



# Guide to Early Entrance

## Early Entrance Criteria

### Early Entrance to Kindergarten - 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 to First Grade

A child must complete Kindergarten before entering first grade. Ohio law allows school districts to evaluate students for entrance to First Grade without completing Kindergarten using the same process as early entrance to Kindergarten.

### 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. **The process of consideration begins with a cognitive assessment administered by the school psychologist.** 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 February and by March 31** 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 determined eligible for further assessment, the school psychologist will schedule and conduct appropriate achievement testing. If the referred child meets the minimum ability and achievement criteria during testing, the building principal will initiate the formation of an acceleration committee to review all data and determine if early entrance is appropriate for the child. The acceleration committee may consist of the student's principal, potential kindergarten teacher(s), gifted intervention specialist, district administrator responsible for gifted education, parent/guardian, and any other relevant support specialists including the school psychologist, school counselor, etc., as applicable, based on a specific need or issue. This process may take up to two months to complete and will begin in late April or early May. The acceleration committee will review the assessment data and make a decision regarding placement.

## **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 administrator responsible for gifted education and/or gifted intervention specialist will develop a Written Acceleration Plan to be in place for 45 days from the start of the school year. The child's 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 or First Grade. 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 or First Grade 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 or First Grade student. Very few children qualify for early entrance to Kindergarten or First Grade. A child may behave like other age-eligible students but still may not be able to pass the stringent early entrance requirements.

## Applying for Early Entrance

### Timeline

If you believe that your child may be a good candidate for early entrance, the application must be submitted starting in February and by March 31. The principal of your child's prospective building must receive the application by this date or the application will not be processed. Testing will occur in late April or early May, and the acceleration committee meeting will be held in May or early June. Placement decisions will be communicated to families at least 30 days prior to the start of the next school year.

### Testing and Data Collection

The process for consideration begins with a cognitive assessment administered by the school psychologist. The child must score at least one standard deviation above the mean on this cognitive ability assessment, which is the critical score on the acceleration tool approved by the Ohio Department of Education. Further cognitive and academic testing will occur if the child attains this requisite score. Based on the criteria set in the acceleration tool, students typically must score at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to age peers and at or above the 50-75<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to students 2 years older to be eligible for further consideration.

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