

Early Admission for Kindergarten and First-Grade Students

A school may accept students of any age the school intends to instruct. However, only those students who meet the statutory definition of “pupils enrolled” may be included on the school’s membership report and be considered eligible to receive MPCP state aid payments. Under the Wisconsin Administrative Code provisions governing the MPCP, state aid payments are based on a school’s membership reports, which include the number of MPCP pupils enrolled in the school on certain count dates. Wisconsin Administrative Code PI 35.02(8) defines pupils enrolled by cross-reference to its public school usage.

The statutory definition of “pupils enrolled” under sec. 121.004(7), Wis. Stats., provides, **with one exception for public school boards of common or union high school districts**, that only students who meet the age requirements of sec. 118.14, Wis. Stats., may be counted as pupils enrolled in the school. Under sec. 118.14, Wis. Stats., no student may be admitted to kindergarten or first grade unless the student is four, five, or six years of age on or before September 1 in the year he or she wishes to enter school. Specifically, sec. 118.14, Wis. Stats., states:

(1) Except as provided in s. 120.12 (25):

(a) No child may be admitted to a 4-year-old kindergarten unless he or she is 4 years old on or before September 1 in the year that he or she proposes to enter school.

(b) No child may be admitted to a 5-year-old kindergarten unless he or she is 5 years old on or before September 1 in the year he or she proposes to enter school.

(c) No child may be admitted to the 1st grade unless he or she is 6 years old on or before September 1 in the year he or she proposes to enter school.

The exception to this age requirement, found under sec. 120.12(25), Wis. Stats., **allows a public school board of a common or union high school district** to admit and receive state aid for students younger than the above-referenced ages if the **public school board** prescribes procedures, conditions, and standards for early admission to kindergarten and first grade.

Because the exception to the age requirement is limited to procedures prescribed by certain public school boards, the exception does not apply to private schools participating in the MPCP.

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Therefore, schools participating in the MPCP may not receive state aid payments unless students are four years of age for four-year-old kindergarten, five years of age for five-year-old kindergarten, or six years of age for first grade on or before September 1 in the year he or she wishes to enter school.

Some MPCP schools may have prescribed and utilized procedures for early admission for the current school year. If early admission procedures have been prescribed and forwarded to DPI with the school's 2000-01 Intent to Participate form, DPI will allow that school to count students admitted under the early admission procedures for the 2000-01 school year only. However, unless the legislature modifies Wisconsin statutes to specifically allow private schools participating in the MPCP to prescribe early admission procedures, schools will not receive future MPCP state aid payments for students that do not meet the above-referenced age requirements. The DPI intends to raise the question of whether the use of early admission procedures should be extended to schools participating in the MPCP in a letter being prepared for the Governor and Legislature on various MPCP issues. A copy of this letter will be sent to participating MPCP schools upon completion.

In summary, only those MPCP schools that submitted an early admission procedure with their school's 2000-01 Intent to Participate form may be eligible to receive MPCP state aid during the 2000-01 school year for students who were born after September 1 in the year the students entered school.