

Prekindergarten Enrollment

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHO CAN ATTEND PREKINDERGARTEN IN HISD?

- Be four years of age on or before September 1 of a given school year
- Live within the boundaries of the Houston Independent School District **AND** meet at least one of the following criteria/eligibilities:
- 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] Public Law 110-134, which amended 42 USC, §1758, or
- Be homeless, or
- Child is or ever has been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services following an adversary hearing held as provided by Section 262.201, Family code, or
- Be the child of an active-duty member of the U.S. military or one who has been killed, injured, or missing in action while on active duty.
- Be the child of a person eligible for the Star of Texas of Award as (1) a peace officer as defined in Section 3106.002, Government Code. (2) a firefighter under Section 3106.003, Government Code. (3) an emergency medical first responder under Section 3106.004, Government Code. The Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division honors recipients annually in September. A list of past honorees may be viewed on the Criminal Justice Division webpage.

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 believed 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 PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE IN HISD?

Upon applying, Parents/Guardians will fill out a Home Language Survey to determine which type of program their child will be placed. Prekindergarten students can be enrolled into the following programs:

- **English Program:** The English program is provided to students whose primary language is English. All instruction in academic subjects and non-academic subjects are delivered in English.
- **English as a Second Language Program:** The ESL program is offered to students with a home language other than English or Spanish. Instruction is provided in English. Teachers in an ESL classroom have specific state certification and training to work with students learning English.
- **Transitional Bilingual Program:** This program provides instruction in Spanish to students whose primary language is Spanish based on a Spanish language assessment. Students will be instructed in English oral and academic language development and non-academic subjects such as art, music, and physical education.
- **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.

- **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. Applications for the Montessori program must be submitted through the HISD Magnet office.

HOW DO I ENROLL MY CHILD INTO A PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM IN HISD?

Begin by completing a Pre-K Application during the fall and spring semester before the academic school year begins. Here are the Pre-K Application Phases that will guide you on when to apply:

- Phase 1 (Sept. 27 – Feb. 28, 2020) Qualified in-district PK 4, TEA Eligible applications received during this phase will be entered into lotteries, if the school has more applicants than classroom spots
- Phase 2 (Feb. 29 – onward) Qualified in-district PK 4, TEA Eligible applications will be considered on a space available basis
- Phase 3 (June 21 – onward) TEA Non-eligible PK 4 tuition and TEA Eligible PK 3 applications will be considered on a space available basis

STEP 1: Find schools you would like your child to attend to as you will have the option to select up to ten schools in the application, including five magnet schools. If you are unsure which schools are located near you use the School Zone Finder and click on Map of All Schools to find schools near you.

STEP 2: Fill out the application at www.Choosehisd.com Be sure to select the schools in the order of preference in case you are not able to get in your first choice. Upload the following documents:

- Birth Certificate (state issued)
- Photocopy of parent ID
- Proof of residence (utility bill with address)
- Proof of income

STEP 3: Expect to hear back from the school when you are accepted or from the School Choice Office, if something is missing in your application. If your child has been offered a seat, you have two weeks to provide proof of residence and sign the entrance agreement.

- On June 1st notifications of acceptance for Phase 1 TEA eligible PK 4 will be sent to parents via USPS mail and it will be viewable online in the application
- On June 21st notifications of acceptance for Phase 3 TEA non-eligible PK 4 tuition and TEA eligible PK 3 will be considered on a space available basis

STEP 4: Once you have secured enrollment, find out important information concerning the following:

- When your child will meet their teacher
- If after school care is an option at the school
- School hours
- Attendance requirements
- Drop off and pick up procedures

If you register your child after school begins you will need to bring any paperwork from the previous school attended.

DOES HISD PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION FOR PREKINDERGARTEN STUDENTS?

No, HISD does not provide transportation for Prekindergarten students.

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 classrooms after all eligible and tuition paying 4-year-olds have been enrolled, campuses can enroll eligible 3-year old.

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 after June 21st. 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. Parents/Guardians will need to complete the PK Application on a space-available basis. On June 21st notifications of acceptance will be considered for PK 4 tuition students.

WHAT PROOF OF INCOME DO I NEED TO SUBMIT 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.

ARE ENRICHMENT OR EXTENDED DAY (AFTER SCHOOL CARE) OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO PRE-K STUDENTS?

After school care is optional for campuses in HISD. You will need to contact the individual campus you are interested in to find out if they offer after care for pre-K students.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD DOES NOT GET IN TO THE FIRST SCHOOL I SELECTED?

There are no zoning requirements in HISD for pre-K students. Parents/Guardians can select up to 10 schools in the application ranking them from the first to last choice. Eligible prekindergarten applicants with older siblings already enrolled in the school should be given preference for admission.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU NEED HELP WITH YOUR APPLICATION?

Please contact the Office of School Choice at studenttransfer@houstonisd.org or call 713-556-6734.