

## **Miami-Dade County Public Schools Attendance/Enrollment**

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

#### ***1. How is compulsory school attendance defined?***

Florida Law (Section 1003.21, Florida Statutes) states that all children who are either six years of age, who will be six years old by February 1 of any school year, or who are older than six years of age but who have not attained the age of 16 years, must attend school regularly during the entire school term. A student who attains the age of 16 years during the school year is not subject to compulsory attendance beyond the date of which the student attains that age if he/she files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the school district.

#### ***2. Does Florida law specify an age requirement for admission into a public school first grade?***

No. However, Florida law does specify that all children who have attained the age of six years or who will have attained the age of six years by February 1 of any school year are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term. (Section 1003.21(1)(a)1, Florida Statutes). Although Florida law does not provide a specific age requirement for enrollment to public first grade, the provisions of Florida law related to kindergarten admission and student progression dictate that first grade enrollment be limited to (1) students who turn six years old on or before September 1 who have successfully completed kindergarten; and (2) out-of-state students who turn six years old after September 1 who meet the age requirement for public kindergarten admission from the transferring state, and who have successfully completed kindergarten.

#### ***3. Is a student over age 16 allowed to quit school without parent permission?***

No. When a student reaches 16 years of age he/she is no longer required to attend school if he/she files the required formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the school district and the declaration is signed by the parent. The declaration must acknowledge that leaving school will likely reduce the student's earning potential. The school district is required to notify the child's parent or legal guardian that the student has filed a declaration of intent to leave school.

#### ***4. How is a truant defined?***

Florida law defines "habitual truant" as a student who has 15 or more unexcused absences within 90 calendar days with or without the knowledge or consent of the student's parent or guardian, and who is subject to compulsory school attendance.

#### ***5. How do school districts determine if an absence is excused or unexcused?***

Florida law requires local school districts to determine the meaning and conditions associated with excused absences, unexcused absences, and tardiness. In part, the statute requires each district school board to

establish an attendance policy that includes the number of days a student must be in attendance per year and to determine whether an absence or tardy is excused or unexcused according to criteria established by the district school board.

**6. *Is there an exception made for absence due to illness?***

When a student is continually sick and repeatedly absent from school, the student must be under the supervision of a doctor in order to receive an excuse. The doctor's statement should confirm that the student's condition requires absence for more than the number of days permitted by the district school board policy.

**7. *What are the requirements for Florida public school kindergarten admission?***

Florida law (Section 1003.21(1)(a)2, Florida Statutes) specifies that children who have attained the age of five years on or before September 1 of the school year are eligible for admission to public kindergarten during that school year based on rules prescribed by the school board. Students are eligible for kindergarten attendance provided they meet the age requirement.

**8. *If a child turns five years old after September 1, can a waiver be obtained from the Florida Department of Education to allow him to attend kindergarten?***

No. Florida Statutes or State Board of Education Rules do not include any provision to waive the age requirement for kindergarten enrollment.

**9. *Can a child whose birth date is after September 1 who has completed a Florida nonpublic school kindergarten program be admitted into a Florida public school first grade?***

No. A child who has satisfactorily completed the requirements for a nonpublic kindergarten from which the district accepts transfer of academic credit, but who does not turn six on or before September 1 of the school year, would be admitted into kindergarten and progress according to the district's student progression plan. (Section 1003.21(1)(b), Florida Statutes).

**10. *Is it possible for a student who is enrolled in an out-of-state kindergarten or first grade program and who does not meet Florida's admission age requirements, to transfer and attend kindergarten or first grade in a Florida public school?***

Yes. Any student who transfers from an out-of-state public school, and who does not meet regular age requirements for admission to Florida public schools, will be admitted to kindergarten or first grade when certain data are presented. A student who transfers from an out-of-state nonpublic school and who does not meet regular age requirements for admission to Florida public schools, may be admitted if he or she meets the age requirements for the public schools in the state from which he is transferring, and if the transfer of the student's academic credit is acceptable under the rules of the school board.

If a student is transferring from an out-of-state public or nonpublic school, the parents must provide the following data to the school district prior to admission:

- official documentation that the parent(s) or guardian(s) was a legal resident of the state in which the child was previously enrolled in school
- an official letter or transcript from proper school authority which shows record of attendance, academic information, and grade placement of the student
- evidence of immunization against communicable diseases as required in Section 1003.22, Florida Statutes
- evidence of a medical examination completed within the last twelve (12) months in accordance with Section 1003.22, Florida Statutes.(Rule 6A-1.0985(1), Entry into Kindergarten and First Grade by Out-of-State Transfer Students, Florida Administrative Code)

**11. *Is kindergarten attendance required for a child that turns five before September 1?***

No. A parent that chooses not to enroll their child in kindergarten is not in violation of compulsory school attendance laws. However, Florida law, [Section 1003.21 (1)(a), Florida Statutes], specifies that all children who have attained the age of six years or who will have attained the age of 6 years by February 1 of any school year are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term. If a child enters public school at age 6 without evidence of kindergarten completion of an official transcript, then they will be placed in the first program of study, and that is kindergarten. The child will progress according to the district's student progression plan.