

BOARD REPORT

Date: February 25, 2021

To: Board of Directors, Academy of Alameda

From: Matt Huxley, Executive Director

Re: Board Report – Early Enrollment of Kindergarten Student

Requested Action

To approve the early admittance of a child who has not yet turned five (5) years old by September 1, 2021, in Kindergarten at AoA for the 2021-2022 school year, by determining that it is in the best interests of the child. Additionally, for the Board to approve the creation of a Board Policy and specific criterion regarding early admittance of kindergarten children who have not yet turned five (5) years old by September 1, of a given school year as well as a notice that will be provided to any family seeking such early admittance.

Background & Legal Requirements

The family of two current AoA students is seeking to enroll their third child who will not have his fifth (5th) birthday until September 16, 2021, in kindergarten at AoA for the 2021-2022 school year.

Pursuant to Education Code § 48000, a child shall be admitted to a kindergarten maintained by a school district or charter school at the beginning of a school year, or at a later time in the same year, if the child will have their fifth (5th) birthday on or before September 1st of that given school year. For any student with a birthdate beyond September 1st, the student can be admitted to a transitional kindergarten program maintained by the charter school or not be allowed to enroll until the following year.

However, pursuant to Education Code § 48000(b), the governing board of a school district [or charter school] maintaining one or more kindergartens may, on a case-by-case basis, admit to a kindergarten a child having attained the age of five (5) years at any time during the school year with the approval of the parent or guardian, subject to the following conditions:

- (1) The governing board of the school district determines that the admittance is in the best interests of the child; and
- (2) The parent or guardian [of the child] is given information regarding the advantages and disadvantages and any other explanatory information about the effect of this early admittance.

Accordingly, the family in question would like the Board to utilize this process and approve the early admittance of their child.

Note that pursuant to Section 48000, the child would be permitted to start attending AoA at the beginning of the school year, but would not be able to collect ADA (Average Daily Attendance) until the child's fifth (5th) birth date occurs on September 16, 2021.

To assist the Board in reaching this determination, I am requesting the Board to adopt specific criteria by which students are accepted and approved for early admittance. Such criteria would govern this process for each student, as determined and approved by the Board on a case-by-case basis.

Other school districts base early admissions on test results, maturity of the child, or preschool records in order to be consistent with the early admission policy and to avoid being challenged by

parents/guardians of whose children were denied early admission. The specific criteria developed is a decision to be made by the Board and/or delegated. Essentially, it is a local control decision as to how this is accomplished, whether it is in writing, and whether there is an appeals process if the Board denies the early admission of a student.

In this case, the family has been interviewed by the K-5 Principal and Executive Director and has provided proof that their child attended pre-school for the past two years. They also sent their son's IXL math and reading assessment scores that indicate that the student is already at kindergarten grade level. Both the School Principal and Executive Director believe the student to be academically well qualified and possess the social emotional skills and qualities to be admitted to kindergarten for the 2021/22 school year.

Moreover, if approved by the Board, AoA will not claim Average Daily Attendance ("ADA") for the child until the first date of the child's attendance at AoA, which would not be until September 16.

Advantages & Disadvantages of Early Admittance

It is important that families are informed of both the possible advantages and disadvantages associated with early kindergarten admittance. The school principal will meet with the family of the child to review them prior to determining if the child should be considered for early admittance.

ADVANTAGES

Academic Readiness

Providing a challenging environment and enriching curriculum when a child is ready for the next stage of learning is very important. Hitting the "window" of excitement and readiness by enrolling a child when s/he is excited and ready to go to "big school" is a positive.

Social and Emotional Maturity

Some children are socially and emotionally mature enough to start school early.

- They often prefer the company of older children
- They frequently have fewer behavior problems when their classmates are older than they are.

Physical Maturity

- At times a child's physical development may lag behind his/her emotional and intellectual development.
- Waiting for his/her physical development to catch up can cause problems for them academically and socially if they are placed in an environment that is not intellectually stimulating or challenging.

DISADVANTAGES

Academic Readiness

When children enter school and are not ready, they may...

- Develop negative self-esteem that impacts both their current and future academic careers.

Social and Emotional Maturity

- Most four-year-olds are not mature enough to start school. Social immaturity can make it difficult for a child to interact appropriately with other children resulting in negative relationships with their peers

Typical Kindergarten Expectations: The ability to pay attention to the teachers and staff, follow directions, sit and listen to stories, stay focused on a task, and understand the difference between work and play.

- If the child is immature emotionally, socially or behaviorally, placing them in kindergarten early may be setting him/her child up for failure or frustration.
- If a child has demonstrated in preschool or daycare an inability to sit and attend to a lesson, get along well with peers, or transition easily from one activity to another, s/he may be put in a situation for which he is not ready, and it may set his entire educational experience off to a negative start.

Physical Maturity

A child may not be physically ready for school.

Note: Physical readiness includes gross and fine motor skill development as well as physical size.

- Children who start school early are typically smaller than their peers and may encounter social problems if the size discrepancy is significant.
- They may not have developed the fine motor skills to be able hold a pencil properly and write at grade level.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, I recommend that the Board approve the early admittance of Student ID # 02-25-21.1. Additionally, I recommend that the Board approve the creation of a Board Policy and specific criterion to govern the early admittance of children to kindergarten to be brought before the Board at a later date.

If the Board approves the recommendation, we will work with Young, Minney & Corr, LLP to create a Board Policy with specific criteria to help determine the early admittance (or not) of any other children who may seek early enrollment in kindergarten at AOA in the future. Moreover, we will finalize the draft notice that AoA will send to any families expressing interest and/or seeking early admittance for their child/children.