

*Early Entrance*  
*to Kindergarten*

*Austin Public School District #492*

*Policy and Procedure Guide*

*Submit Requests by April 1<sup>st</sup>*

*Decisions will be made and communicated by June 15th*

## *Austin Public School's Mission Statement*

Engaging and Empowering ALL Learners for Life!

## *Austin Public School Board Policy*

### EARLY ENTRANCE AND GRADE ACCELERATION POLICY # 535

#### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide procedures for the consideration of early entrance for students in kindergarten and grade acceleration for students in grades 1-8.

#### II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The school board will allow early school entrance and grade acceleration. The following steps will be followed prior to the school district's decision regarding each individual student case.

##### A. Early Entrance

Students who have met the criteria set by the Austin Public Schools will be allowed to enter kindergarten early. The decision made by the administration shall be final.

#### **Early Entrance**

1. The parent initiates the request with the elementary principal in whose attendance area the child resides. All requests should be submitted by April 1. Parents will be notified regarding the dispensation of the request no later than June 15.
2. The building principal will arrange a pre-assessment interview involving himself/herself, the central office designee, the parent, and a kindergarten teacher. The primary purpose of the interview is to assemble data on the child such as the child's birth date, preschool experiences, and any other information which might be needed in order to arrive at an eventual decision.
3. The parents may be asked to provide a psychologist's recommendation based on achievement and ability testing. The parents are responsible for all costs incurred to secure the recommendation.
4. After the parent has submitted the necessary data to the building principal, the principal, teacher, and central office designee will meet to determine the findings of the collected data and to make a decision regarding the request for early entrance.
5. The building principal and central office designee will then meet with the parent and relate their decision.

#### **OR**

6. The child does not meet the age requirement for kindergarten, but has transferred from a state in which he/she did meet the age requirements and was previously enrolled. The parent will need to provide verification of enrollment from the previous district.



### *Questions?*

If you have any questions about the process for Early Entrance to Kindergarten, please contact:

- District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services:  
Mrs. Edwina Harder  
507-460-1924  
401 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. NW, Austin, MN 55912 [Austin High School]  
[edwina.harder@austin.k12.mn.us](mailto:edwina.harder@austin.k12.mn.us)
  
- Principal of Woodson Kindergarten Center:  
Mrs. Jill Rollie  
507-460-1400  
1601 4<sup>th</sup> St. SE, Austin, MN 55912  
[jill.rollie@austin.k12.mn.us](mailto:jill.rollie@austin.k12.mn.us)
  
- Para Español: Sra. Laura Ramirez  
507-460-1404  
1601 4<sup>th</sup> St. SE, Austin, MN 55912  
[laura.ramirez@austin.k12.mn.us](mailto:laura.ramirez@austin.k12.mn.us)

## *Research Regarding Early Entrance to Kindergarten*

- In 1991, a survey of parents and teachers found that overall attitudes toward early entrance were fairly negative. Teachers tended to have negative attitudes even when they experienced success with an early entrance child; they view these successes as 'exceptions to the rule.' [Rogers]
- Children who have attended preschool are more likely to be better candidates for early entrance to kindergarten because they have already experienced a structured routine, learned to share adult attention with other children, and developed group social skills. [Belin & Blank]
- Based on a meta-analysis of 68 studies on Early Entrance to Kindergarten, Karen Rogers calculated the overall *effect size [additional year's growth]* of Early Entrance to Kindergarten is 0.49 Academically, 0.20 Socially, and 0.16 Esteem
- According to the research from the Belin & Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, students who enter elementary school early are as capable academically as the students into whose grade they have been accelerated into, and all but a small percentage...are as socially well-adjusted as their new peers.

## *Early Entrance to Kindergarten Requirements*

The following skills vary from child to child. The support of teachers, parents, and family all contribute to the level of a child's readiness for Kindergarten.

Based on the work of Karen Rogers in Re-Forming Gifted Education, candidates who will likely benefit from early entrance:

- Are Processing and Achieving Well Above Age Peers [Cognitive Functioning]
  - Show readiness for reading and good math reasoning, or are already reading and calculating
- Are Independent and Motivated [Personal Characteristics]
  - Want to start school, are motivated to learn, are comfortable with older children, have longer attention spans than age-alike peers, are socially mature, are emotionally stable, are perceptive and confident
- Enjoy Visual and Small Motor Activities [Learning Preferences]
  - Have a preference for reading and math activities, participate in fine motor activities, like being challenged and perceive school as a place to learn
- Like Academic Work and Have Exhausted What Preschool Can Offer [Interests]
  - Like reading activities, like math activities, have wide-ranging interests in previous preschool situations

## *Early Entrance to Kindergarten Requirements [continued]*

The Belin & Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development notes several points regarding Early Entrance to Kindergarten:

- Accelerated students should be expected to achieve, relative to their new grade peers, at a high level that is generally comparable to their performance in their previous grade. Such students are typically among the top 10% in a class, and they should be expected to remain in the top 10% throughout their academic careers.
- We would be less likely to recommend early entrance to kindergarten in a more formal, academic kindergarten program in which the schedule is highly structured and there is little flexibility with the curriculum than in a more traditional [free play, socialization, exploration] setting.
- While performance on ability and achievement testing is an important indicator in whole-grade acceleration decisions, other methods can also identify potentially successful candidates for acceleration. Students should demonstrate academic skill levels that would place them in the upper range of students in the grade into which they would be accelerated.

## Early Entrance to Kindergarten Checklist

### Early Childhood Screening

This is a FREE service by Austin Public Schools for all 3, 4, and 5 year olds; required by the State of Minnesota. Early Childhood Screening is a quick and simple check of how children are doing. It identifies, at an early stage, possible learning or health concerns so that children can get needed help. An appointment is required. To make your appointment, call Austin Public Schools at 460-1709. Para Español al 507-460-1703.

WHEN: 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month

WHERE: Community Learning Center, 912 1st Ave. NE, Austin, MN 55912

### Submit Student Background Information for Early Entrance to Kindergarten

Submit the Student Background Information Form [attached] and all required supplemental materials to the District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services by April 1<sup>st</sup> of the year. Submit in person, mail, or email:

Edwina Harder, District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services  
507-460-1924  
401 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. NW [Austin High School]  
Austin, MN 55912  
[edwina.harder@austin.k12.mn.us](mailto:edwina.harder@austin.k12.mn.us)

### Kindergarten Assessment – Achievement & Ability

Once the Student Background Information and supplemental materials are reviewed, the District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services will contact you via phone or email to schedule a Kindergarten Assessment meeting. The Kindergarten Assessment will be delivered by the District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services, a Gifted and Talented Interventionist, or Success Coach. Parents are asked not to accompany the child or observe the child during the assessment.

The Kindergarten Achievement Assessment and Ability Assessment take approximately 30 minutes each to complete; total of about 60 minutes. Assessments can be scheduled to be taken at the same time or in 2 separate sessions.

The Results of the Kindergarten Assessment will be shared when the decision about early entrance is shared.

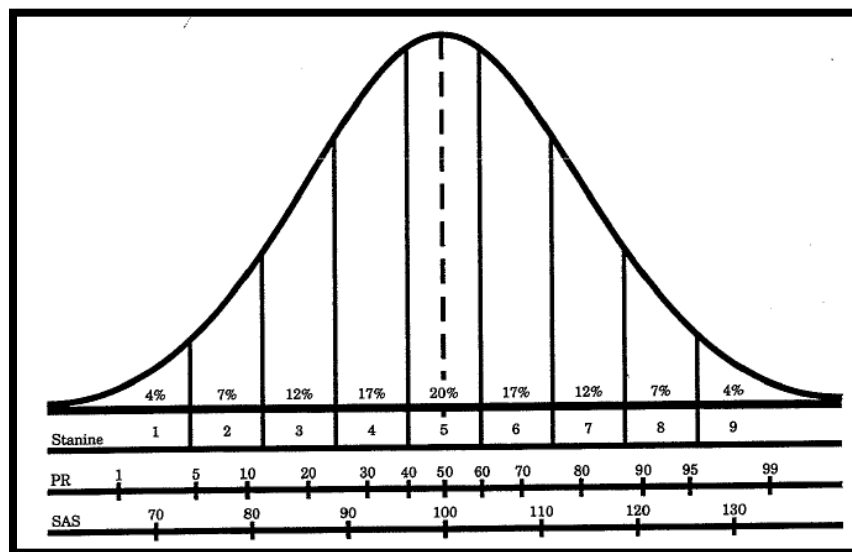
Assessment	Purpose for Assessment
Ability	Measures what a child CAN DO
Achievement	Measures what a child IS DOING

## ❑ Assessment Evaluation

A team including the District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services, Principal of Woodson Kindergarten Center, and the administrator of the Kindergarten Assessment will meet to discuss the results of the Kindergarten Assessment. A decision whether or not to recommend Early Entrance will be based on the Kindergarten Assessment and support by the Student Background Information and the supplemental materials. The decision made by the administration team shall be final.

An excellent candidate for Early Entrance for Kindergarten will score a 3 [Meeting Expectations] or 4 [Consistently Above Expectations] in the majority of the standards on the Kindergarten Achievement Assessment.

Scores from the Kindergarten Ability Assessments will be shared in Percentile Rank [PR] or Standard Age Score [SAS]. The average PR is 50 and average SAS is 100.



## ❑ Observed Social Behaviors [Observation during Kindergarten Round-Up]

At the same time as scheduling the achievement and ability assessments, you can schedule a time to attend one of the Kindergarten Round-Up meetings. These meetings are for parents and future Kindergarten students. Upon arrival, students are brought into a classroom with other future Kindergarten students where they will listen to a story, work on a few activities, and even ride the school bus around the block. During these activities the Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services or a Gifted and Talented Interventionist will observe the child's attention, adaptability, social skills, and communication skills. Meanwhile, parents will be in the gym learning about the 'ins and outs' of Woodson Kindergarten Center with the principal.

## ❑ Assessment Results

The Principal of Woodson Kindergarten Center or the District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services will contact the family to share whether or not Early Entrance to Kindergarten is recommended. If the family would like more information regarding the results of the Kindergarten Assessment, a meeting can be scheduled.

## *Student Background Information*

Attached to the Early Entrance to Kindergarten Policy and Procedure Guide are the Student Background Information Sheets. This document provides important information about your child's readiness for Kindergarten. Please submit this document along with the supplemental materials to the address listed previously.

## *Supplemental Materials to Submit*

1. Letter of Support from the Parents/Guardian outlining why the child should be considered for Early Entrance for Kindergarten.
  2. Letter of Support from a Pre-School Teacher [or other adult who works with the child in a Pre-School like setting] outlining the child's readiness academically and socially/emotionally. Please give the attached outline to the Pre-School Teacher for assistance.
- *IF NEEDED, the parents may be asked to provide a psychologist's recommendation based on achievement and ability testing. If asked for this evaluation, the parents are responsible for all costs incurred to secure the recommendation. Parents will need to sign a release of information form for the results of the testing to be sent to the school district.*





## Pre-School Teacher Letter of Support

In a narrative, please describe the following developmental areas outlined below. Feel free to document any other characteristics or data that you feel would support your position of the named child's consideration for Early Entrance to Kindergarten.

*Please include the following:*

1. *Your Name & contact information*

2. *Name of Pre-School*

3. *Indicate the child you are describing (name of child)*

4. *Emotional Development*

*(How does the child express ideas, feelings, and needs? Regulate and control behavior?)*

5. *Listening & Attentiveness*

*(How does the child listen to and respond to others? Follow classroom routines? Follow one-step & multi-step directions?)*

6. *Literacy Skills*

*(How does the child demonstrate understanding of alphabetic awareness, phonemic awareness, and sight words? Use writing to represent ideas?)*

7. *Mathematical Skills*

*(How does the child demonstrate understanding of numbers, counting, number operations, shapes, comparisons, and patterns?)*

8. *Social Competence*

*(How does the child understand rules & social expectations? Resolve conflicts? Engage in social play with others?)*



## Observed Social Behaviors For Early Entrance Candidates

*(To be completed by school district personnel)*

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer's Name & Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: After observing the student, circle the description in each category that best describes the student's observed social behaviors.

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>Observed Sustained Attention</b>				
<b>Focus</b>	Student had difficulty focusing for an appropriate amount of time during tasks.	Student was able to focus his/her attention for an appropriate amount of time during tasks.	Student was able to focus his/her attention for an extended amount of time during tasks.	Behavior was NOT observed
<b>Task Completion</b>	Student had difficulty completing tasks in a reasonable amount of time.	Student was able to complete tasks in a reasonable amount of time.	Student was able to complete tasks in less amount of time compared to peers.	Behavior was NOT observed
<b>Observed Adaptability</b>				
<b>Separation</b>	Student had difficulty separating from parent.	Student was able to separate from parent with some teacher guidance.	Student was able to separate easily from parent.	Behavior was NOT observed
<b>Transition</b>	Student had difficulty transitioning from task to task.	Student was able to transition with teacher guidance from task to task.	Student was able to transition easily from task to task.	Behavior was NOT observed
<b>Observed Social Skills &amp; Communication</b>				
<b>Cooperation</b>	Student had difficulties participating, sharing, and/or cooperating in groups.	Student intermittently participated, shared, and/or cooperated in groups.	Student was willing to participate, share, and/or cooperate in groups.	Behavior was NOT observed
<b>Socializing</b>	Student had difficulties socializing with peers.	Student intermittently socialized with peers.	Student socialized with peers with relative ease.	Behavior was NOT observed
<b>Verbalizing</b>	Student had difficulty verbalizing with teacher or peers.	Student was able to verbalize easily with teacher only or peers only.	Student was able to verbalize easily with teacher and peers.	Behavior was NOT observed

## Student Background Information ~ Early Entrance to Kindergarten

<i>Student Name</i>	
<i>Student Address</i>	
<i>Family Phone Number</i>	<i>Alternative Phone Number[s]</i>
<i>Current School Name</i>	
<i>Current School Address</i>	
<i>Current School Phone Number</i>	<i>Number of Years at Current School</i>
<i>Current Grade</i>	
<i>Current Age [Years and Months]</i>	<i>Student Birthdate [Month/Day/Year]</i>

<i>Father's Name</i>	
<i>Mother's Name</i>	

### Professional Evaluation Services

If the student has received a formal professional evaluation [example: from a psychologist, social worker, or learning specialist] for a disability or disorder, please complete the chart below. Note: Disclosure of a disability will not disqualify a child from Early Entrance to Kindergarten.

<b>Disability</b>	<i>Details: Specific Type, Date of Diagnosis, Special Education Services Received, Additional Comments</i>
<i>Specific Learning Disability: [example: Written Language, Math, Reading, Nonverbal]</i>	

<i>Developmental: [example: Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, PDD-NOS]</i>	
<i>Other Health Impairment: [example: ADD, ADHD]</i>	
<i>Social/Emotional/Psychiatric: [example: Depression, Bipolar Disorder, OCD, ODD]</i>	
<i>Physical: [example: Visual, Hearing, Motor, Traumatic Injury]</i>	
<i>Any Not Listed:</i>	

*Please share any additional information that you feel important:*