

PREKINDERGARTEN

Background

The Division recognizes that all children benefit from positive early childhood experiences. Prekindergarten programs are designed to target children and families with vulnerabilities and to facilitate the development of the whole child through an integrated, holistic approach. The key components of a Prekindergarten program are a responsive learning program, a caring environment, family involvement, community partnerships and integrated services.

Procedures

1. Children who are three and four years old with vulnerabilities are eligible to attend Prekindergarten. To apply for Prekindergarten, parents/caregivers/guardians need to complete Form 212-1.
2. An attempt will be made to balance the number of three and four year old children in the program, however, student and family vulnerability will be the deciding factor over age. Whenever possible, children with the greatest need will be provided with the opportunity to attend the program for two years.
3. In order to ensure that children with the greatest need are served, the student selection committee will refer to the following process to identify children and families in need of Prekindergarten programming based on the vulnerability criteria outlined in Form 212-2 Prekindergarten Selection Process Form.
 - 3.1 Prekindergarten teachers and administrators, in consultation with their Student Services Coordinator, will determine which partner agencies should be invited to the Prekindergarten selection meeting held in June of each year.
 - 3.2 Professionals from the following agencies should be considered when extending invitations to the selection meeting: Sunrise Children's Therapy Program, Public Health Nurses, Parkland Early Childhood Intervention Program, KidsFirst, Child and Youth Mental Health, SIGN, community childcare directors, and preschool teachers. The selection team should request that partner agencies unable to attend the meeting provide input regarding children who would benefit from Prekindergarten programming.
 - 3.3 A home visit or parent meeting may be completed prior to the selection meeting if the Prekindergarten teacher feels more information is required than what was provided on the application.
 - 3.4 All applications submitted should be shared with the selection committee team at the June/September meeting. At this time, applications that do not

indicate any vulnerability factors will not be considered and other early learning programs may be suggested to those families. Bringing all applications forward ensures Prekindergarten programs reach their targeted audience because team members may be aware of further vulnerability factors a family may be experiencing.

- 3.5 Form 212-2 Prekindergarten Selection Process Form will be used by the selection committee to guide vulnerability discussion and selection decisions. Children with the highest scores will be offered spaces in the Prekindergarten program, as long as the team determines their needs are not better met through programming they may already be enrolled in such as licensed childcare. Refer to *Maximizing Early Learning Spaces (2012)* to guide these decisions.
- 3.6 Students who live in the area served by the Prekindergarten program will be given priority over students from outside the catchment area with comparable vulnerability factors/scores.
- 3.7 The selection committee should be mindful of the number of students with intensive needs placed in each Prekindergarten classroom along with the number of adults assigned for support. Where there is a high level of student need, the team should consider whether any of the students would be better served in other early learning programs as indicated in point 3.5.
- 3.8 Prioritized wait lists based on vulnerability criteria will be established when there are inadequate spaces available in a Prekindergarten program.
- 3.9 Prekindergarten programs are funded for sixteen student spaces. To support families in planning, Prekindergarten teachers should notify eight to twelve families prior to the end of June to indicate their child has been accepted into Prekindergarten for fall. Programs in communities with little transience should notify twelve families.
- 3.10 Up to four spaces should be kept open per class for the month of September to ensure Prekindergarten programs are able to accommodate vulnerable children that may have been missed or are new to the community. By mid-October the empty spaces should be filled with children from the prioritized wait list.
- 3.11 In cases where Prekindergarten programs are not filled to capacity, the teacher will actively collaborate with community agencies throughout the school year to search for additional students who meet vulnerability criteria.
- 3.12 For students with intensive needs, the decision regarding whether they will attend Prekindergarten should be established in spring and can be decided before the selection meeting in collaboration with involved agencies and families. This is to ensure proactive planning occurs regarding accessibility, transportation, Inclusion and Intervention Plan (IIP) development, and required supports.

4. Family involvement is pivotal to an effective Prekindergarten program. Prekindergarten staff will actively engage parents/caregivers/guardians in the development and education of their children. In an ongoing process to support parents/guardians, staff will provide opportunities to enhance their knowledge of child development and their role in supporting such development.
5. Prekindergarten programs are mandated to operate twelve to fifteen hours per week. The Prekindergarten Professional Learning Community (PLC) will establish consistent start and end dates each school year with programming typically beginning two weeks after the start of the school year and culminating two weeks prior to the end of the year to allow for home visits and preparation. Prekindergarten teachers will submit start and end dates and hours of operation to their administrator annually.
6. Prekindergarten teachers should hold one or two family events per month.
7. The Division values smooth transitions, appropriate placement, and responsive programming for Prekindergarten students as indicated in the following guidelines:
 - 7.1 A general transition meeting shall occur in spring between the Prekindergarten and Kindergarten teachers for all students transitioning to Kindergarten.
 - 7.2 For students with intensive needs transitioning to Kindergarten, the Student Services Coordinator, Prekindergarten teacher, and Student Support teacher will arrange a transition meeting early in spring and invite the current team, receiving team, and parents/caregivers/guardians. Refer to *GSSD Transition Process Guidelines* for further information regarding transition procedures.
 - 7.3 Decisions regarding delaying Kindergarten entrance must be made in consultation between the Prekindergarten teacher, parents/guardians, administrator, Student Services Coordinator, and involved agencies. Factors to consider include the child's social-emotional maturity, birthdate, exposure to play and early learning experiences, space availability in the program, and whether remaining in Prekindergarten is the best environment to meet their needs. When children have delays that will not be improved by extra time in Prekindergarten, they should transition to Kindergarten with their age cohort. Discussion and decisions made should be documented in the Clevr *Student Placement and Retention Template*.
 - 7.4 An *Inclusion and Intervention Plan (IIP)* is required for children in need of continuing interventions, individualized supports, or who are involved with a number of agencies. The Student Services Coordinator should be consulted when school staff members are unsure of whether a child requires an IIP.
 - 7.5 When a child with intensive needs transitions into Prekindergarten during the school year and has a current *Integrated Family Services Plan (IFSP)* in place through involved agencies, it is sufficient to implement this plan and

upload it to Clevr and develop an IIP for the upcoming year as outlined by the Student Services Department.

8. Transportation of Prekindergarten students is not provided.
 - 8.1 Prekindergarten teachers and administrators can make an Alternate Transportation request to the Division in the event that a Prekindergarten student who lives in town would not be able to access the program without transportation. If approved, transportation would be provided by the Prekindergarten Educational Associate or other school staff member.
 - An approved Form 552-1 *Driver Information Form* must accompany the Alternate Transportation Request
 - Transporting students would be a part of the staff member's work day hours
 - When the staff member is required to use their personal vehicle AP 518 *Travel Allowances* will apply
 - A booster seat will be provided by the Division when a staff member is transporting a Prekindergarten student in a personal vehicle
 - 8.2 Rural parents who demonstrate the need for financial support can apply to the Division to be reimbursed for one round trip per school day attended by their child. From their knowledge of the children and their families, Prekindergarten teachers and their administrator will determine which families may require travel reimbursement and will provide Form 212-3 Parent Reimbursement Claim Form to these families.
9. Prekindergarten students can ride the school bus for approved field trips with adequate supervision of a 5:1 student to supervisor ratio. Booster seats are not required for Prekindergarten transportation in buses or taxis but it is recommended that children under 18 kg (40 lbs) before the age of four-and-a-half years would benefit from child seats/restraints on buses. If there are students that would benefit from the child seats, schools would need to make arrangements with Transportation well in advance of the field trip for a specific bus to be used.
10. Prekindergarten Program Educational Associate should work toward completing the following training within three years of beginning their Prekindergarten position:
 - 10.1 Hanen Training Level 1 and 2
 - 10.2 Prekindergarten Basics Workshop
 - 10.3 Play and Exploration Early Learning Program Guide (ELPG) - Phase 1 Online
 - 10.4 ELPG Phase 2: How Children Learn

References: Better Beginnings, Better Futures: Effective Practices Policy and Guidelines for Prekindergarten 2004 Edition
Maximizing Early Learning Spaces (2012)
Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide (2008)
Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale -ECERS-R (2004)
Family Engagement in Prekindergarten: A Resource Guide for Prekindergarten Teachers and Associates (2012)
Essential Learning Experiences for Three, Four, and Five Year Olds (2013)

Prekindergarten Program: A Handbook for Administrators (2009)
GSSD Transition Process Guidelines (2014)
Form 212-1 Prekindergarten Application Form
Form 212-2 Prekindergarten Selection Process Form
Form 212-3 Parent Reimbursement Claim Form
Form 552-1 Driver Information Form
Administrative Procedure 513 Appendix B Flex Time for Educational Assistants
Student Transportation Legislation and Best Practices (2014)

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