



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: September 11, 2019  
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads  
From: Abdulsaleem Hasan, Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Field Services

## Guidance on Early Admission to Kindergarten

To assist school districts and parents regarding the cutoff date for entry into kindergarten, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is providing additional information on issues that commonly arise as related to early entry into kindergarten.

In accordance with *N.J.S.A. 18A:38-5*, a student must be 5 years old by October 1 in order to have a statutory right to enrollment where a kindergarten program is offered by a public school. However, district boards of education can establish policies regarding cutoff dates and age requirements for admission that enable students to begin kindergarten while still age 4 on October 1. Although it is within the discretion of the school district, the NJDOE recommends that districts adhere to the October 1 cutoff date. The October 1 deadline is statutorily mandated, and as such, school districts do not have any obligation to offer an exception to that deadline. To the extent that school district boards of education may adopt policies that allow early kindergarten admission, those policies should be equitable and applied in a uniform manner. Additionally, there are no statutory or regulatory provisions that require pre-entrance testing prior to student enrollment in kindergarten.

The NJDOE recognizes that school districts receive considerable pressure to make accommodations for children who have a date of birth within a few days of the cutoff date, as well as for children who are deemed by their parents to be academically advanced. While the NJDOE does not recommend the use of testing or screening for early entrance into kindergarten, school districts may choose to accommodate parents by allowing students who do not meet the October 1 deadline to enter kindergarten if the student achieves a certain score on a pre-entrance testing exam. Screening programs are more appropriately used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of students who meet the age requirement and are about to enter kindergarten.

Further, when a local school district allows for exceptions to the October 1 cutoff date, there could be the appearance of inequity. For example, if a school district permits one student to “test in” to early kindergarten admission, while not affording the same opportunity to other families, it could be perceived as discriminatory. Additionally, in most cases the testing is conducted by a private testing center that charges a fee for the test. A board policy that permits early entry to kindergarten based on performance on a parent-pay assessment contributes to inequities because not all families have the resources to pay for private testing.

### Contact information

Districts wanting to discuss their policies can reach out to their NJDOE [County Office of Education](#) or email their questions to the NJDOE’s Division of Early Childhood Education at [doeearlychild@doe.nj.gov](mailto:doeearlychild@doe.nj.gov).

c: Members, State Board of Education  
Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., Commissioner  
NJDOE Staff

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network  
Garden State Coalition of Schools  
NJ LEE Group