

Board Policy 7:50 | Kindergarten Early Entrance | Procedure

Pennoyer School District 79 complies with Illinois law which specifies that to enter kindergarten, children must be five years of age by September 1st of their kindergarten year. However, Pennoyer School District 79 allows exceptions to this law for children whose potential and skills are in the 90% or above percentile range when compared with their peers.

Pennoyer School District 79 has identified early entrance to kindergarten as whole-grade acceleration, appropriate for those students who are intellectually and socially advanced. Pennoyer School District 79 is responsible for determining whether a child is appropriate for early entrance, and the school district will complete all necessary assessments.

The decision for children to enter school early can have a profound effect on their academic and social performance for the remainder of their school career. It is a decision that needs to be taken seriously. Research indicates that early entrance and/or early reading ability is not a predictor of continued high achievement in the future.

Students who enter school early may demonstrate adaptive and social-emotional differences from peers who enter at the age-appropriate time due to their relative physical and emotional immaturity. As they progress through school, children who are young for their grade level may have more difficulty fitting in with their peers in social situations. The impact on extra-curricular activities that place students based on age or grade alone should also be considered.

To be considered for early entrance, students must demonstrate advanced characteristics in cognitive, academic, functional, and social-emotional domains. District 79 utilizes a systematic process that involves review of records, standardized assessment, and other components for determination.

Requesting Early Entrance to Kindergarten

To be eligible for consideration for early entrance to kindergarten, the child must:

- Turn five years old by October 31st of the school year for which they are seeking entrance,
- Have attended an early childhood center/preschool (public or private), and
- Have a recommendation from a preschool teacher endorsing early entrance to kindergarten.

Parents/guardians wishing to apply for early entrance for their child must:

- Contact the Pennoyer Principal
- Provide a copy of the student's birth certificate
- Reside in the Pennoyer School District boundaries
- Complete the **Early Entrance Request Form**:
 - Once parents have completed the Early Entrance Request Form, they should print and submit it to the building principal along with the other required documents listed below no later than April 15th.

- Provide a copy of the student's report card or other rating document from the current school placement or written letter from the current teacher recommending placement,
- Sign a Release of Information Form to allow Pennoyer School District 79 to communicate with the child's current school, and
- Return the above documents to the building principal by April 15 of the school year prior to the school year for which early entrance is sought. All documents must be received before the student can be considered for early entrance.

Early Entrance Assessment and Decision-Making Process

Based on a review of the information provided above, Pennoyer School District 79 will determine if the child should participate in an evaluation for grade advancement.

Assessment Process:

1. Pennoyer School District 79 completes a screening of academic skills in reading, math, and school readiness. The child must score above the 90th percentile on mid-year curriculum-based measurement probes at the kindergarten level.
2. Pennoyer School District 79 completes a language screener to determine English proficiency for students who speak a second language or who have a second language present in the home.

If the student meets the criteria on the individual assessment of student intelligence, the process continues.

1. District 79 will determine whether the student demonstrates above average social-emotional development. This may be determined by interview, observation in the current school placement, and/or behavior rating scales completed by District 79 staff.

Based on the completed evaluation, and any additional data provided by parents, District 79 will make a decision regarding the appropriate grade placement.

Children who are accepted for early entrance will be enrolled on a probationary basis. The school staff will assess each child's initial adjustment to school during the first 20-30 school days. If a child's initial adjustment is not satisfactory, District 79 will require that the child enroll when the child meets the state's enrollment age requirement for the appropriate grade level.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. If I choose to enroll my child in preschool or junior kindergarten a year early, will he/she automatically be eligible for kindergarten the following year (as a four year old)?

No. To be considered for early entrance to kindergarten, children who turn five after September 1st will have to participate in the above assessment process and meet the early entrance requirements.

2. Why do children applying for early entrance have to be assessed when other children entering school do not?

Children who turn five on or before September 1st are age-eligible according to Illinois state law and therefore entitled to enter kindergarten. A child whose birth date falls between September 1st and October 31st may be considered for early entrance to kindergarten, but must meet the district's criteria outlined above.

3. Is early entrance the best choice for my child? Please consider the following:

- *The intent of the early entrance process is to offer a stimulating academic and social environment for students who are capable of excelling in a classroom setting with children one year older.*
- *The standards for early entrance are high to ensure that students are not frustrated by their advanced placement.*
- *It is important to consider your child's social-emotional strengths and development when considering grade advancement.*

4. What are the assessors looking for in the assessments?

A. *Children cannot study or prepare for developmental readiness. Assessments include a variety of activities that measure each child's progress in the following developmental domains:*

- *Intellectual development*
- *Academic skills and/or readiness*
- *Personal/social readiness*

5. Is this procedure applicable for early entrance to other grade levels at Pennoyer School?

- *No*