

Exhibit 2: National Policies on School Entry and Promotion

Reported by National Research Coordinators

Country	Official Policy on Age of Entry to Primary School	Based on Parental Discretion, Usual Practice on Age of Entry to Primary School	Age of Entry Policy Has Changed Within Past 10 Years	Description of Policy Change	Policy on Promotion and Retention in Grades 1–8
Armenia	Children must be 6.5 years old by the end of December to begin school the following September.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–4; promotion dependent on academic progress for Grades 5–9.
Australia	Varies by state, but generally children must begin school by age 6.	Most children begin school when they are 4.5–5 years old, but some wait until the compulsory age, either on advice from preschool staff or on the judgment of parents, usually because of maturity.	Yes	All states include a full year of preprimary education during primary school.	Varies by state, but generally automatic promotion for Grades 1–8.
Bahrain	Children must be 6 years old to begin school in September.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion is rare and only applies to students in Grades 1–4.
Belgium (Flemish)	Children must begin school in September during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents can keep their child in kindergarten until age 7, with approval from an independent counseling center. Homeschooling is also practiced. Children with serious disabilities can be exempt from compulsory education.	No	n/a	In Grades 1–6 the final decision is formally made by the parents, but in fact many schools stipulate that some children repeat a grade. In Grade 7–8 the decision is made by the school, although one alternative can be to change to another track without repeating.
Botswana	Children must be 6 years old by the end of June to begin in January of the same calendar year.	Children from remote areas or disadvantaged children may begin later than age 6. Children enter private schools at age 5.	No	n/a	Up to 12.5% retention allowed in each class for Grades 1–7; automatic promotion for Grades 8–10. Students should not repeat more than three grades. Retention and accelerated progression decisions are made after a teacher, school, and parent consultation.
Bulgaria	Children must begin school during the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	Children may begin at the age of 6 with parental/guardian discretion.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–4. In Grades 5–12, students who receive a grade of Poor (2) are required to pass a correction exam. If they fail the exam, they will have to repeat the grade level.
Canada	Varies by province, but most children begin school at the age of 6.	Practice varies by province, but generally parents have the option of accelerating or delaying enrollment by one year. Some parents opt to homeschool their children.	No	While the official policy has not changed in the majority of provinces across Canada, it has been amended in a few provinces.	Varies by province, but the majority of Canadian provinces do not have policies on the promotion and retention of students across Grades 1–8.
Chile	Children must be 6 years old by March 31 of the year they begin school.	Principals are allowed some discretion regarding the admission of children who will turn 6 after March 31 but before June 30.	No	n/a	Promotion is dependent on academic progress in all grades.
Chinese Taipei	Children must be 6 years old to begin school in September.	Parents can apply for early enrollment to elementary schools. Legal representatives can apply to delay enrollment to elementary schools for children with disabilities.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–8. For intellectually gifted students, parents can apply for promotion to accelerate children through the grades. However, a child must spend at least 5 years in elementary school.
Croatia	Children can begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Children typically begin primary school at age 7 because their parents feel they will benefit from being more mature.	No	n/a	Promotion is dependent on academic progress.

SOURCE: IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study – TIMSS 2015

A dash (–) indicates data not provided.

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Cyprus	Children can begin school if they are 5.75 years old before September 1.	Parents can apply to delay enrollment of children for one year with the approval of the Director of Primary Education.	No	n/a	Depending on academic or socio-emotional progress, a student may be required to repeat a particular grade in primary school. Parents may request that a student complete an additional year of primary school. Promotion in Grades 7–8 is dependent on academic progress and minimum attendance requirements.
Czech Republic	Children must be 6 years old to begin school in September.	On one hand, parents may request that children born after September 1 be allowed to enroll at age 5 with pedagogical and psychological certification. On the other hand, about 22% of students every year receive permission to postpone enrollment for one year.	No	n/a	Promotion in all grades is dependent on academic progress and minimum attendance requirements. Students may only repeat one grade at the primary level and one at the lower secondary level.
Denmark	Children can begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents may request early enrollment for mature children whose 5th birthdays are before October 1 from the school principal. Parents may also request a one-year postponement of enrollment for developmentally challenged children from the municipal council.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion through the Folkeskole.
Egypt	Children must be 6 years old by the end of September to begin school.	Follows policy	No	n/a	No policy
England	Children must begin school during the calendar year of their 5th birthday.	Most children begin school the September after their 4th birthday. Parents may request that their child's entry to school is deferred until later in the school year and up until the compulsory school age.	Yes	Schools are now required to have a place for children in the September following their 4th birthday.	No policy. In practice all schools apply automatic promotion approach.
Finland	Children must begin school during the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	It is possible for parents to enroll children one year earlier or one year later than the official policy.	No	n/a	A pupil may be retained in a grade if he or she has had failing performance in one or more subjects or subject groups in the syllabus for that grade. The pupil is to be provided with an opportunity, without participating in instruction, to demonstrate that he or she has achieved an acceptable level of knowledge and skills.
France	Children must begin school in September of the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	In rare cases it is possible for parents and/or teachers to request early enrollment for academically advanced and mature children or to request a one-year delay in enrollment for immature children.	No	n/a	The board of teachers, including the principal, recommend retention or promotion for each child based on academic performance. Parental input is considered. During elementary school, a student may repeat or skip only one class.

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Georgia	Children must be 6 years old to begin school.	Follows policy	Yes	Until 2012 children who were 6 years old by the end of the calendar year entered primary school that year. From 2012–2015, children who were 5 years old by the end of the calendar year entered primary school that year.	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–4; promotion is dependent on academic progress for Grades 5–8.
Germany	Varies by state, but generally children must have reached their 6th birthday before a statutory qualifying date (usually between June 30 and September 30) to begin school on August 1.	Varies by state, but generally, parents may request early enrollment from the local primary school or request deferred enrollment from the school administration for children with demonstrated physical or mental disabilities.	Yes	Policies regulating exceptions to the start of compulsory education in Germany, including whether and to what extent parents have discretion, vary by state. Some states have implemented different policy changes in the last 10 years, including flexible school entry, school deferment, and school choice.	Automatic promotion for Grade 1; promotion policies differ between states for subsequent grades, but are generally dependent on academic progress.
Hong Kong SAR	Children begin school if they are 5.75 years old before September 1.	Some parents choose not to enroll their children according to policy.	No	n/a	No policy for Grades 1–8. Schools may set up rules concerning the promotion and retention of students, but the Education Bureau (EDB) will prescribe a maximum number of times a student may repeat a grade.
Hungary	Children must be 6 years old before August 31 to begin school that year.	Children may remain in preschool for an extra year upon recommendation from a committee of experts.	Yes	Until January 1, 2013, children began school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday if their birthday was before May 31. Parents could request that enrollment be postponed until the child was 7–8 years old.	Promotion is dependent on academic progress in all grades.
Indonesia	Children must be 6 years old to begin school in August.	Parents may request early enrollment for mature students. In rural areas, it is common for children to enroll at age 7.	No	n/a	No policy on the promotion and retention of students in Grades 1–5; at Grade 6, students must pass an examination to enter the secondary school system.
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	Children must be 6 years old by September 21 to begin school that year.	Parents may enroll their children at age 7.	Yes	–	Students with unsatisfactory grades in June take a comprehensive examination in September to determine promotion or retention. For Grades 7–8, students must repeat classes they do not pass rather than be retained a grade level.

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Ireland	Children can begin school (ISCED 0) at age 4, but must begin school by age 6.	Most children begin primary school at age 4–5, the first two years of which are pre-primary grades.	No	n/a	Students may only repeat a year for educational reasons and in exceptional circumstances.
Israel	Children begin school the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents may apply for delayed enrollment and have the final say in enrollment decisions.	No	n/a	Retention only in exceptional cases.
Italy	Children begin school the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents have discretion over early or delayed enrollment.	No	n/a	Retention in Grades 1–5 is possible only for very serious reasons.
Japan	Children must be 6 years old by April 1 to begin school.	Follows policy	No	n/a	No policy
Jordan	Children must be at least 5.75 years old by September 1 to begin school.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Dependent on academic progress in Arabic and mathematics for Grades 1–3, with parental consent; dependent on academic progress for Grades 4–8. Students should not repeat a grade more than twice. Students absent more than 20% of school days without official permission are required to repeat the grade regardless of the total number of repeats.
Kazakhstan	Children must begin school at age 6.	Parents can delay enrollment for one year.	Yes	–	–
Korea, Rep. of	Children must be 6 years old by the end of December to begin school the following March.	Parents can decide to enroll academically advanced children one year earlier or postpone enrollment for one year for health reasons with the permission of the school superintendent.	Yes	Children with birthdays in January and February begin school in March of the following year.	Dependent on attendance for Grades 1–8.
Kuwait	Children must be 6 years old by March 15 to begin school that calendar year.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Until 2013 there was automatic promotion for students from Grades 1–3; for Grades 4–12 promotion was based on the academic progress of the student. From 2013 on, the results of short examinations in Grades 1–3 determine promotion.
Lebanon	Children must be 6 years old by the end of June to begin school the following September.	Parental discretion is not allowed in private schools. In public schools there may be special cases authorized by the Ministry of Education.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–6; dependent upon academic performance for Grades 7–8.
Lithuania	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	Parents can request early enrollment or request to delay enrollment by one year.	Yes	Policy was changed in 2010 to recommend that children enter school at age 7.	No policy, but decisions may be made at the school level.
Malaysia	Children must be at least 6 years old to begin school.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–8.
Malta	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 5th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion. Retention only in exceptional cases and after parents have given consent.

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Morocco	Children must be 6 years old to begin school.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Promotion depends on academic progress for both primary and secondary grades.
Netherlands	Children must start kindergarten on the first day of the month after their 5th birthday.	Most children begin kindergarten when they are 4 years old and begin primary school when they are 6 years old. Some children start primary school later if the school thinks that the child would benefit from being more mature. Parents are involved in this decision, but the school has the final say.	No	n/a	No policy
New Zealand	Children can begin school at age 5, but must be enrolled in primary school by their 6th birthday.	Most children begin school on or soon after their 5th birthday.	No	n/a	Generally automatic promotion, but can be subject to parent/principal decisions.
Northern Ireland	Children must be 4 years old by July 1 to begin school in September.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for all grades.
Norway	Children must begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for all grades.
Oman	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–4; promotion dependent on academic progress for Grades 5–8.
Poland	Children must begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	From 2012–2015, parents could decide whether to send their children to school at age 6 or age 7.	Yes	Until 2012 children began school during the calendar year of their 7th birthday. In 2012 the school entry age was lowered by a year. From 2012–2015, parents could decide whether to send their child to school at age 6 or age 7.	Promotion for Grades 1–12 is dependent on academic progress. In Grades 1–3 promotion is generally automatic. Retention is rare and must be justified.
Portugal	Children must be 6 years old by September 15 to begin school in that calendar year.	Parents or legal guardians can request that children who will be 6 years old between September 16 and December 31 be allowed to enroll in primary education in the school year of their 6th birthday.	No	n/a	Students are not retained in Grade 1; students can be retained in any grade from Grades 2–12.
Qatar	Children must be 6 years old by the end of December to begin school in September.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Promotion and retention are based on academic progress for Grades 1–12.
Russian Federation	Children begin school when they are at least 6.5 years old by September 1 of that school year.	Children under 6.5 years old may begin school with consent of the parents and school principal. Parents may delay entry until age 7 or older if they want the child to be more mature, or for health reasons.	No	n/a	Promotion for Grades 1–8 depends on satisfactory academic progress and successful defense of a group (Grades 3–7) or individual (Grade 8) project. Unsatisfactory academic progress or project can result in the student being conditionally moved to the next grade, retained, or trained on an adapted or an individual program. Schools are responsible for selecting a solution.

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Saudi Arabia	Children must be 6 years old by the end of August to begin school in September.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Promotion and retention are based on individual assessment for Grades 1–6; based on test results for Grades 7–12.
Serbia	Children must be 6.5–7 years old to begin school.	Schools may recommend one year of continued preparatory preschool for children not considered school ready. If the child is over 7.5 years old, and due to illness or other differences did not enroll in first grade, he or she may enroll in the first or other appropriate grade based on the results of testing.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for Grade 1, generally automatic for Grades 2–3 except per parent request; in Grades 4–7 students failing two or more subjects must pass makeup exams to be promoted.
Singapore	According to the Compulsory Education Act, children must begin school in the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	Parents may seek a deferral of registration for medical reasons or if the child is homeschooled.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–4; dependent on academic progress and principals' discretion for Grade 5; dependent on academic progress (national examinations) for Grade 6; and dependent on academic progress (school-based examinations) for Grades 7–8.
Slovak Republic	Children must begin school on September 1 if their 6th birthday is before August 31.	Children may begin school early or after an approved delay based on psychological tests and professional recommendations.	No	n/a	Promotion is dependent on academic progress. Students failing 1–2 required subjects may be promoted by passing makeup examinations.
Slovenia	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents can request early enrollment for children who have their 6th birthday in January of the next calendar year or request a one-year delay in enrollment for medical or developmental reasons.	No	n/a	Promotion is automatic for regular students in Grades 1–9, and dependent on academic progress for students with special needs who cannot achieve the minimal standards.
South Africa	Children must be 5 years old and have their 6th birthday by June 30 of the next year to begin school mid–January.	Follows policy	Yes	The National Curriculum Statements for Grades R–9 and 10–12 were combined into a single document that provides clearer specification on a term-by-term basis, including the promotion requirements.	Students may only be retained once within each of three phases—Foundation Phase (Grades 1–3), Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6), and Senior Phase (7–9).
Spain	Children must begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Almost all children begin kindergarten at age 3, even though it is not compulsory.	No	n/a	Students can be retained for one year during Grades 1–6, but students with special needs can be retained twice. Students that do not make sufficient academic progress in Grades 7 and 8 can be retained in both grades.
Sweden	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	In special cases students may begin school when they are 6 or 8 years old.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–9.
Thailand	Children must be 6 years old by May 16 to begin school the following academic year.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Retention is based on academic performance. Students who demonstrate above grade level intelligence and knowledge can skip to a higher grade.

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Turkey	Children must be 5.5 years old to begin school in September.	If parents prefer, children ages 5.5–5.75 can delay enrollment for one year. Children ages 5.75–6 can delay enrollment for one year for medical or developmental reasons.	Yes	In 2011 the beginning age for primary school was changed from 6 to 5.5 years old.	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–4; dependent on academic success and attendance for Grades 5–8.
United Arab Emirates	Children can begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday, but must begin by age 8.	Parents may delay enrollment, but students may not be older than 8 years old on December 31 of their entry year.	Yes	Children were able to begin school at age 5.5, but now must wait until the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Automatic promotion for Grades 1–5; dependent on academic progress for Grades 6–12.
United States	Each state requires parents to send their children to school between set ages. Required entry is often between 5 to 7 years old, exact age varies by state.	Children typically begin kindergarten at age 5.	No	n/a	Varies by state

Benchmarking Participants—Responses Pertain to Benchmarking Provinces/Emirates/States

Buenos Aires, Argentina	Children must be 6 years old by the end of June to begin school in March of the same year.	Follows policy	No	n/a	n/a
Ontario, Canada	Students can begin school in September if they have their 6th birthday before December 31.	Parents may enroll their children in junior kindergarten at age 4 or senior kindergarten at age 5. Some students may start school at the junior kindergarten level at 3 years old if their birthday is between September 1 and December 31. In addition, some parents homeschool their children.	No	n/a	Promotion from Grade 8 to secondary school is dependent on academic achievement. In cases where promotion may be in question, the decision to promote or retain students is usually made by the principal of the school in accordance with school board policy. When promotion is denied, there is an appeal process.
Quebec, Canada	Children must be 6 years old by September 30 to begin in September of that calendar year.	Follows policy	No	n/a	School boards determine promotion. The Ministry sets rules for obtaining diplomas.
Abu Dhabi, UAE	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Promotion and retention decisions are made by the principal of the school in consultation with staff members.
Dubai, UAE	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	Yes	The age at which children begin school changed in 2014 from age 5 to age 6.	Varies by school type
Florida, US	Children must begin school if they have their 6th birthday by February 1 of that school year.	Children who are 5 years old on or before September 1 of the school year are eligible for admission to public kindergarten during that school year, based on rules prescribed by the school board. Parents may choose whether or not to enroll their children in kindergarten. School superintendents may authorize certificates of exemptions from school attendance requirements in certain situations.	No	n/a	Districts determine promotion and retention policies in Grades 1–8. Promotion to Grade 4 depends on the student scoring Level 2 or higher on the statewide English Language Arts assessment required for Grade 3. Starting in the 2014–2015 school year, there is a required examination that is based on Grade 9 entrance standards in the state of Florida. Students must pass the examination in order to graduate from high school.