

Students

School Admissions and Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools ¹

Age [Elementary or Unit Districts only]

To be eligible for admission, a child must be five years old on or before September 1 of that school term.² A child entering first grade must be six years of age on or before September 1 of that school term.³ Based upon an assessment of a child's readiness to attend school, the District may permit him or her to attend school prior to these dates.⁴ A child will also be allowed to attend first grade based upon an assessment of his or her readiness if he or she attended a non-public preschool, continued his or her education at that school through kindergarten, was taught in kindergarten by an appropriately licensed teacher, and will be six years old on or before December 31.⁵ A child with exceptional needs who qualifies for special education services is eligible for admission at three years of age.⁶ Early

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¹ State law requires some of the subject matter contained in this sample policy to be covered by policy and controls this policy's content. Boards must adopt a policy on school admissions (105 ILCS 5/10-21.2) and restricting a student from transferring from another school while under a suspension or expulsion from that school (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6). A *registration guidance document*, updated annually, is available from the Ill. State Board of Education (ISBE) at: www.isbe.net/Documents/guidance_reg.pdf.

² 105 ILCS 5/10-20.12. The district may, however, establish a kindergarten for children between the ages of 4 and 6 years old. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.18. Any child between the ages of 7 and 17 (unless the child has already graduated from high school) must attend public or private school, with certain exceptions allowed for physical and mental disability, lawful employment, or other reasons as specified by statute. 105 ILCS 5/26-1. The phrase "a child between the ages of 7 and 17" is liberally construed to fully carry out the true intent and meaning of the General Assembly (5 ILCS 70/1.01), which is to ensure that students graduate from high school (105 ILCS 5/26-1). Therefore, "the ages of 7-17" means a child is 17 until his or her 18th birthday.

³ Optional sentence.

⁴ 105 ILCS 5/10-20.12.

⁵ Id. Delete the first four sentences in this paragraph if the district operates a year-round school and use the following alternative:

To be eligible for admission, a child must be at least five years old within 30 days after the commencement of that school term. Based upon an assessment of the child's readiness to attend school, the District may permit him or her to attend school prior to this date. A child may also attend first grade based upon an assessment of his or her readiness if he or she attended a non-public preschool and continued his or her education at that school through kindergarten, was taught in kindergarten by an appropriately licensed teacher, and will attain age six within four months after the commencement of the term.

⁶ 105 ILCS 5/14-1.02 and 5/14-1.03a. An ISBE rule states: "Each school district shall be responsible for actively seeking out and identifying all children from birth through age 21 within the district (and those parentally-placed private school children for whom the district is responsible under 34 C.F.R. §300.131) who may be eligible for special education and related services." 23 Ill.Admin.Code §226.100. Note that after a child is determined to be eligible for special education services, the child must be placed in the appropriate program no later than the beginning of the next school semester. 105 ILCS 5/14-8.02.

entrance to kindergarten or first grade may also be available through Board policy 6:135, *Accelerated Placement Program*.^{7 8}

Admission Procedure

All students must register for school each year on the dates and at the place designated by the Superintendent. Parents/guardians of students enrolling in the District for the first time must present:

1. A certified copy of the student's birth certificate. If a birth certificate is not presented, the Superintendent or designee shall notify in writing the person enrolling the student that within 30 days he or she must provide a certified copy of the student's birth certificate. A student will be enrolled without a birth certificate.⁹ When a certified copy of the birth certificate is presented, the school shall promptly make a copy for its records, place the copy in the student's permanent¹⁰ record, and return the certified copy to the person enrolling the child. If a person enrolling a student fails to provide a certified copy of the student's birth certificate, the Superintendent or designee shall immediately notify the local law enforcement agency, and shall also notify the person enrolling the student in writing that, unless he or she complies within ten days, the case will be referred to the local law enforcement authority for investigation. If compliance is not obtained within that ten-day period, the Superintendent or designee shall so refer the case. The Superintendent or designee shall immediately report to the local law enforcement authority any material received pursuant to this paragraph that appears inaccurate or suspicious in form or content.¹¹

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⁷ 105 ILCS 5/14A-17, Accelerated Placement Act (APA). For high school districts, delete this sentence and the cross reference to 6:135, *Accelerated Placement Program*. See sample policy 6:135, *Accelerated Placement Program*, and sample administrative procedure 6:135-AP, *Accelerated Placement Program Procedures*, for further detail.

Attorneys disagree whether the APA conflicts with 105 ILCS 5/10-20.12 (*School year – School age*). See f/n 4 in sample policy 6:135, *Accelerated Placement Program* for a discussion about reconciling the APA and 105 ILCS 5/10-20.12. **Consult the board attorney for guidance.**

⁸ Districts should consider implementing specific and objective criteria for early admissions and address such issues as who pays the costs for assessments, etc. Using this exception defeats the age requirement rules because it only relies upon a child's readiness, regardless of his or her age.

⁹ Presenting a certified copy of a student's birth certificate is a missing children's law enforcement issue **that may not be used for denying enrollment**. See **Guidance Documents** subhead in sample administrative procedure 7:50-AP, *School Admissions and Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools*, for more information about enrollment and residency issues. Consult the board attorney if a student cannot produce a certified copy of his or her birth certificate and wishes to provide a passport, visa, or other governmental documentation of identity. To balance the tension between the missing children's laws reporting requirements and *Plyler v. Doe* (457 U.S. 202 (1982)), many attorneys advise not to report a student's failure to produce a birth certificate; however always consult the board attorney for assistance based upon the specific facts of the enrollment situation (see f/n 11 below).

¹⁰ 23 Ill.Admin.Code §375.10 states that the *student permanent record* shall include basic identifying information, including the student's name, birth date and place, and gender, and evidence required under 325 ILCS 50/5(b)(1).

¹¹ Two almost identical laws govern this requirement: Missing Children Records Act (325 ILCS 50/) and Missing Children Registration Law (325 ILCS 55/). We reconciled their differences as much as possible but chiefly used the language from the Registration Law because it has the clearest explanation. The statutory enforcement requirements, as nonsensical as they may seem, are quoted in the policy. **Important:** Schools cannot deny admission based upon immigration (illegal) status alone. Note that singling out foreign-looking students for visa requests is probably illegal discrimination. See *Plyler v. Doe*. See also f/n 18 below.

2. Proof of residence, as required by Board policy 7:60, *Residence*.
3. Proof of disease immunization or detection and the required physical examination, as required by State law and Board policy 7:100, *Health, Eye, and Dental Examinations; Immunizations; and Exclusion of Students*.¹²

The individual enrolling a student shall be given the opportunity to voluntarily state whether the student has a parent or guardian who is a member of a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and who is either deployed to active duty or expects to be deployed to active duty during the school year.¹³ Students who are children of active duty military personnel transferring will be allowed to enter: (a) the same grade level in which they studied at the school from which they transferred, if the transfer occurs during the District's school year, or (b) the grade level following the last grade completed.¹⁴

Homeless Children

Any homeless child shall be immediately admitted, even if the child or child's parent/guardian is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.¹⁵ Board policy 6:140, *Education of Homeless Children*, and its implementing administrative procedure, govern the enrollment of homeless children.

Foster Care Students

The Superintendent will appoint at least one employee to act as a liaison to facilitate the enrollment and transfer of records of students in the legal custody of the Ill. Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS) when enrolling in or changing schools. The District's liaison ensures that DCFS' Office of

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According to the Ill. State Police, a certified copy of the student's birth certificate is the only acceptable proof of the child's identity and age. 20 Ill.Admin.Code §1290.60(a). For more discussion about acceptable proof of identity, see f/n 1 in sample administrative procedure 7:50-AP, *School Admissions and Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools*. The Missing Children Records Act requires schools to make prompt copies of these certified copies. 325 ILCS 50/5(b)(1). Once made, schools need not request another certified copy with respect to that child for any other year in which the child is enrolled in that school or other entity. *Id.* While the Act does not mandate where the copy should be kept, it is appropriate for placement in the student's permanent record. See 23 Ill.Admin.Code §375.10 and f/n 10, above. The school person who receives the copy of the certified birth certificate should initial and date the document. That way, if there is a question or an investigation (which can happen even years after enrollment) there will not be an issue as to who received the document and the date it was processed.

A district must also *flag* a student's record on notification by the State police of the student's disappearance and report to the State police any request for a *flagged* student record. 325 ILCS 50/3, 50/5.

¹² Each school must maintain records for each student that reflect compliance with the examinations and immunizations required by 105 ILCS 5/27-8.1 and 23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.530(a). A Tuberculosis skin test is required if the student lives in an area designated by the Ill. Dept. of Public Health as having a high incidence of Tuberculosis. 105 ILCS 5/27-8.1(1).

¹³ 105 ILCS 5/22-70. Districts must report this enrollment information as aggregate data to ISBE. *Id.*

¹⁴ The Educational Opportunity for Military Children Act (105 ILCS 70/) further details enrollment and entrance requirements for children of active military personnel. 105 ILCS 70/33. After enrollment, the law allows a district to perform evaluations to ensure appropriate placement of the student. Course, program, graduation, extracurricular(s), and other placement options for this student population are further discussed in sample administrative procedure 7:50-AP, *School Admissions and Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools*.

¹⁵ Required by Education for Homeless Children Act (105 ILCS 45/) and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §11431 *et seq.*). See §11432(g)(3)(C)(i).

Education and Transition Services receives all written notices and records pertaining to students in the legal custody of DCFS as required by State law.¹⁶

Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools¹⁷

A student may transfer into or out of the District according to State law and procedures developed by the Superintendent or designee. A student seeking to transfer into the District must serve the entire term

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¹⁶ Required by 105 ILCS 5/10-20.59. These liaisons must be licensed under Article 21B of the School Code. 105 ILCS 5/10-20.59 directs how employees are prioritized for liaison appointment. Liaisons are “encouraged to build capacity and infrastructure within their school district to support students in the legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services.” Schools are required to give DCFS liaisons certain notices, records, and meeting invitations. See 105 ILCS 5/10-20.77 (notice and invitation to attend parent-teacher conferences and other meetings); 105 ILCS 5/10-21.8 (copies of correspondence and reports upon request of DCFS); 105 ILCS 5/13B-60.10 (notice and invitation to attend alternative learning opportunities program conference); 105 ILCS 5/14-8.02 (notices related to special education); 105 ILCS 10/ (student records). See sample administrative procedure 7:340-AP1, *School Student Records*, for more information regarding DCFS access to the student records of children in its legal custody. The law does not specifically require that a district’s DCFS liaison perform these duties; this policy assigns them to the liaison because they logically fit within the responsibilities outlined in 105 ILCS 5/10-20.59, which may include:

1. Streamlining the enrollment process for students in foster care;
2. Implementing student data tracking and monitoring mechanisms;
3. Ensuring that students in DCFS custody receive all school nutrition and meal programs available;
4. Coordinating student withdrawal from a school, record transfers, and credit recovery;
5. Becoming experts on the foster care system and State laws and policies in place that support students in DCFS custody;
6. Coordinating with child welfare partners;
7. Providing foster care-related information and training to the district;
8. Working with DCFS to help students maintain their school placement, if appropriate;
9. Reviewing student schedules to ensure students are on track to graduate;
10. Encouraging a successful transition into adulthood and post-secondary opportunities;
11. Encouraging involvement in extracurricular activities; and
12. Knowing what support is available within the district and community for students in DCFS custody.

¹⁷ 105 ILCS 5/2-3.13a requires each transferor (original) school to keep documentation of transfers in the student’s record. It also requires “notification [by the transferee (recipient) school] of the transfer on or before July 31 following the school year during which the student withdraws from the transferor school or school district or the student shall be counted in the calculation of the transferor school’s or school district’s annual student dropout rate.” ISBE rule, 23 Ill.Admin.Code §375.75(e), is consistent with this requirement. The rule also requires the transferring school or district to maintain any documentation of the student’s transfer, including records indicating the school or school district to which the student transferred, in that student’s temporary record. Id.

Out-of-state transfer students, including children of military personnel, may use unofficial transcripts for admission to a school until official transcripts are obtained from the student’s last school district. 105 ILCS 10/8.1 and 70/32. See also sample administrative procedure 7:50-AP, *School Admissions and Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools*.

A board has two basic options for students transferring into the district who are serving a suspension or expulsion. Under option one, it may comply with the minimum requirements of 105 ILCS 5/2-3.13a by refusing to allow a student transferring from any public school to attend classes until the period of any suspension or expulsion has expired when the penalty was for: (1) knowingly possessing in a school building or on school grounds a weapon as defined in the Gun Free Schools Act; (2) knowingly possessing, selling, or delivering in a school building or on school grounds a controlled substance or cannabis; or (3) battering a staff member of the school. Under option two, a board may require a student who was suspended or expelled for *any* reason from any public or private school in this or any other state to complete the entire term of the suspension or expulsion before being admitted to the school district. The sample policy uses the second, more simple, more comprehensive alternative.

of any suspension or expulsion, imposed for any reason by any public or private school, in this or any other state, before being admitted into the School District. The District will consider mitigating factors including but not limited to student's status as a parent, expectant parent, or whether they are a victim of sexual or domestic violence when deciding whether the student must complete the term of expulsion before being enrolled by the District.

Foreign Students [High School or Unit Districts only] ¹⁸

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A board may adopt a policy providing that if a student is suspended or expelled for any reason from any school, anywhere, the student must complete the suspension's or expulsion's entire term in an alternative school program under Article 13A (105 ILCS 5/13A, amended by P.A. 103-473) or an alternative learning opportunities program under Article 13B (105 ILCS 5/13B) before being admitted into the school district if there is no threat to the safety of students or staff in the alternative program. 105 ILCS 5/2-3.13a and 5/10-22.6(g), amended by P.A. 102-466, a/k/a *Ensuring Success in School (ESS) Law*, eff. 7-1-25. If a board adopts such a policy, it must allow for the consideration of any mitigating factors (including the student's status as a parent, expectant parent, or victim of domestic or sexual violence as defined in 105 ILCS 5/26A). 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(g), amended by P.A. 102-466, a/k/a *ESS Law*, eff. 7-1-25. If a board wants to provide for this alternative, it may add the following to either of the above options and add 105 ILCS 5/26A to the Legal References:

The Superintendent is authorized to allow a student who was suspended or expelled from any public or private school to be placed in an alternative school program established under Article 13A of the School Code or an alternative learning opportunities program established under Article 13B of the School Code for the remainder of the suspension or expulsion. When determining whether to authorize such placement, the Superintendent shall consider any mitigating factors relating to the suspension or expulsion, including the student's status as a parent, expectant parent, or victim of domestic or sexual violence as defined in 105 ILCS 5/26A.

¹⁸ Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the U.S. must first obtain either: (1) a nonimmigrant visa (for temporary stay for tourism, medical treatment, business, temporary work, or study), or (2) an immigrant visa for permanent residence. Common visas presented by foreign students are:

1. J-1 nonimmigrant visas for participants in educational and cultural exchange programs designated by the U.S. Dept. of State (DOS), Exchange Visitor Program, and Designation Staff. These students are enrolled provided they otherwise qualify for admission. For information about J-1 visas and the Exchange Visitor Program, see j1visa.state.gov/programs.
2. F-1 nonimmigrant student visa. F-1 visas are not issued for attendance at an elementary or middle school (K-8). Before obtaining an F-1 student visa, the individual must submit evidence that the school district has been reimbursed for the unsubsidized per capita cost of the education. These students are enrolled provided they otherwise qualify for admission. However, attendance at U.S. public high schools cannot exceed a total of 12 months.
3. B-2 visitor nonimmigrant visas. There is disagreement over whether these students must be enrolled tuition free. Their *visitor* visa is evidence of nonresident status. Call the district's attorney for guidance.
4. The qualified school-age child of an alien who holds another type of visa, i.e., A, E, H, I, L, etc., other than a visitor visa. These students are enrolled provided they otherwise qualify for admission. Likewise, dependents of foreign nationals on long-term visas are enrolled provided they otherwise qualify for admission.
5. No immigration documentation. *Plyler v. Doe*. A school cannot deny admission based upon immigration (illegal) status alone. Note that singling out foreign-looking students for visa requests is probably illegal discrimination. Thus, undocumented aliens are enrolled, provided they otherwise qualify for admission.
6. Immigrant visa. These students are enrolled provided they otherwise qualify for admission.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is an Internet-based system that provides tracking and monitoring, with access to accurate and current information on nonimmigrant students (F and M visas) and exchange visitors (J visa), and their dependents (F-2, M-2, and J-2). 8 U.S.C. §1372(c)(2), implemented by 8 C.F.R. §214.1(h), is an exception to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. §1232g) authorizing and requiring districts to report information concerning an F, J, or M nonimmigrant to the extent necessary to comply with 8 U.S.C. §1372 and 8 C.F.R. §214.3(g) to certify these students for enrollment. SEVIS enables schools and program sponsors to transmit electronic information and event notifications, via the Internet, to the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) and DOS throughout a student's or exchange visitor's stay. SEVIS will provide system alerts, event notifications, and reports to the end-user schools and programs, as well as for DHS and DOS offices.

According to federal regulations, students who apply for F-1, M-1, F-3, J-1, or M-3 visas must pay a fee to the DHS. The regulations describe when and how the fee is to be paid, who is exempt from the fee, and the consequences for failure to pay, 8 C.F.R. Parts 103, 214, and 299.

The District accepts foreign exchange students with a J-1 visa and who reside within the District as participants in an exchange program sponsored by organizations screened by administration. Exchange students on a J-1 visa are not required to pay tuition. ¹⁹

Privately sponsored exchange students on an F-1 visa may be enrolled if an adult resident of the District has temporary guardianship, and the student lives in the home of that guardian. Exchange students on an F-1 visa are required to pay tuition at the established District rate.²⁰ F-1 visa student admission is limited to high schools, and attendance may not exceed 12 months.

The Board may limit the number of exchange students admitted in any given year. Exchange students must comply with District immunization requirements. Once admitted, exchange students become subject to all District policies and regulations governing students.

Re-enrollment ²¹ [*High School or Unit Districts only*]

Re-enrollment shall be denied to any individual 19 years of age or above who has dropped out of school and who could not earn sufficient credits during the normal school year(s) to graduate before his or her 21st birthday. However, at the Superintendent's or designee's discretion and depending on program availability, the individual may be enrolled in a graduation incentives program established under 105 ILCS 5/26-16 or an alternative learning opportunities program established under 105 ILCS 5/13B-1 (see 6:110, *Programs for Students At Risk of Academic Failure and/or Dropping Out of School and Graduation Incentives Program*). Before being denied re-enrollment, the District will offer the individual due process as required in cases of expulsion under policy 7:210, *Expulsion Procedures*. A person denied re-enrollment will be offered counseling and be directed to alternative educational programs, including adult education programs that lead to graduation or receipt of a GED diploma. This section does not apply to students eligible for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act or accommodation plans under the Rehabilitation Act, Section 504.

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¹⁹ State law allows, but does not require, boards to waive nonresident tuition for these students. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.5a.

²⁰ Exchange students on F-1 visas must pay the full-unsubsidized public education costs before entering the U.S. 8 U.S.C. §1101(a)(15)(F); 8 U.S.C. §1184(m). Boards may not waive the fee.

²¹ 105 ILCS 5/26-2(b). The requirements in this section are provided in State law, that is: (1) it is mandatory that a district deny re-enrollment as provided in this section; (2) it is permissive whether to enroll the individual in a district graduation incentives program or alternative learning opportunities program (although depending on circumstances, a student below the age of 20 may be entitled to enroll in a graduation incentives program); (3) it is mandatory to provide due process before denying re-enrollment; (4) it is mandatory to offer the individual who is denied re-enrollment counseling and to direct that person to alternative educational programs; and (5) it is mandatory that this section not apply to students eligible for special education.

105 ILCS 5/26-2(c) allows a district to deny enrollment to a student 17 years of age or older for one semester for failure to meet minimum academic or attendance standards if certain conditions are met. See sample policy 7:70, *Attendance and Truancy*.

- LEGAL REF.: 8 U.S.C. §1101 et seq., Illegal Immigrant and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996.
 20 U.S.C. §1232g, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
 20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq., Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act.
 29 U.S.C. §794, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504.
 42 U.S.C. §11431 et seq., McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
 105 ILCS 5/2-3.13a, 5/10-20.12, 5/10-20.59, 5/10-22.5a, 5/14-1.02, 5/14-1.03a, 5/26-1, 5/26-2, and 5/27-8.1.
 105 ILCS 10/8.1, Ill. School Student Records Act.
 105 ILCS 45/, Education for Homeless Children Act.
 105 ILCS 70/, Educational Opportunity for Military Children Act.
 325 ILCS 50/, Missing Children Records Act.
 325 ILCS 55/, Missing Children Registration Law.
 410 ILCS 315/2, Communicable Disease Prevention Act.
 20 Ill.Admin.Code Part 1290, Missing Person Birth Records and School Registration.
 23 Ill.Admin.Code Part 226, Special Education.
 23 Ill.Admin.Code Part 375, Student Records.
- CROSS REF.: 4:110 (Transportation), 6:30 (Organization of Instruction), 6:110 (Programs for Students At Risk of Academic Failure and/or Dropping Out of School and Graduation Incentives Program), 6:135 (Accelerated Placement Program), 6:140 (Education of Homeless Children), 6:300 (Graduation Requirements), 6:310 (High School Credit for Non-District Experiences; Course Substitutions; Re-Entering Students), 7:60 (Residence), 7:70 (Attendance and Truancy), 7:100 (Health, Eye, and Dental Examinations; Immunizations; and Exclusion of Students), 7:340 (Student Records)