

Early Entrance to Kindergarten or First Grade

Early Entrance Information

District #201 follows Illinois School Code which specifies that, to enter kindergarten, children must be five years of age by September 1 of their kindergarten year. The district's policy for first grade early entrance is that students must be six years of age by September 1 of their first grade year.

On rare occasions, exceptions to both of these policies may be made for children whose potential and skills are in the very superior range. District #201 has specific criteria and procedures for considering parent requests for early entrance.

The decision for a child to enter school early can have a profound effect on his or her academic and social performance for the remainder of the child's school career. It is a decision that needs to be taken very seriously.

Research indicates that early entrance and/or early reading ability is not a predictor of success in school. In fact, children with strong early reading skills often plateau by third grade. Children who enter kindergarten or first grade early may demonstrate social or emotional difficulties due to their relative 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. They are less likely to excel in sports because of their age and/or their smaller size. These and other possible effects of being younger than others in their classes should be considered carefully.

District #201 may screen eight children each year, but typically only one or two are found eligible to enter kindergarten for first grade early.

Criteria For Eligibility

District #201 has developed standard criteria and procedures to allow for careful consideration of parents' requests for early entrance to kindergarten and first grade. The criteria for early entrance are:

Kindergarten-

- The child's fifth birthday falls between September 2 and October 15, as documented by a certified copy of the birth certificate.
- The child demonstrates attention, gross and fine motor skills, cooperative play, and expressive and receptive language skills in the very superior range as demonstrated during a group observation session.
- The child attains a score of 145 or above on an intelligence test administered by District #201.

First Grade-

- The child's sixth birthday falls between September 2 and October 15, as documented by a certified copy of the birth certificate.
- The child demonstrates attention, language, reading, math, and written language skills in the very superior range.
- The child attains a score of 145 or above on an intelligence test administered by District #201.

PROCEDURES-

1. Between March 1 and May 1, parents meet with the assistant superintendent, principal of the school the child will attend and school psychologist to discuss the child's early entrance potential.
2. Following this discussion, if parents wish to continue the process, they will be given two forms to complete:
 - A. Parent Request for Early Entrance to Kindergarten (or First Grade), and
 - B. Child Information Sheet
3. Parents return the completed forms to the assistant superintendent by May 1 with:
 - A. A certified copy of the child's birth certificate, and
 - B. A nonrefundable check in the amount of \$300 made payable to District #201.
4. The observation and testing will occur during a three hour session in early June. Parents receive a letter with the date, time, and place of the observation and follow-up conference.
5. After the observation and testing, parents will be invited to a feedback conference. Members of the early entrance team and the principal will provide information regarding the child's performance during the observation, review the test results, and give parents a written summary of the screening.
6. The decision about early entrance eligibility will be made by the early entrance team. **This decision is final.**

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is District #201's early entrance policy?

A. District #201 policy states that children must turn five by September 1 of their kindergarten year for admission to kindergarten or six by September 1 of their first grade year to be admitted to first grade. However, District #201 may consider early entrance if children meet the criteria established by the district's early entrance policy.

Q. How many children are eligible for early entrance each year?

A. Generally, no more than two children screened are admitted early.

Q. If I put my child in private kindergarten, will he/she automatically be eligible for first grade the following year?

A. No. To be considered for early entrance to first grade, children who are not six by September 1 will have to meet the early entrance requirements as noted in this letter.

Q. Who makes the decision about whether my child can enter kindergarten early?

A. The District #201 early entrance team will make the decision, taking into consideration test results and the child's performance during an observation period.

Decisions of the early entrance team are final.

Q. Who should I contact about having my child screened for early entrance?

A. Contact the assistant superintendent of the District #201 schools. The first step is to arrange a meeting with the assistant superintendent, principal, and school psychologist. The meeting must take place before May 1 for consideration in the coming year.