the child from the program and delay attendance until the following school year if the parent(s)/guardian(s) believes it is in the best interest of the child.

b. *Alternative Program Settings*

- i. A child may be exempted from attending kindergarten if the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) files in writing their intent to place the child in an alternative setting and verifies that the child is enrolled in one of the following programs:
 - a) Full-time in a licensed childcare center;
 - b) Full-time in a registered family day care home; or
 - c) Part-time in a Head Start 5-year old program.
- ii. A child's parent(s)/guardian(s) who elects to enroll a child full-time in a licensed child care center or full-time in a family day care home or part-time in a Head Start 5-year old program shall file with AACPS the intent to enroll the 5-year-old child in an alternative program before the opening of school of the year in which the child becomes 5 years old. The child's parent(s)/guardian(s) shall verify enrollment by providing AACPS the following information:
 - a) Name of program;
 - b) Address of facility location; and
 - c) License or registration number and expiration date.
- iii. A parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 6 years old and shall provide documentation showing proof of attendance in the alternative program setting. Documentation includes:
 - a) Date child was enrolled; and
 - b) Number of days child was absent; or
- iv. Program directors or providers who enroll a 5-year-old child full-time in a licensed child care center or full-time in a family day care home, shall furnish the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) with the documentation as specified in subparagraph (i.) above.
- v. A 5-year-old who moves into Maryland with kindergarten experience in another state for part of the school year shall be enrolled in kindergarten. A 6-year-old child who moves into Maryland who has not had kindergarten

experience may be enrolled in kindergarten or first grade. The school system shall determine the appropriate grade placement of the 6-year-old who moves into Maryland based on a review of the documentation provided by the parent(s)/guardian(s).

5. The *Kindergarten Readiness Assessment* shall be conducted in accordance with COMAR.
6. The prekindergarten program shall be in accordance with COMAR.
 - a. AACPS prekindergarten program for eligible 4-year-old children shall have the overall goal of providing learning experiences to help children develop and maintain school readiness skills necessary for successful school performance.
 - b.
 - i. AACPS shall enroll all 4-year-old applicants who are from families with economically disadvantaged backgrounds or who are homeless.
 - ii. For vacancies remaining after compliance with this provision, the school system shall enroll 4-year-old applicants who are not from families with economically disadvantaged backgrounds but who represent a student population that exhibit a lack of school readiness.

Regulation History: Issued 03/01/06; Revised 04/28/10; 06/06/18; 03/04/25

Note Previous Regulation History: Replaces IFA-RA issued 03/01/06

Legal References: Section 7-301 of the Education Article, *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002*, Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.08.01.02, 13A.06.02.01