



# Planning for Kindergarten

Kindergarten is an important next step for all young children who attend preschool as well as for children who have not had a formal school experience. Families often have questions about where and when to send their child to school and often have many questions as they make this decision.

The purpose of this document is to help preschool teams, including families, understand some of the factors involved in decision making about a child's enrollment in kindergarten.

## What is “school readiness”?

The State Board of Education describes school readiness as both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students enrolled in publicly funded kindergarten. School readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community service providers work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning in academic content<sup>1</sup>.

Voluntarily holding children out of kindergarten will not mean that more children are ready for kindergarten. Older children are not always more successful in kindergarten. Hoping to promote kindergarten readiness, families may decide to hold a child out of school for a year but holding children out of school has not been found to predict better social or academic success.<sup>2,3</sup>

There is no clear consensus about what school readiness entails and some of the components of traditional descriptions of school readiness are based on standards that are not inclusive or equitable. They assume some early learning experiences, like center-based pre-K and academically oriented programs, make students ready for school. However, students without those experiences may still be ready for school in their own communities and have a host of other competencies not captured in this description.<sup>4</sup>

The CDE encourages teams to review the guiding questions prior to making decisions about holding children out from kindergarten.

## What are Colorado's Kindergarten Entry Requirements?

Kindergarten programs must serve any age-eligible child who enrolls in school.<sup>5</sup> Age requirements for kindergarten entry are determined locally. Local early admittance policy determines if a child who does not meet that age requirement is admitted into kindergarten.<sup>6</sup> Attending preschool is not a prerequisite for kindergarten entry. Across Colorado, about 50% of 3- and 4-year-olds are enrolled in a preschool program.

<sup>1</sup> [School Readiness | CDE - Colorado Department of Education](#). (2021).

<sup>2</sup> NAEYC | [Where We Stand on School Readiness](#). (2009).

<sup>3</sup> [The Power of Kindergarten: 10 Policies Leading to Positive Child Outcomes](#) (2014).

<sup>4</sup> The Early Learning Network – A Language Guide to Center Racial Equity in Education Research (2021)

<sup>5</sup> Students are required to be age 5 by Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> with the following exceptions: 1) children of military families in kindergarten who are transferring from another state and were previously enrolled in kindergarten and the child's parents are active military; 2) a child who is identified as a highly advanced gifted student (C.R.S. 24-60-3402; C.R.S. 22-54- 103(10)).

<sup>6</sup> [Kindergarten Enrollment Policy, Research, and Resources](#) (2021).

## Guiding Questions

Please consider the following questions as part of the discussion about what is best for the young student:

- Is there a decision-making team in place which includes the family?
- Has the team considered what the research says about delaying kindergarten entry?
- Will one more year of preschool positively affect the child later in schooling?
- What supports will be in place in kindergarten for the child who may be on an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?
- Will the child benefit from the same academic content, delivered in the same way as the year before?
- Will one more year of preschool close the opportunity gap if there is one? How is this determined?
- Will a child receive a full day in kindergarten versus a half day in preschool?
- When is the cut-off date in the school district?
- Have team members considered their own biases that influence their beliefs on school readiness?



## Is the child a Dual Language Learner?

Title III of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) ensures success for all students. The law requires that DLL students be placed with their peers, in grade level appropriate settings.<sup>7</sup>

## May school districts serve students in preschool when the child meets the age criteria to attend kindergarten?

When choosing to serve a student in preschool who is eligible to attend kindergarten, district policies related to retention must consider the individualized needs of the student. For students receiving special education, the IEP must document when the district places a child in preschool who meets the age criteria for kindergarten. The child's family and the rest of the IEP team should have an opportunity to provide input on the placement decision. Special education funding and services may be accessed in instances when a decision is made to continue in preschool, in alignment with district policies.

## What is considered if the child has an IEP?

IDEA indicates that children with disabilities should have access to grade level curricula with their nondisabled peers. Local school districts and the IEP team are required to consider the child's needs while planning transition to kindergarten. Needed support should be put in place in any classroom or placement for the child to be successful.

Section 300.101(c) of the IDEA regulations addresses services and supports at each grade level and expects that a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is "available to any individual child with a disability who needs special education and related services" *as they advance from grade to grade*.<sup>8</sup> This means that children with disabilities should access grade level curricula with their peers.

Section 300.116(e) of the IDEA regulations discusses placements in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Age-appropriate regular classrooms that have accommodations and modifications in place enable children to participate and access learning.<sup>9</sup>

Children with disabilities and who have an IEP may be eligible to receive services through the public education system until they turn 21. The period for transition planning to community programs is shortened when a student has delayed kindergarten entry.<sup>10</sup>

## What is "academic redshirting" in preschool?

Academic redshirting is the practice of holding a child out of kindergarten for an extra year even though he or she is eligible to enroll in kindergarten.<sup>11,12</sup> Parents sometimes want an academic advantage and to give time for the child to mature.<sup>13</sup> Research shows that white boys from high socioeconomic status and boys with social/emotional immaturities and birthdays close to the kindergarten cutoff dates are most often held out of kindergarten.<sup>14</sup>

In certain communities where there may be a higher incidence, the practice of "holding out" can create kindergartens that have a class which ranges in age from not yet 5 years old to older than age 6, having an even wider range of skills and experiences.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>7</sup> [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) | U.S. Department of Education. (2015).

<sup>8</sup> [Sec. 300.101 IDEA](#) | U.S. Department of Education. (2017)

<sup>9</sup> [Sec. 300.116 IDEA](#) | U.S. Department of Education. (2017).

<sup>10</sup> [Secondary Transition](#) | CDE - Colorado Department of Education (2021).

<sup>11</sup> Kelmon, J. (2016). [When should kids start kindergarten?](#)

<sup>12</sup> Marshall, H. (2011) [Opportunity Deferred or Opportunity Taken?](#)

<sup>13</sup> Wong, A. (March 11, 2021) [Beyond the Pros and Cons of Redshirting.](#)

<sup>14</sup> David, J. (2008, March). [What Research Says About.../ Grade Retention.](#)

<sup>15</sup> Ackerman, D. and W. Steven Barnett (2005). [Prepared for Kindergarten: What Does "Readiness" Mean?](#)



## Additional Resources

Bassok, D., & Reardon, S. (2013). "Academic Redshirting" in Kindergarten: Prevalence, Patterns, and Implications. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 283-297.

Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2013). Research to Policy: Transition to School Position Statement. *Transitions to School - International Research, Policy and Practice*, 277-294.

Frey, N. (2005). Retention, Social Promotion, and Academic Redshirting: What Do We Know and Need to Know? *Remedial & Special Education*, 26(6), 332-346.

Range, B., Dougan, K., & Pijanowski, J. (2011) Rethinking Grade Retention and Academic Redshirting: Helping School Administrators Make Sense of What Works. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(2), n2.

P. Gail Williams, MD (2019). ["School Readiness" Pediatrics, Volume 144, Issue 2](#)

*This CDE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects CDE's recommendations, but Administrative Units (AUs) may have developed their own policies or procedures that differ from those described herein. Be sure to refer to your local AU's policies and procedures through the Director of Special Education. If you are seeking legal advice, please contact your legal counsel.*

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Exceptional Student Services Unit,  
[Office of Special Education](#)  
Office of Elementary Literacy and School Readiness,  
[Kindergarten School Readiness in Colorado](#)