WHO CAN ATTEND PREKINDERGARTEN IN HISD?

To be eligible, a child must meet the following two criteria:

- Be four years of age on or before September 1 of the enrollment year
- Live within the boundaries of the Houston Independent School District, AND

Meet at least one of the criteria listed below:

- Be unable to speak or understand English, or
- Be economically disadvantaged, or
- Qualify for the National School Lunch Program to include all children who meet any eligibility criteria for Head Start, not only those who meet the low-income eligibility criteria for Head Start.
- The TEC, §5.001(4), defines educationally disadvantaged as "eligible to participate in the national free or reduced-price lunch program." Consequently, all children who are eligible for Head Start are eligible for free prekindergarten, based on their eligibility for the NSLP. [1][1]

WHY CAN’T ALL STUDENTS ATTEND HISD PREKINDERGARTEN? MY CHILD DOES NOT MEET THE CRITERIA AND I CAN’T AFFORD PRIVATE PREKINDERGARTEN.

The Texas Legislature determines eligibility requirements for free, public Prekindergarten in Texas. When the Texas legislature established the Prekindergarten program the intent was, and still is, to provide early learning experiences to students who are most at-risk for school failure. The eligibility is therefore limited. The legislature believes that a high-quality Prekindergarten program could mitigate the impact of the at-risk characteristics, thereby assisting these students to become school ready when they enter kindergarten.

WHAT MAGNET PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE IN HISD?

Prospective Prekindergarten students can be enrolled into the following Magnet programs:

- **Dual Language Program:** The dual language program provides instruction in English and Spanish. A combination of native Spanish speakers and native English speakers are taught together in an effort to develop full bilingualism and biliteracy for both groups of students. Magnet Programs: Wharton & Helms

- **Language Immersion Program:** Language Immersion programs are taught with a minimum of 50% to a maximum of 80% of daily instruction in the non-English language. Magnet Programs: Arabic Immersion & Mandarin Immersion.

- **Montessori Program:** The Montessori program emphasizes highly personalized learning for each child to develop his/her own interests and full potential. Every classroom is equipped with special materials designed to work with the whole child to develop social skills, emotional growth, physical coordination, and cognition. Magnet Programs: Blackshear, Garden Oaks Montessori, and Wilson Montessori.
**HOW DO I ENROLL MY CHILD INTO A MAGNET PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM IN HISD?**

Parent/Guardian can apply online at [www.hisdchoice.com](http://www.hisdchoice.com) or submit a completed paper application to the Office of School Choice. Paper applications are available at [houstonisd.org/Page/122068](http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/122068) or at your local HISD school and must be postmarked by December 7, 2018 to be considered for the lottery. A centralized lottery will be conducted for Magnet Pre-K programs that have more eligible Pre-K applicants than space available. Your child must be 4 years old by September 1st of the upcoming school year. To learn more about the magnet application process and timelines, visit [www.HoustonISD.org/SchoolChoice](http://www.HoustonISD.org/SchoolChoice).

**STEP 1**: Create an Account with an email at [http://hisdchoice.com/](http://hisdchoice.com/). Applicants can apply to as many as 5 choices. Select your school of choice and input your student’s information, address, parent information, and upload a state issued Birth Certificate. Once the application has been filled out, review your application and submit it electronically. An email will be sent to confirm your application.

**STEP 2**: To be eligible for enrollment in a HISD non-tuition based prekindergarten program, the applicant must upload additional documents to the application. The following documents are accepted online:

- Home Language Survey
- Income verification
- Homeless or Under Conservatorship (Student Assistance Questionnaire)
- Military Identification

**STEP 3**: Rank your prekindergarten applications in priority order, from first choice to last choice. Parents will be able to adjust the order of their choices through December 7. After December 7, choices will be locked into place.

**STEP 4**: On March 21st, parents will be notified of the outcome of their applications, the highest ranked program to which a child is accepted will be critical. All applications ranked below that choice will be dropped automatically. Any programs that are wait listed with a higher rank choice will remain active.

**STEP 5**: Applicants that receive an offered seat will have two weeks to accept the seat and make arrangements with the school to provide their proof of residence, sign the magnet entrance agreement, and provide supporting documentation from Step 2.

**STEP 6**: If your child is not eligible for the HISD non-tuition based prekindergarten program (See Step 2) or is not 4 years old by September 1st, and you have applied for a Magnet prekindergarten program for the 2019-2020 school year, your application will be labeled as “qualified pending” until after the first day of school. A “qualified pending” applicant will not be considered until after all Pre-K eligible students have been offered service and a determination of space availability has been made by the Office of School Choice.

**DOES HISD ENROLL 3-YEAR-OLD STUDENTS IN PREKINDERGARTEN?**

Campuses must enroll all eligible 4-year-old students first. If there are additional spots in Prekindergarten after all eligible and tuition paying 4-year-old students have been enrolled, applicants will be contacted by campus designated personnel for enrollment instructions.

**WHAT IS TUITION-BASED PREKINDERGARTEN?**

The state of Texas allows school districts to offer on a tuition basis or use other funds to provide full-day Prekindergarten classes to children not eligible for classes under Section 29.153. Districts must ensure that serving students who are not eligible for the program does not interfere with serving students who are eligible for the program. Tuition-based students can only be enrolled into an HISD Prekindergarten program once all eligible students have been enrolled on the first day of the enrollment school year. There is no guarantee a tuition-based program will be available. It is based on the enrollment of eligible students and that varies from year to year.

**EMPLOYEE PREFERENCE**

Campus-based employees who want to enroll their prekindergarten child(ren) at the campus at which they work for are eligible after all eligible non-tuition based Pre-K students have been enrolled.

**HOW WILL INELIGIBLE NON-TUITION APPLICANTS BE CONTACTED FOR ENROLLMENT**

Applicants will be contacted by campus designated personnel after all eligible prekindergarten students have enrolled on the first day of school. Only those students who have not already enrolled in another HISD campus will be allowed to accept the offer.
WHAT PROOF OF INCOME DO I NEED TO BRING TO REGISTER MY CHILD FOR PRE-K?

If your child qualifies as economically disadvantaged the following proof of income is acceptable:

- Current paycheck stub
- Letter from employer stating gross wages paid and how often they are paid
- Unemployment, Worker’s Compensation, or Disability payment stub

Acceptable documentation for self-employment income include:

- Business or farming documents such as ledger books and/or self-issued pay check stub
- Last year’s tax return

CAN I USE MY SNAP OR TANF CARD TO DOCUMENT ELIGIBILITY FOR MY CHILD TO ATTEND PRE-K?

Yes. All children in a SNAP or TANF household are categorically eligible to receive free meals.

When a household submits a complete application that contains: the name of the child, a current SNAP or TANF case number and an adult signature, the determining official must approve the child for free meals. No further proof of income is required. Lone Star Card account numbers are not acceptable SNAP case numbers on the application.

PRE-K TRANSFERS ARE ONLY VALID UNTIL A STUDENT TURNS 5 YEARS OLD

Pre-K Enrollment will not be renewed for students who will be five years of age on or before September 1st. Pre-K students NOT turning 5 years of age on or before September 1st will automatically be renewed.

CONTINUING TO KINDERGARTEN

A Pre-K Magnet transfer will not be renewed after the child turns 5 years of age on or before September 1st. Students will have to reapply for a lottery Kindergarten Magnet seat.

SIBLING PRIORITY IS IN THE ENTRY GRADE

Up to 25% of available slots will be awarded first to students applying to an entry grade level who have a sibling attending the same program the year the student is applying for. If there are more students with siblings than the 25% of spaces allowed, they will be placed at the top of the waitlist in the relative order they were selected from the lottery.

Entry grades are defined as Kindergarten, 6th, and 9th grades. For Montessori, Language Immersion and Dual Language programs, sibling priority is given at K entry levels. For K-8 Multi-level programs, sibling priority is given at K and 6 entry grade level.