



TRI-VALLEY
Local Schools

A Parent's Guide to Early Entrance to Kindergarten or 1st Grade



Early entrance is a decision that should involve careful deliberation. The following example may help with the understanding of the reasoning behind the early entrance process.

Some children excel early in sports. A parent may feel that their child is very advanced in basketball and wish that they could be moved up into the next age bracket in order to provide a greater challenge. Such a move would represent a need for that child to go against older, more experienced and physically more mature basketball players than their age would indicate is appropriate. For a coach, that would require an extensive evaluation of the child's skills to ensure that such a move is appropriate. That child would need to perform considerably better than their peers in order to overcome the natural deficits that occur when playing with older teammates. Without strong assurances that they are truly able to excel at that level, that child could become discouraged, lose playing time and find less success than they would have had by staying and performing at the top of their current age level.

The issues of Early Entrance are very similar to the analogy above. For students who are advanced, the desire to move forward in grade may be appropriate, but it is one that requires a thorough evaluation process in order to ensure that they will have the highest likelihood of finding success in their formative years of school. Our goal as a district is to provide you as a parent with the quality data and expertise needed to navigate this process.

Mark Neal
Superintendent

Legislation Governing Early Entrance

Appropriate use of academic acceleration is a law in Ohio (House Bill 79 amended to House Bill 66 – June 30, 2006). Please refer to the State of Ohio’s Model Student Acceleration Policy for more information.

According to **Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3321.01** a parent may request early admission to kindergarten if the child turns five years of age **on or after** the district’s kindergarten entrance date of August 1st each year. The local board of education shall determine early entrance criteria through a standardized testing program.

The Board may admit a younger child to kindergarten if the child satisfies the Board’s early entrance criteria. Children who will not yet be the proper age for entrance to kindergarten or first grade by the first day of January of the school year for which admission is requested shall also be evaluated for possible early admittance if referred by an educator within the district, a pre-school educator who knows the child, or pediatrician or psychologist who knows the child.

Tri-Valley Local School District

In accordance with the belief that all children are entitled to an education commensurate with their particular needs, students who can exceed the grade-level indicators and benchmarks set forth in the standards must be afforded the opportunity and be encouraged to do so. The Board of Education believes that such students often require access to advanced curriculum in order to realize their potential contribution to themselves and society.

For this reason the Tri-Valley Board of Education adopted policies related to early entrance to school and academic acceleration, which can be found on the [About Us](#) page on the Tri-Valley website: see **Policy Manual: Chapter VI – Pupil Personnel, 6.01. ACADEMIC ACCELERATION, EARLY ENTRANCE TO KINDERGARTEN, AND EARLY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION**

The Tri-Valley Local School District considers a child eligible for entrance into kindergarten if they attain the age of five (5) by August 1st of the year they apply for entrance. A child under the age of six (6) who is enrolled in kindergarten will be considered of compulsory school age.

A child who does not meet the age requirement for admittance to kindergarten or first grade, but who will be five (5) or six (6) years old, respectively, prior to the first day of January of the school year in which admission is requested, shall be evaluated for early admittance upon referral by the child’s parent or guardian, an educator employed by the District, a preschool educator who knows the child, or a physician or psychologist who knows the child.

The building principal will convene an acceleration evaluation committee to determine the most appropriate available learning environment for the referred student using an acceleration process approved by the Ohio Department of Education. For students recommended for early entrance to kindergarten, the student will be provided with a written acceleration plan (WAP) to support a successful transition.

A parent or legal guardian of the referred student may appeal in writing the decision of the evaluation committee to the local Superintendent within 30 days of being notified of the committee’s decision. The Superintendent shall review the appeal and notify the parent or legal guardian who filed the appeal of his or her final decision within 30 days of receiving the appeal. The Superintendent’s decision shall be final. However, the student may be referred and evaluated again at the next available opportunity if he or she is again referred for evaluation by an individual eligible to make referrals as described in this policy.

Is early entrance to kindergarten the best choice for your child?

Early entrance should be viewed as a means of meeting a child's needs. Developmental readiness is the key to determining whether or not early entrance is appropriate. Even though a child may have a great deal of ability, s/he may not be ready for kindergarten. Social maturity, personal development and motor development are important factors for a child's success in school.

Early entrance is designed for the exceptional child who is both academically ready as well as developmentally mature when compared to others of his or her chronological age. This opportunity is designed as a measure to meet individual differences in school readiness.

Some considerations when determining if early entrance is right for a child:

- Is my child capable of working in a classroom setting?
- Will my child be frustrated by this placement?
- What are the possible long-term impacts for my child as s/he progresses through elementary, middle and high school (e.g., beginning college at a younger age)?
- Does my child have a sibling in the same grade or will accelerate ahead of a sibling the same age?
- Early entrance is not designed as a replacement for child care. Is this a need or a want?
- Do I understand the expectations for students in kindergarten today? For example, students are expected to ask and answer questions about key details in a text, retell familiar stories with details, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text, and identify similarities and differences between two texts on the same topic.

There is a difference between ability and achievement. Some children may appear exceptional simply because of their access to opportunities (e.g., preschool programs, parents working with them on skills, or access to learning materials). Early entrance is designed for the child who not only has skills but also shows the ability to easily achieve when presented with new material. If a child is evaluated as a good candidate for early entrance to kindergarten, it is important that all stakeholders are supportive of the decision.

What is expected of students in kindergarten?

Kindergarten, like many other areas of education, has changed considerably over the past couple of decades. Today's kindergarten students are engaged in a rigorous instructional program. Please take the time to review the following information:

- Parents can easily access the Early Learning Content Standards as well as the subject specific Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies on the Ohio Department of Education website – [Standards and Model Curriculum](#).
- The Ohio Department of Education's website contains useful information about kindergarten, in particular, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment ([KRA-R](#)).
- The Ohio Department of Education has on its website a checklist for kindergarten readiness. ([Kindergarten Readiness Checklist](#)) When looking at whether early entrance is appropriate for a child, the same readiness checklist should be considered.

Steps for Applying for Early Entrance

- Contact the building principal in the school your child will attend. Note that early entrance is a process completed in the spring with a deadline of **April 1**. *Due to required timelines, any applications turned in after April 1 will be reviewed at the discretion of the building Principal and Auxiliary Services Coordinator.*
- The building principal will coordinate the early entrance process. The first step will be scheduling a kindergarten screening. If your child shows appropriate entry level skills for kindergarten, then you will be given an application and skills checklist to complete. Once these items are received, the evaluation will be completed within 45-business days.
- If your child is currently in preschool, an observation, virtual meeting or interview with preschool staff may be scheduled by a district representative. Parents will be contacted if this observation is needed.
- A school psychologist will administer required standardized assessments.
- Once the evaluations are completed, the acceleration evaluation committee will convene for the purpose of conducting a fair and thorough evaluation of the child. This committee may include the following: parent/legal guardian or a representative designated by the parent/guardian, gifted education coordinator, gifted education specialist, or a school psychologist or a guidance counselor with expertise in the appropriate use of academic acceleration, principal or assistant principal of the school to which the child may be admitted, teacher at the grade level to which the student may be admitted

How will my child be evaluated for early entrance to Kindergarten?

- If the student is seen as a viable candidate based on parent and screening information, then the **Iowa Acceleration Scale, 3rd Edition**, which is the only process approved by the Ohio Department of Education, will be the guide for early entrance and whole grade acceleration. The IOWA is a multi-tiered process that begins with an individual cognitive assessment. A preschool test of cognitive functioning will show if a child can access and learn new material at an accelerated rate. If a student shows advanced skills on the cognitive assessment, additional measures of achievement and aptitude will be administered per the requirements of the IOWA and used in consideration for early entrance.

Note: *Very few children who are referred for Early Entrance actually meet entrance criteria. Not meeting requirements is fairly typical and should not be viewed by you or your child as “failing” the test or not being good enough. If your child will be greatly disappointed, you may want to reconsider having the early entrance assessment done. In order to minimize the stress or impact of not meeting entrance requirements, it is highly recommended that the possibility of advancing in grade is not openly discussed with the child until the assessment process is completed. Please be sure to make appropriate child care arrangements in the event that the Acceleration Committee’s decision is to not admit your student to Kindergarten or First Grade as an early entrant.*

Transition/Acceleration Plan

Should your child meet the criteria for Early Entrance to Kindergarten, they will receive a Written Acceleration/Transition Plan (WAP). WAPs will include strategies to ensure success and list staff members responsible for monitoring academic progress until the end of the transition period. The WAP will provide a transition period of thirty school days. Parents can request an extension during the initial transition period. At the end of the transition period, the accelerated placement shall become permanent. The student's record shall be modified accordingly and the acceleration implementation plan shall become part of the student's permanent record in order to facilitate continuous progress through the curriculum.