

VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM POLICY

I. Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

Any Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program offered by the school district shall be a developmentally appropriate program designed to prepare a student for early literacy, enhance age-appropriate progress of attaining the Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program Standards, and prepare students to be ready for kindergarten, based on the statewide kindergarten screening administered under Florida Statute 1002.69.

The summer program must comprise at least 300 instructional hours and may not start any sooner than May 1 of the school year. The program shall not be delivered to a child any sooner than the summer immediately before the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under Florida Statute 1003.21(1)(a)2.

The district may provide a school year program. If the program is provided the school year program must comprise at least 540 instructional hours.

The district shall determine which public schools shall provide the program and shall ensure that each public school providing the program shall register to provide the program with the Early Learning Coalition serving Volusia County. This registration will be in a format prescribed by the Office for Early Learning.

II. Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program Eligibility

The Early Learning Coalition serving Volusia County determines eligibility for admission to the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program. Families of children wishing to enroll must provide the school district with an original, valid State of Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program Child Eligibility and Enrollment Certificate issued by the Early Learning Coalition serving Volusia County. The certificate of eligibility must be valid for the session in which the child is being registered.

A child who is eligible for kindergarten is not eligible for Voluntary Prekindergarten.

III. Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program Enrollment

The school district may only enroll a child in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program after the Early Learning Coalition serving Volusia County determines that a child is eligible for the program. The school district may limit the number of students admitted by any public school for enrollment in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program; however, the school district must provide for the admission of every eligible child within the district whose parent enrolls the child in a summer Voluntary Prekindergarten Program delivered by a public school under section 1002.61, Florida Statutes.

The district may determine additional criteria for admission to the school year Voluntary Prekindergarten Program which comply with the antidiscrimination requirements of 42

U.S.C. s. 200d. The school district may not discriminate against a parent or child in violation of these antidiscrimination requirements.

To be enrolled a child must have attained the age of four (4) years on or before September 1 of the school year. A child must be either a resident of Volusia County, Florida or be the child or grandchild of a Volusia County School District employee. The child must not have been dismissed from any Voluntary Prekindergarten Program previously due to a lack of compliance with the attendance policy of a program provider. Admission to the program is dependent upon written agreement of the student's parents or guardians to adhere to the school district's Voluntary Prekindergarten Attendance requirements.

IV. Voluntary Prekindergarten Attendance Requirements

The Voluntary Prekindergarten Program law requires each public school, upon enrollment of a child in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program, to provide each child's parent with a copy of the school district's attendance policy as applicable. Each parent enrolling his or her child in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program must agree to comply with the school district's attendance policy, as applicable. This agreement shall be in written format as provided by the school district upon enrollment and signed by the parent or guardian.

The superintendent shall develop and distribute procedures that meet the school district's obligation regarding attendance under this policy, state statutes and state rules and regulations, including the enforcement of school attendance requirements. The procedures must provide that schools track excused and unexcused absences and contact the home in the case of an unexcused absence from school, or absence for which the reason is unknown, to prevent the development of patterns of non-attendance.

The superintendent shall also establish necessary disciplinary procedures for the program designed to make parents aware of the expectations for participation in the program. Among the expectations for participation in the program is the expectation that each child enrolled will be present for at least 80% of the program. These procedures will also be provided to parents.

A. Excused Absence

1. Illness or other legitimate causes will be excused for up to 10% of the program when documented in writing by the parent to the building principal or designee. For absences equaling or exceeding 10% of the program time, the school shall also have the discretion to require that absences be accompanied by a doctor's verification of illness. The school has further discretion to accept written documentation from someone, unrelated to the child or the child's parents, who has personal knowledge of the reason for the child's absence (e.g. compliance with a court order). The legitimacy of a cause for being absent shall be determined by the building principal or designee. Any or all written excuses will be submitted to the Early Learning Coalition serving Volusia County as needed for verification of attendance.

2. Medical and dental appointments should be made after school hours or on non-school days. When this is not possible, students may be excused to fill these appointments. An excuse from the doctor or dentist is required.

B. Unexcused Absence

1. The fact that the student's parent or guardian knew of the absence does not, in and of itself, require that an absence is excused by school personnel.
2. Absence without written notification of school officials by the parent/guardian is considered an unexcused absence.
3. If a student is absent from the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program for more than 20% of the program or five (5) consecutive instructional days, the student is considered withdrawn from the program unless the parent submits written documentation describing the reasons for the absence. The documentation may describe any reason or reasons for the absence and is not limited to the extraordinary circumstances listed in IV.A.1. and 2. above. These reasons do not require the district to re-enroll a student who has automatically been withdrawn from the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program.

C. Documentation and Certification of Student Attendance in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program

1. The parent or guardian of each student enrolled in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program must verify, on a monthly basis, the student's daily attendance on the prior month's certified student attendance form. The parent must submit the verification with an original signature to the school district in a format prescribed by the Florida Office for Early Learning.
2. The parent or guardian of each student enrolled in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program must also certify, again on a monthly basis, that it is their choice that the school district continues to be the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program chosen to deliver the program to their child and that the Early Learning Coalition serving Volusia County should direct program funds to Volusia County Schools for their child.

Legal Authority:

Sections 1001.41(2), 1001.49(3), Florida Statutes

Laws Implemented:

Sections 1002.53, 1002.61, 1002.71, 1002.72, 1002.79, Florida Statutes
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History:

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