

## Early Entrance

Gower School District 62 follows Illinois law which specifies that, to enter kindergarten or first grade, children must be five years of age by September 1st of their kindergarten year or six years of age by September 1st of their first grade year. However, District 62 allows exceptions to this law for children whose skills are in the superior range when compared to their peers.

District 62 has identified early entrance to kindergarten or first grade as *full-grade acceleration*, appropriate for those students who are developmentally and academically ready. The decision to allow a student early entrance is solely at the discretion of the district.

## Important Considerations

The decision for a child to enter school early can have a profound effect on his or her academic and social performance for the remainder of the child's school career. It is a decision that needs to be taken seriously. Research indicates that early entrance and/or early reading ability is not a predictor of success in school. In fact, children with strong early reading skills often plateau by third grade.

Children who enter kindergarten or first grade early may demonstrate social or emotional difficulties due to their relative immaturity. As they progress through school, children who are young for their grade level may have more difficulty fitting in with their peers in social situations. They are less likely to excel in sports because of their age and/or their smaller size. These and other possible effects of being younger than others in their classes should be considered carefully. Very few children screened meet the criteria to enter kindergarten or first grade early.

## Requesting Early Entrance

Children eligible for early entrance must turn five years of age for kindergarten by October 15th, or six years old for first grade by December 31st of the current school year. Parents/guardians wishing to apply for early entrance for their child must contact the **Assistant Superintendent or the Building Principal** and request the *Early Entrance Nomination Form*. The form will ask for the child's name, date of birth, the type of request (early entrance to kindergarten or first grade), and contact information. In addition, parents will be asked to complete the *Parent Report of Skills Inventory* to provide relevant information that supports their belief that early entrance to school is in the best interest of their child.

The *Early Entrance Nomination Form and additional supporting information requested* should be returned to the Assistant Superintendent or School Principal no later than **April 15th**. Upon acceptance of the request for consideration of early entrance, an evaluation of the child by the district's School Psychologist or other qualified examiner may be scheduled and additional supporting information may be requested. The Assistant Superintendent, School Principal, and/or designee will review the evaluation report and information provided by the parent and a decision regarding the enrollment of the child will be determined.

Children who are accepted for early entrance will be enrolled on a *probationary* basis. The school staff will assess each child's initial adjustment to school during the first five (5) weeks of the school year. If at any time during the probationary period there are concerns about the child's performance, a meeting will be requested to determine whether withdrawal or continuation in the assigned grade is appropriate. If it is determined that the child's performance is satisfactory, the child may continue enrollment in the assigned grade.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q.** What is Gower School District 62's early entrance policy?

**A.** The district's policy states that children must turn five (5) by September 1st of their kindergarten year for admission to kindergarten or six (6) by December 31st of their first-grade year to be admitted to first grade. However, the district's administration may consider early admission if children meet the criteria established by the district's early admission policy.

**Q.** If I put my child in private kindergarten, will he/she automatically be eligible for first grade the following year?

**A.** No. To be considered for early entrance to first grade, children who are not six (6) by September 1st will have to meet the early entrance requirements.

**Q.** Who makes the decision about whether my child can enter kindergarten or first grade early?

**A.** If a child does not meet the criteria for early entrance, the parent(s) may appeal in writing to the **Superintendent or designee** within thirty (30) days of receiving the notification from the Principal. The review committee will respond in writing with the decision within thirty (30) days of the parent request. The decision of the appeals committee will be final.

**Q.** Why do children applying for early entrance have to be assessed when other children entering school do not?

**A.** Children who turn five (5) or six (6) on or before September 1st are age-eligible according to Illinois State law and therefore are entitled to enter kindergarten or first grade respectively. A child whose birth date falls between September 1st and October 15th for kindergarten and September 1st and December 31st for first grade may be considered for early entrance but must meet the district's criteria that demonstrate the child's skills are in the superior range of development.

**Q.** Is early entrance the best choice for my child?

**A.** Please consider the following:

1. The intent of the early entrance process is to offer a stimulating academic environment for students who are capable of excelling in a classroom setting with children one year older.
2. The standards for early entrance are high to ensure the students are not frustrated by their advanced placement.
3. There may be social issues that have long-term implications for the child.

**Q.** What are the assessors looking for in the assessments?

**A.** Children cannot study or prepare for development readiness. Assessments include a variety of activities that measure each child's progress in the following developmental domains:

1. Academic skills and/or readiness
2. Motor skills
3. Personal/social readiness