

# Transition from Preschool To Elementary Education: Commonly Asked Questions

## Readiness for Kindergarten

**Question: I feel my child is not ready for kindergarten. Can my child stay in preschool for an extra year?**

**Answer:** Preschool special education is a program for children ages 3-5 who are not yet eligible for kindergarten and who have disabilities requiring special education services. The preschool program offers activities, instruction and therapy designed to meet each child's goals and objectives on their IEP. Unless there is a unique special education reason that a child's educational program cannot be implemented in the elementary schools with special education and related services, then children who are 5 before September 1 enter the elementary education program.

**Question: My child doesn't have the skills that other children do. Shouldn't he/she remain in preschool until those skills are acquired?**

**Answer:** The elementary special education program provides special education services, speech language therapy, occupational and physical therapy, audio logy services, and assistance from teachers of the hard of hearing and blind/visually impaired. There are a lot of support services available to your child through special education and related services. Specific services your child needs will be specified in the IEP. Your student can continue to develop the skills he/she needs in Kindergarten with these supports. Studies show that children benefit socially and academically from the being with age appropriate peers.

## Busing to Kindergarten

**Question: Will my child still ride a bus to school?**

**Answer:** Many children who enter kindergarten will be in walking distance of their neighborhood school. Children who live within 1.5 miles from the school will walk. Children who live more than 1.5 miles from school ride the regular education bus. The bus stops at various locations in the neighborhood, but not in front of individual houses. Children will walk to and from the bus stop. In some cases, the district has identified hazardous routes, and a regular education bus may be provided in neighborhoods where the walking route has been determined as hazardous by the school district. Some

children have physical or mental problems that prohibit them from walking to school or riding the regular education bus.

In these cases, the child's IEP team (teacher and related services staff) will document the physical or mental problem that requires special education busing on the child's IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) and then a special education bus will be provided.

If your child will be walking to a regular education bus stop, or to and from school, you will want to spend some time with them this spring and summer teaching them the way to school and about traffic safety. You may want to walk with them the first couple of days. You might even consider getting together with your neighbors and arrange for other children to go to and from school with your child.

**Question: If my child has a physical or learning problem and requires a special education bus for kindergarten, does the pick up and drop off address need to be in the same area?**

**Answer:** If your child will be attending your neighborhood school and your child requires a special education bus, then the pick up and drop off address must be in the same attendance boundary as the school. This means that if you have day care in another school's attendance area, you may either need to locate a new day care in the neighborhood school's attendance area, or apply for a zone exemption to attend the school located near the daycare. Zone exemptions are not automatically approved for daycare reasons. Because the schools are crowded the district is not able to honor all parent requests. You may want to be considering alternative day care arrangements.

## **Zone Exemptions and Alternative Programs**

**Question: How do I apply for a zone exemption?**

**Answer:** Go to the school office of your home school and request a zone exemption form. Fill out the form and have it signed by the principal. Zone exemptions are considered by principals on a space available basis and for the specific criteria listed on the form. Zone exemptions are generally not approved until up to 10 days after school has started. It is important that you register at your neighborhood school.

**Question: I would like my child to attend one of the alternative programs offered in ASD. How do I apply for admission?**

**Answer:** Zone exemptions for alternative programs (such as Montessori, optional programs, Fundamental Programs, etc) are handled by a lottery process. Lotteries are held one week before the end of each quarter and one week before school starts. Lottery dates may change so please check with the school office of the program you are

interested in for the most up-to-date lottery dates. See brochure on options within the Anchorage School District.

Zone exemptions should be submitted as soon as possible, but no later than the middle of May. Transition meetings will be held at the neighborhood school even if you have applied for a zone exemption, since at the time of transition, you probably will not be notified of a confirmed space for fall. Should you receive early notice of an approved zone exemption, please let your child's teacher know that your child has confirmed space and if possible, transition can take place there. If you are notified in the fall of confirmed space please let that school know that your child has an IEP and that transition information is available at your neighborhood school or through the elementary teacher consultants. It's a good idea to have a copy of your child's current IEP and any other transition documents handy to share with the new school. Sometimes it takes several days for files to be forwarded to the appropriate schools.

## **Visiting the Kindergarten School**

**Question: May I observe in the school my child will be attending in the fall?**

**Answer:** Many schools have a kindergarten round-up (orientation) in the spring where parents and children are invited to visit the school and learn about the kindergarten program. You are encouraged to attend this event. Schools with alternative and optional programs often have a monthly visit date. For further information on kindergarten round-ups, call the elementary school.

**Question: Can I request a specific teacher?**

**Answer:** Yes, you still need to register. The elementary school will need to update registration forms, etc. Your child's cumulative records will be forwarded to the appropriate elementary school. Registration times are in the spring and early fall. These dates will be advertised in the newspapers, school newsletters or Cable Channel 14. Call the elementary school where your child will attend for more information.

**Question: What do I need to bring for registration?**

**Answer:** You will need to take a copy of your child's shot records, physical examination and original birth certificate. Please let the elementary school secretary know that your child attended special education preschool and already has a student number. Even if you have applied for a zone exemption, you must register at your neighborhood school (unless your child will be attending a special programs site, in which case, you may register at the school where the intensive needs site is located.)

**Question: The elementary program will be new to us. If we have problems or questions, how can we get help?**

**Answer:** Just like in the preschool program, it is usually best to share your problems with your child's teacher. If the problems cannot be resolved, talk to the school principal. There are other people available who can help you with problems related to the special education aspect of your child's program. You may contact any of these people:

Early Childhood & Elementary Special Education 742-3886

There are several teacher experts in the early childhood and elementary special education program who are assigned to provide support to the special education teachers at specific schools who are located in the early childhood and elementary education office.

Related Services 742-6065 (Speech/Language; Psychology; Occupational and Physical Therapy, APE, Blind/Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology)

School Principal at your child's new school.