



Engage, Equip, Empower

Guide to Early Entrance

Early Entrance Criteria

Five by August 1

A child must be five years of age to enroll in kindergarten. Ohio law allows school districts to determine the kindergarten entrance date (either August 1 or September 30). **For Bexley City Schools, a child must turn five by August 1 to be eligible for kindergarten enrollment.**

Referral for Early Entrance

If the child's birthday falls between August 1 and the following January 1, the parent/guardian may make a referral for early entrance to kindergarten by completing the district's application. **If the child will not be five by January 1 of the year of desired enrollment, then the referral must come from a district educator, a certified preschool teacher, a physician, or a psychologist who knows the child (Ohio Revised Code 3321.01).**

Early Entrance Consideration

The law requires the local Board of Education to develop policy for early entrance consideration (see JEBA, Early Entrance to Kindergarten). Early entrance may be a way to meet the needs of the exceptional child who is both academically ready and developmentally mature: Early entrance is viewed as a way of meeting a child's needs.

Early entrance is considered a grade-level acceleration. Ohio law requires school districts to use a standardized testing program and an acceleration assessment process approved by the Ohio Department of Education to determine a child's readiness for early entrance. The district uses the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) (3rd Ed.) to guide data collection and review for determining early admission. This process includes an initial screener of cognitive ability: The child must attain a required score in order to be considered as a potential applicant for early entrance and for the district to continue the process, which includes other data collection.

Screening and Eligibility for Further Testing

For current residents of Bexley, applications for early entrance should be submitted and received by the principal of the child's respective school starting in January and by March 30 for the assessment process to be completed by the end of the current school year and before the new school year starts.

For the child who has been screened and determined eligible for further assessment, the principal will initiate further data collection and the formation of an acceleration committee to review all data and

determine if early entrance is appropriate for the child. This process may take up to two months to complete. The acceleration committee will include the principal, a kindergarten teacher, a gifted intervention specialist, a school counselor, and a school psychologist. A meeting with the parent/guardian will be scheduled to discuss the results of the evaluation process, and at this time, a written summary will be provided.

Appeals

The acceleration committee makes the decision for early entrance. The decision of the acceleration committee may be appealed in writing to the superintendent within 30 days of the parent/guardian receiving the results of the evaluation. The superintendent will review the appeal and provide a decision within 10 days of receiving the written appeal. The superintendent's decision will be final.

Written Acceleration Plan

If a child is recommended for early entrance, the acceleration committee will develop a Written Acceleration Plan to be in place for 45 days from the start of the school year. The child's kindergarten teacher will oversee the implementation of the acceleration plan, which serves to monitor the child's adjustment to early entrance. The acceleration committee will meet before the end of the 45 days to recommend additional supports if needed. The parent/guardian may also request in writing that the child be withdrawn from this accelerated placement.

Is Early Entrance the Best Choice for My Child?

For the Exceptional Child

Early entrance is for the exceptional child who is both academically and developmentally mature when compared to other children of the same chronological age. Early entrance should be viewed as a means of meeting that child's needs. Admission is determined appropriate based on evidence collected that shows that this placement is highly appropriate for the child who displays this type of maturity.

Even though a child may have a lot of ability, the child still may not be ready for kindergarten. Some children may appear exceptional simply because of their access to opportunities (e.g., enrollment in preschool programs, parents working with them on skills or in providing them with access to learning materials). However, there is a difference between ability that comes from early learning opportunities and exceptionality that is because the child is developmentally advanced when compared with the child's same age peers.

If a child is to be referred for early entrance, it is important that all stakeholders (educators, parents/guardians, and child) are supportive of this decision before the assessment process begins. Careful consideration should be given before making the application for early entrance:

Maturity:

- Is my child capable of working in a classroom setting with children who may be one year older than my child?
- Will my child be frustrated by this placement?
- What are the possible long-term impacts for my child as my child progresses through elementary, middle and high school (e.g., beginning college at a younger age or considering physical size for athletics)?

- Is early entrance a need or a want? Early entrance is not a replacement for child care.
- Do I understand the expectations for students in kindergarten today?

Exceptionalities:

Is my child advanced beyond other children in these ways:

- Understands meanings and use of words better than other children of my child's age?
- Is curious about many things and asks questions often?
- Is very good at working puzzles or solving problems?
- Has a great sense of humor and understands jokes more than other children of my child's age?
- Has a good memory and remembers details of conversations or stories?
- Is interested in difficult concepts such as time and space?
- Concentrates on certain activities much longer than other children of my child's age?
- Reads (and understands text) in picture books or chapter books?
- Figures out math-related problems better than other children of my child's age?
- Has excellent fine motor skills when compared with other children of my child's same age (e.g., my child can write letters uppercase and lowercase)?

Expectations for Today's Kindergarten Students

Kindergarten has changed considerably over the past decade. Today's kindergarten students are engaged in a rigorous instructional program aligned to state standards with the purpose of preparing today's students for a world that is rapidly changing. For more information about kindergarten readiness, visit the Ohio Department of Education website:

[Ohio Department of Education](#) > Topics > Early Learning > Kindergarten for topics "Academic Acceleration of Advanced Learners," "Kindergarten Readiness Checklist," and "The Young Gifted Child."

Whole Grade Acceleration

Early entrance to kindergarten is considered an acceleration by a whole grade. Acceleration is typically addressed through gifted education. The process for acceleration consideration is addressed in the State of Ohio's *Model Student Acceleration Policy*. According to the Ohio Revised Code (3324.01), "gifted" means students who perform or show potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared to others of their age, experience or environment and who are identified under Division (A), (B), (C), or (D) of Section 3324.03 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Early entrance is not an evaluation to determine "readiness." State and local policies require the child's ability to far exceed that of the average kindergarten student. Very few children qualify for early entrance to kindergarten. A child may behave like other age-eligible kindergarten students but still may not be able to pass the stringent early entrance requirements.

Applying for Early Entrance to Kindergarten

Timeline

If you believe that your child may be a good candidate for early entrance, submit the application starting in January and **by March 30**. The principal of your child's prospective building must receive the application by this date or the application will not be processed.

If your child qualifies for further testing beyond an initial screener, the district needs at least 30 days, in the current school year, to collect additional data and for the acceleration committee to review the data and make a recommendation. Admission to early entrance will be communicated to parents/guardians prior to the end of the current school year.

Initial Screening > Further Testing and Data Collection

The process for consideration begins with an initial screening using an Ohio Department of Education approved instrument. The child must score at least one standard deviation above the mean on this cognitive ability assessment. Further testing will occur if the child attains this requisite score.

An observation by a district representative (elementary school counselor and/or school psychologist) of your child in your child's preschool setting may be scheduled. Parents will be contacted if this observation is needed. While some children may be cognitively ready for kindergarten, they may not be developmentally ready. This additional information may be needed to assess the social and emotional skills necessary to be successful in a school environment.

Board of Education Policies

- IGBB, Programs for Students Who Are Gifted
- IKEB, IKEB-R, Acceleration
- JEB, Entrance Age (Mandatory Kindergarten)
- JEBA, JEBA-R, Early Entrance to Kindergarten