

Kindergarten Enrollment and Early Entrance in Minnesota Schools: Responses to Frequently Asked Questions (January 2014)

What are the requirements for kindergarten enrollment in Minnesota?

In Minnesota, children are eligible to attend kindergarten when they are five years old on or before September 1 of the calendar year that schools starts (Minn. Stat. § 120A.24).

In addition to the age requirement, each child entering kindergarten must:

- Provide documentation of meeting Minnesota immunization requirements as required per Minnesota Statutes, section 121A.15, prior to starting kindergarten. [More information about the school immunizations is available on the Minnesota Department of Health website.](#)
- Participate in a school district's Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening program. Children can receive a school district screening in any school district in Minnesota. A child may also meet the screening requirement by participating in a comparable health and developmental screening program provided by Head Start, Child and Teen Checkups or through a health care provider. If a parent is a conscientious objector to the screening program for their child, the child does not need to participate in the state screening program (Minn. Stat. § 121A.17). If a child has not been screened prior to kindergarten entry, the child must receive the district's Early Childhood Screening within the first 30 calendar days of kindergarten enrollment.

Does compulsory instruction apply to kindergarten?

Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, Subdivision 5(a) requires that every child between the ages of seven and 17 receive instruction. Children under the age of seven and who are enrolled in any kindergarten program regardless of the kindergarten schedule (e.g., half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten program on alternative days or full-day kindergarten) shall receive instruction. A parent may withdraw their child under the age of seven from a kindergarten program at any time. Once withdrawn, the compulsory instruction statute does not apply day kindergarten program on alternative days or full-day kindergarten) shall receive instruction. A parent may withdraw their child under the age of seven from a kindergarten program at any time. Once withdrawn, the compulsory instruction statute does not apply.

What is the requirement for compulsory attendance for children under the age of seven?

Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, Subdivision 6, states that once a child is enrolled into kindergarten, the child is subject to the compulsory attendance law. A parent or guardian may withdraw the kindergarten student from enrollment in the school for good cause by notifying the school district. "Good cause" includes, but is not limited to, enrollment of the pupil in another school or the immaturity of the child. If a kindergarten student is withdrawn for good cause, compulsory attendance does not apply.

The 2013 Legislature amended Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, Subdivision 12(b), to state that a parent may withdraw a child from an all-day, every-day kindergarten program and put their child in a half-day program, if offered, or an alternate-day program without being truant. A school board must excuse a kindergarten child from a part of a school day at the request of the child's parent.

If the district only offers a full-day program, but the parent only wants the child to go half-time, the parent can request the child be excused from part of the school day and the school board must excuse the student. A child who is excused from part of the school day in a full-time program is a part-time student and is counted as a fraction of an Average Daily Membership (ADM), based on the portion of the school day the student attends.

The district must provide the parent or guardian who enrolls the pupil with a written explanation of the provisions of compulsory attendance.

Are there a minimum number of hours per year for kindergarten students when the school offers only a full-day, daily kindergarten program and parents exercise their right to excuse a student from part of the school day under Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, Subdivision 12(b)?

Statutes give parents the right to request their child be excused from a full-day, daily kindergarten program and attend a half-day, daily or full-day, alternate day program. The student must be scheduled to attend for a minimum of 425 hours to be in compliance with the truancy statutes. Any student who is scheduled to attend at the school site for less than the full school day as adopted by the school board is considered a part-time student.

Can children enter kindergarten before age five? If so, what are the requirements?

In order for children to enter kindergarten before they are age-eligible, a school district must have board-adopted policies for early admission to kindergarten for select students who will then progress to first grade the subsequent year. Minnesota Statutes, section 124D, Subdivision 1, requires the following to be included in a board-adopted policy for early admission:

- Must establish a **comprehensive evaluation to be used to help determine the child's cognitive, social and emotional development and the child's ability to meet kindergarten grade expectations.** The comprehensive evaluation must use valid and reliable instrumentation and be aligned with state kindergarten expectations.

- Include a parent report and teacher observations of the child's knowledge, skills and abilities.

Minnesota Statutes require districts to provide the board-approved early entrance policy in an accessible format to parents. The commissioner of MDE must also have access to the board's early kindergarten admission policy. The early entrance policy is subject to an MDE audit as required in Minnesota Statutes, section 127A.41. Charter schools must publish the early entrance policy of selected pupils on their website (Minnesota Statutes, section 124D, Subdivision 9(d)).

What is the early entrance requirement for children who are gifted and talented?

Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.15, requires districts to adopt procedures for early admission to kindergarten or first grade for gifted education for select students. This early admission procedure to gifted education for select students must be consistent with the school district's overall board-approved policy for early admission to kindergarten. The procedures for early admission to kindergarten or first grade for gifted education must be sensitive to under-represented groups of students.