

Early Entrance to Kindergarten



Austin Public School District #492 Policy and Procedure Guide

Submit Requests by April 1st

Decisions will be made and communicated by June 15th



EARLY ENTRANCE AND GRADE ACCELERATION POLICY # 536

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.

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

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 Process

(See below for information about each step in the process.)

- Early Childhood Screening
- Student Background Information (Complete prior to April 1st)
 - Student Information Form
 - Letter of Support from Parent
 - Letter of Support from Pre-School Teacher
- Kindergarten Assessment
- Assessment team meets to review student information
- Assessment findings and early-entrance recommendations are shared with the family

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 prior to the start of kindergarten. 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

Student Background Information (Submit no later than April 1st)

Submit the Student Background Information Form (attached) and all required supplemental materials to the District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services by April 1st of the year.

- Submit a Letter of Support from the parents/guardian outlining why the child should be considered for Early Entrance for Kindergarten.
- Submit a 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.
- 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. (Only need to submit upon request)

Andrea Malo, District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services
507-460-1924
Austin Public Schools District Office of Teaching and Learning
401 3rd Ave. NW
Austin, MN 55912
andrea.malo@austin.k12.mn.us

Kindergarten Assessment – Achievement, Ability, & Social Emotional Behaviors

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, Kindergarten Teacher or Success Coach. Parents are asked not to accompany the child or observe the child during the assessment.

The kindergarten assessments take approximately 30 minutes each to complete; total of about 60 minutes. Assessments can be scheduled to be taken in one block of time or in 2 separate sessions. At the same time, the test administrator will also observe the child's attention, adaptability, social skills, and communication skills.

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

The results of the kindergarten assessments will be reviewed with the family when the decision about early entrance is shared.

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 assessments. A decision whether to recommend early entrance will be based on the kindergarten assessments and support by the student background information and the supplemental materials. The decision made by the administration team shall be final.

Assessment Results

The Principal of Woodson Kindergarten Center or the District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services will contact the family to share whether 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.

Questions?

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

- District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services:
Andrea Malo, District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Services
507-460-1924
Austin Public Schools District Office of Teaching and Learning
401 3rd Ave. NW
Austin, MN 55912
andrea.malo@austin.k12.mn.us

- Woodson Kindergarten Center Administrator:
Mrs. Jen Lawhead

507-460-1400
1601 4th St. SE, Austin, MN 55912
jill.rollie@austin.k12.mn.us

- Para Español: Sra. Laura Ramirez
507-460-1404
1601 4th St. SE, Austin, MN 55912
laura.ramirez@austin.k12.mn.us

Early Entrance to Kindergarten ~ Student Background Information Form

Student Name	
Student Address	
Family Phone Number	Alternate Phone Numbers
Current School Name	
Current School Address	
Current School Phone Number	Number of Years at Current School
Current Grade or Programming	

Current Age [Years and Months]	Student Birthdate [Month/Day/Year]

Parent or Guardian's Name:	Email Address
Parent or Guardian's Name	Email Address

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.

Disability	Details: Specific Type, Date of Diagnosis, Special Education Services Received, Additional Comments
Specific Learning Disability: [example: Written Language, Math, Reading, Nonverbal]	
Developmental: [example: Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, PDD-NOS]	
Other Health Impairment: [example: ADD, ADHD]	
Social/Emotional/Psychiatric: [example: Depression, Bipolar Disorder, OCD, ODD]	
Physical: [example: Visual, Hearing, Motor, Traumatic Injury]	
Any Not Listed:	

Please share any additional information that you feel important:

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?)