WESTLAKE
City Schools

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

2027-2028



WE EDUCATE FOR EXCELLENCE . . .

Empowering all students to achieve their educational goals, to direct their lives, and to contribute to society.

Legislation Governing Early Entrance

According to House Bill Number 114, signed into law in December of 2025, which amends Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3321.01 a parent may request early admission to kindergarten if the child turns five years of age after the district's kindergarten entrance date of the first date of instruction of the school year. For the 2027-2028 school year, students must be five (5) on or before August 24, 2027 to be admitted to Kindergarten and six (6) on or before September 30, 2027 to be admitted to first grade. The local board of education shall determine early entrance criteria through a standardized testing program.

The Board may admit a younger child, those who turn 5 or 6 before January 1st, to kindergarten or first grade, respectively, if the child satisfies the Board's early entrance criteria. Children who will not yet be the proper age for assessment for early entrance to kindergarten or first grade, those who turn five (5) between August 25, 2027 and December 31, 2027 or turn six (6) between October 1, 2027 and December 31, 2027, respectively, shall be evaluated for possible early admittance if referred by a parent, an educator within the district, a preschool educator who knows the child, or pediatrician or psychologist who knows the child, following the ODEW Model Acceleration Policy, which was adopted by WCSD for Acceleration in 2006. Please see WCSD's Acceleration Handbook for details regarding our Acceleration Policy.

Acceleration is the Law (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.

Westlake City School District

The Westlake City School District considers a child eligible for entrance into kindergarten if the student attains the age of five on or before the first date of instruction of the school year in which they seek admittance. A child under the age of six (6) who is enrolled in kindergarten will be considered of compulsory school age.

Early Entrance Application

By parental request, a child may be evaluated for early entrance to kindergarten or first grade if they will be five (5) between August 25, 2027 and December 31, 2027 or turn six (6) between October 1, 2027 and December 31, 2027, respectively, and exhibit the mental, social and emotional standards established by the Westlake Board of Education by filling out the early entrance packet and returning it by April 1, 2027 for possible early entrance for the 2027-2028 academic school year.

The Westlake Board of Education adopted policies related to early entrance to school and academic acceleration: Policies 5112, 5409, 5410.

Evaluations related to referrals submitted to the Department of Academic Services no later than April 1 in the year for which admission is being requested, will ordinarily be completed and a written report issued within forty-five (45) calendar days of submission of the referral to the Department of Academic Services. Evaluations related to referrals submitted to the Department of Academic Services after April 1 will be reviewed at the discretion of the Associate Superintendent of Instruction."

"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 are also to be evaluated for possible early admittance if referred by an educator within the District, a preschool educator who knows the child, or pediatrician or psychologist who knows the child. The building principal may also request an evaluation at their discretion."

Appeal Process

The parent/guardian will be provided with a written summary of the outcome of the evaluation process. This notification shall include instructions for appealing the outcome of the evaluation process. Appeals must be made in writing to the Associate Superintendent of Instruction within thirty (30) calendar days of the parent/guardian receiving the results of the evaluation. The Superintendent or designee will review the appeal and notify the parent/guardian of their decision within thirty (30) calendar days of the designee receiving the appeal. The Superintendent or designee's decision will be final.

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, they 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 their 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 they progress through elementary, middle, and high school (e.g., beginning college at a younger 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 ability but easily achieves 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. (See the Kindergarten Readiness Checklist on the next page.) When looking at whether early entrance is appropriate for a child, the same readiness checklist should be considered.
• For the 2026-2027 school year, we anticipate Kindergarten in the Westlake City School District will continue to be half-day or a tuition-based full-day program. The half-day program runs from 9:00am to 11:45 am or 12:45pm to 3:30 pm. The full-day program begins at 9:00 am and ends at 3:30 pm Students are expected to participate in the academic program throughout the day. This is subject to change.

Ohio Department of Education Kindergarten Readiness Checklist

To do well in school, children need to be supported and nurtured in all areas of development.

It is also important that your child is physically, socially, and emotionally ready for school. This checklist can help serve as your guide. But please remember, young children change so fast. Students should have mastery of the majority of the developmental areas listed below.

Is your child ready for kindergarten?

ready for KINDERGARTEN OHIO

Ohio | Department of Education

To prepare for kindergarten, children need to be supported and nurtured in all areas of development. It is also important that your child is physically, socially and emotionally ready to participate in school. This list can serve as a guide as you and your child prepare for the exciting transition to kindergarten!

Can your child separate from primary caregiver without anxiety?

Use self-control?
•Keeping hands to self
•Sharing and taking turns
•Cooperating and playing with other children
•Using classroom supplies appropriately





Cooperate with adults and authority figures?
•Following directions
•Communicating needs effectively



Demonstrate self-help skills?
Using the restroom independently
Putting on and zipping own coat
Tying shoes



Use classroom tools and toys efficiently?
Cutting with scissors
Holding and using a pencil, crayon or marker
Building with blocks or Legos

Express self-awareness in a variety of ways?
Knowing first and last name.
Writing first name.
Naming the letters in first name.
Knowing name of primary caregiver(s)



Applying for Early Entrance

• If you believe that your child may be a good candidate for early entrance, please obtain an information/application packet from the District's website. The Early Entrance packet is online under the Early Entrance Tab on the Registration page at http://www.wlake.org/registration1/kindergarten. You may also pick up an Early Entrance Packet at the Westlake Board of Education Office. For your convenience, it is also attached to the end of this handbook.

• Once the application has been completed, it needs to be returned to the Department of Academic Services by **April 1st** the year for which admission is being requested. Any applications turned in after April 1st will be reviewed at the discretion of the Associate Superintendent of Instruction.

• The Associate Superintendent of Instruction, or designee will coordinate the early entrance process. A school psychologist will administer the assessments. The evaluation will be completed within 45 business days from receipt of the completed packet.

• 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. 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.

• 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:

A. parent/legal guardian or a representative designated by the parent/guardian
B. gifted education coordinator or gifted education specialist, or, if neither is available, a school psychologist or a guidance counselor with expertise in the appropriate use of academic acceleration
C. principal or assistant principal of the school to which the child may be admitted
D. teacher at the grade level to which the student may be admitted

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

• Early entrance evaluation is completed in the spring.

• Because developmental readiness is important for success in kindergarten, students who are viable candidates for Early Entrance to Kindergarten are expected to be developmentally "on track" with the typical kindergarten student. Should a student meet the identification criteria for Superior Cognitive identification (127) but fail to meet the developmental readiness assessment, the acceleration team (principal, kindergarten teacher, gifted specialist, parent, and/or legal guardian) will then discuss and reach a consensus as to what placement is best for the child. The **Iowa Acceleration Scale, 3rd Edition,** modified to meet the needs of our K and 1st Grade students, 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.

The Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Cognitive Abilities is most typically used for this assessment although any state approved Cognitive Ability Assessment may be utilized at the discretion of the School Psychologist.

According to the Iowa Acceleration Scale, 3rd Edition, a student who achieves a score of 125 or higher on the WJ-IV Tests of Cognitive Abilities is a viable candidate for acceleration. Students who do not achieve this score will not be considered for early entrance to kindergarten. If a student does not achieve a score of 125 or higher, parents may elect to have their child tested privately at their own expense.

However, if a student scores 125 or higher on the WJ-IV Tests of Cognitive Abilities or other Cognitive Assessment approved by the State of Ohio, additional measures of achievement and aptitude will be administered and used in consideration for early entrance.

Timeline for Early Entrance to Kindergarten/1st Grade

Deadline for Early Entrance to kindergarten/1st grade applications: April 1, 2027

Deadline for completion of evaluations: 45 school calendar days after submission of application

Deadline for completion of acceleration committee meetings: June 1, 2027

Deadline for written notification of the outcome of the evaluation process: June 1, 2027

Deadline to appeal to Associate Superintendent of Instruction: July 1, 2027

Please return the completed application, information sheet, and consent form to:

Westlake Board of Education
Department of Academic Services
24365 Hilliard Blvd.
Westlake, Ohio 44145

Note: Very few children who are referred for Early Entrance actually meet entrance criteria. Please be sure to make appropriate childcare 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, all students will be given a Written Acceleration/Transition Plan (WAP). Westlake City School District WAPs will include strategies to ensure success and list staff members responsible for monitoring academic progress until the end of the transition period. Academic, behavioral, and social goals will be jointly developed by the teacher, school counselor, school psychologist, PreK teacher input (if applicable), building principal, and parent. 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.

APPLICATION and PERMISSION FOR ASSESSMENT:

Early Entrance to Kindergarten/1st Grade

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Return Complete Form to:
Westlake Board of Education
Department of Academic Services
24365 Hilliard Blvd.
Westlake, Ohio 44145

Please complete this application if you feel that your child demonstrates academic achievement, social, emotional, and physical maturity appropriate for kindergarten/1st grade placement and should be considered for early placement in kindergarten/1st grade, with a birth date between August 25, 2027 and December 31, 2027.

Child's Name_____
Last **First** **Middle Initial**
Birthdate_____ **/**_____ **/** _____ **Male**_____ **Female**_____

Address_____ _____
Street **City** **State** **Zip Code**
Custodial Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name_____
Relationship to child_____
Home #: _____ **Work#:**_____ **Cell#:**_____
Email: _____

Preschool or Kindergarten Experience - (please attach preschool/kindergarten report card if available)
List the nursery schools, Head Start, special programs, and other day care programs attended. Include the dates of attendance and the approximate number of hours per week attended.

Name of School/Program	**Dates of Attendance**	**# of Hours/Week**

Why do you feel that your child would be ready for a kindergarten/1st grade program? Comment on your child's social behavior and academic skills. (Use additional paper, if needed).

_____
_____
_____
_____

RETURN APPLICATION & PERMISSION FOR REVIEW NO LATER THAN April 1, 2027

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the contents of the Early Entrance brochure and give permission to have your child assessed:

_____ ____/____/_____
Signature, Custodial Parent / Guardian **Date**

EARLY ENTRANCE CHECKLIST

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Return Completed Form to:
Westlake Board of Education
Department of Academic Services
24365 Hilliard Blvd.
Westlake, Ohio 44145

The seven broad developmental dimensions provide the framework for the kindergarten instructional program. This checklist will help in determining your child's readiness for a kindergarten program. **Please read each statement and indicate how you rate your child's abilities by placing a "checkmark" in the appropriate space.**

Physical Well-Being and Motor Development

Performs self-help tasks independently (dressing, undressing, zipping, tying, toileting, eating)	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Uses eye/hand coordination to perform fine motor tasks (drawing, writing, and cutting)	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Uses balance and control to perform large motor tasks (walking, jumping, and skipping)	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**

Personal and Social Development

Shows eagerness to learn (curious, likes to investigate)	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Follows rules and routines (cleans up at playtime)	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Handles change and transition (dinnertime to bedtime)	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Interacts easily with one or more children	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Separates easily from parent	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
The ability to listen (attend) for at least 10 minutes	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**

Language and Literacy

Listens for meaning in stories, discussions, and conversations	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Speaks clearly, to share ideas and thoughts	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Can identify most letters (uppercase and lowercase)	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Can identify some beginning sounds	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Use some letters and words to write	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**

EARLY ENTRANCE CHECKLIST *continued…*

Please read each statement and indicate how you rate your child's abilities by placing a "checkmark" in the appropriate space.

Mathematical Thinking

Can recognize numbers 0-20	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Can orally count forward to 20	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Can recognize, duplicate, and extend simple patterns (circle-triangle, circle-triangle, circle-triangle)	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Can recognize and duplicate basic shapes	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**

Scientific Thinking

Uses a magnifying glass to look at different objects	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Can describe and sort objects by one or more properties	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Uses the five senses to make observations about the natural world	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**

Social Studies

Recognizes self and others as having the same and different characteristics	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Describes roles and responsibilities of people	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Mom is a doctor, she helps sick people) Recognizes the reasons for rules	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**

The Arts

Likes to paint and draw	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Likes to sing and dance	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Can share ideas about a drawing/painting	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**
Can recognize basic colors	☐**Frequently**	☐**Sometimes**	☐**None of the time**

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Early Entrance Flowchart

Early Entrance Applications are due to the Associate Superintendent of Instruction by April 1st of the calendar year for which enrollment is to be considered

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Associate Superintendent alerts Kindergarten School Psychologist and WES Gifted Intervention Specialist of application

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The Kindergarten School Psychologist will coordinate a cognitive assessment with the parent.

↓

The Kindergarten School Psychologist will share results of the cognitive assessment with the parent, Associate Superintendent, and Gifted Intervention Specialist.

↓

Was a cognitive score of 125 achieved?

YES

↓

The Kindergarten School Psychologist will set up Academic Testing in both Reading and Math. The Gifted Intervention Specialist will contact the student's preschool and complete an interview.

↓

Once the testing and interview is complete, the Gifted Intervention Specialist will set up a team meeting with the parent, school psychologist, building principal, and a grade level teacher.

↓

The GIS will lead the meeting using the Iowa Acceleration Scale. The team will determine acceptance. Was the child admitted for Early Entrance?

YES → A WAP is to be created at the meeting; the WAP and acceptance letter will be mailed home by the Associate Superintendent of Instruction.

NO → Associate Superintendent will send a DNQ letter

NO

↓

The Associate Superintendent will send home a DNQ letter with appeal instructions.