

LEGAL MAILBAG – MARCH 12, 2026



By Attorney Thomas B. Mooney, Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut

The “Legal Mailbag Question of the Week” is a regular feature of the CAS Weekly NewsBlast. We invite readers to submit short, law-related questions of practical concern to school administrators. Each week, we will select a question and publish an answer. While these answers cannot be considered formal legal advice, they may be of help to you and your colleagues. We may edit your questions, and we will not identify the authors. Please submit your questions to: legalmailbag@casciac.org.

Dear Legal Mailbag,

I am the principal of an elementary school in a town that has one thing in common with Lake Wobegon, Minnesota – “all the children are above average.” As a result, many parents here want to accelerate the education of their children, and we have been inundated with requests from parents that we admit their children to kindergarten early.

In recent years, the rules for admitting children to kindergarten have changed a couple of times, and I am having a hard time keeping up. Is there any hope that the General Assembly will unburden us from what has been?

Signed,
Dare I Hope

Dear Hope:

In talking about actions of the General Assembly, it is the rare occasion when Legal Mailbag can share good news (at least for educators). Today is such a day. Effective July 1, 2026, parents will only have the right to request early admission of their children to kindergarten if their local or regional board of education voluntarily adopts an “early admission policy” that permits parents to make such requests. Moreover, effective July 1, 2027, boards of education will no longer have that option, and children will be eligible to attend kindergarten only if they reach age five on or before September 1, period. Given your obvious intellectual curiosity, Legal Mailbag will give you the full story.

From 1988 until 2023, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-15c provided in relevant part:

The public schools shall be open to all children five years of age and over who reach age five on or before the first day of January of any school year, . . . , provided boards of education may, by vote at a meeting duly called, admit to any school children under five years of age.

In 2023, however, the law was changed. The General Assembly first passed Public Act 23-159 to push the date for children to enter kindergarten back to September 1. Before this change even became effective, however, the law was changed again with Public Act 24-208, effective July 1, 2024, which added the following procedure permitting parents to seek early admission of their children to kindergarten:

. . . provided a child who has not reached the age of five on or before the first day of September of the school year may be admitted (1) upon a written request by the parent or guardian of such child to the principal of the school in which such child would be enrolled, and (2) following an assessment of such child, conducted by such principal and an appropriate certified staff member of the school, to ensure that admitting such child is developmentally appropriate.

This change in the law raised a number of questions and imposed new responsibilities on school officials. For example, could a parent whose child has not even reached age five by January 1 in a given year (the old standard) request assessment and early admission of that child? When would school officials be justified in denying a parent's request? Given these questions and the new obligations that were imposed effective July 1, 2024, the changes in this statute made by Public Act 26-1 will be welcome to some educators.

Effective July 1, 2026, the provision requiring individual assessment of a underage child's readiness for school upon a parent's request is limited with the new emphasized limitation in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-15c as follows:

. . . provided a child who has not reached the age of five on or before the first day of September of the school year may be admitted ***if the local or regional board of education adopts an early admission policy that permits such child to be admitted*** (1) upon a written request by the parent or guardian of such child to the principal of the school in which such child would be enrolled, and (2) following an assessment of such child, conducted by such principal and an appropriate certified staff member of the school, to ensure that admitting such child is developmentally appropriate.

Given this change, in the coming year parents will have the option of requesting early admission of their child (and school officials will have the concomitant obligation to conduct the related assessment) only if the board of education adopts an early admission policy.

Finally, effective July 1, 2027, the option for an early admission policy is eliminated altogether. A further change in the statute made by Public Act 26-1 removes from Section 10-15c all of the language quoted above about children who have not reached age five on or before September 1 of a given year. On behalf of school principals and others, Legal Mailbag hopes that this new bright line rule requiring that a child must reach age five on or before September 1 to be eligible for kindergarten will carry forward without change.