

**PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EARLY LEARNER PROGRAMS**

501 North Dixon Street / Portland, OR 97227

To: Dr. Cheryl Proctor, Deputy Superintendent
Re: Reimagining PPS Early Entry to K policy
From: Emily Glasgow, Matt Eide, Judy Brennan
Date: May 9, 2022--revised

Overview & background:

For many years, per [Board Policy 4.10.020](#) and [Admin Directive 4.10.033](#), our TAG Office has been tasked with administering our Early Entry to K process. This year, we shifted management of this process from TAG to our Early Learners Department to better align it with other Kindergarten supports. This process allows for families of students who turn 5 between September 2 and October 1 to apply for an exception to our September 1 birthdate requirement for Kindergarten entry. Families must file an independent application, pay for private intelligence testing, and procure a recommendation letter from a preschool provider to complete the process. We are concerned that continued support of this process is in conflict with our district vision, strategic plan, equity lens, and Early Learner Core Values.

Recommendation:

Having taken historical data and current trends into consideration, the Enrollment & Transfer Center, Early Learners Department, and TAG Department are in agreement that the most equitable and logical decision would be to *abandon our early entry to K policy and practice*, beginning in January 2023. This would require us to rescind [Admin Directive 4.10.033](#) and make a small modification to [Board Policy 4.10.020](#). And, moving forward, all students who are not 5 by September 1 would need to enroll in a PreK program.

If it is not feasible to completely abandon this policy and practice, we would recommend at least removing the required assessment component of the application and modifying the approval process to ensure more equitable access and opportunity.

In this memo, we are summarizing the data that has led us to this recommendation for your review.

Number of students who apply/are approved (historical trends):

- Since 2009, an average of approximately 39 early entry to kindergarten applications were submitted to the Talented and Gifted education department each year. About 69% of those applications were approved. The number of applications ranged from 11 in



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2010-2011 to 55 in 2015-16 and the percent approved ranged from 27% in 2010-2011 to 92% in 2020-21.

- As illustrated in the table below, the percent of early entry to kindergarten applications that were approved varied across racial and ethnic demographic groups. For example, on average 68% of applications from White students were approved, while only 27% of applications from Black students were approved.

Demographic group	Percent of applications	Percent approved
Asian	6%	27%
Black	12%	27%
Latinx	4%	14%
Pacific Islander	1%	50%
Two or more (HU)	11%	50%
Two or more (not HU)	7%	79%
White	59%	68%

Resources required to support the process:

History of in-district v out-of-district testing: PPS School Psychs used to administer testing. Approximately 8 years ago, we could not find any PPS psychs who were available to conduct testing during the school day, as they were all working full time. We hired a retired PPS psych, but when she was no longer available, we started telling families they would need to seek their own testing. This creates an inequity, even with sliding scale options.

Administrative support: For the past several years, one of our TAG TOSAs has designated 5-10 hours between winter and spring to respond to family requests, collect and review application materials, and respond to families' applications. Our Early Learners Department often receives and responds to inquiries about this process as well.



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Concerns that the assessment is cost-prohibitive and culturally/linguistically-biased:

The Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence, Revised (WPPSI-R) must be administered by a trained practitioner, typically an Educational Psychologist. The assessment can take up to two hours and is financially prohibitive for many families. Estimated costs are as low as \$400 for families with documented need to \$1100 or more. Especially during the pandemic appointments can be difficult to obtain and require access to transportation and time. Additionally, there is no oversight of private assessment providers, the quality of assessment administration and interpretation varies, and results can be impacted by the implicit racial and linguistic bias of providers.

Furthermore, the WPPSI-R is not a valid index of cognitive ability for bilingual children. In researching the validity of this assessment to measure readiness for kindergarten our team learned, “the WPPSI-R is not measuring the same verbal or general factors in bilingual children as in monolinguals. Consequently, these scores cannot be interpreted as valid indicators of either verbal intelligence or general intellectual ability in bilingual children.”

(Using the WPPSI-R with Bilingual Children: Implications for Practice, Mary diSibio and Thomas Whalen, CSU, Hayward 2000.)

Evolving logic of the need for an early entrance process:

PreK availability: In the past, there were few free PreK slots available to families who did not qualify for Head Start. As a result, families living just over the poverty line whose child missed the K age cut-off might have paid an average of \$600- 1,200 per month for an additional year of Pre-K. Therefore, it was financially supportive of families to offer an early entry option. However, with the ongoing expansion of free PreK through Preschool Promise and Preschool for All, more and more of our families of 4 year olds have access to free public PreK.

Later registration trends: Another consideration is the growing trend of families enrolling their Kindergarten- age students a year later. In 2016, 4.22% of K students were actually eligible for 1st grade. This year, 5.62% of K students are eligible for 1st grade. The impact is a widening range (4 year olds - 6 year olds) in ages, ability, etc in a K classroom. This widening range further problematizes the entry of very young children into the program.