A Parent/Guardian's Guide to

Early Entrance to Kindergarten (& 1st Grade)

Willoughby-Eastlake City School District

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Legislation Governing Early Entrance and Giftedness

- By Ohio Department of Education guidelines, a parent may request regular *early* admission to kindergarten if the child **turns five years of age after the district's kindergarten entrance date (August 24) and before January 1**. The local board of education shall determine entrance through a standardized testing program.

- Children who will **not yet be the proper age for entrance to kindergarten 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 preschool educator who knows the child, or pediatrician or psychologist who knows the child.

- Early Entrance is a subject typically addressed through gifted education. According to the Ohio Revised Code (3324.01), "gifted" means students who perform or show potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared to others of their age, experience, or environment and who are identified under Division (A), (B), (C), or (D) of Section 3324.03 of the Revised Code.

Willoughby-Eastlake City School District

- The W-E City School District considers a child eligible for entrance into "regular" kindergarten if s/he attains the age of five on or before **August 24** of the year s/he applies for entrance. A child under the age of six (6) who is enrolled in kindergarten will be considered of compulsory school age.

- By parental request a child may be tested for regular *early* admission to kindergarten if s/he will be five (5) years of age between August 25 and January 1st, inclusive, and exhibit the mental, social and emotional standards established by the W-E Board of Education. **If your child turns 5 years of age after January 1st and you believe s/he is a viable candidate for early entrance , please contact the district Coordinator of Gifted Services at (440) 283-4332.**

- A child is eligible for entrance into 1st grade if s/he attains the age of six (6) on or before August 24 of the year in which s/he applies for entrance and has completed the kindergarten program of this district or an equivalent program elsewhere and has been recommended by the teacher for advancement to the first grade. This requirement may only be waived if the acceleration evaluation committee decides it is appropriate for the child. **If your child turns 6 years of age after January 1st, has not yet completed Kindergarten, and you believe s/he is a viable candidate for Early Entrance to 1st Grade, please contact the district Coordinator of Gifted Education at (440) 283-4332.**

- **As per the ODE's Model Acceleration Policy:**

  "Children who are referred for evaluation for possible accelerated placement sixty or more days prior to the start of the school year shall be evaluated in advance of the start of the school year so that the child may be placed in the accelerated placement on the first day of school. Children who are referred for possible accelerated placement sixty or more days prior to the start of the second semester shall be evaluated for possible accelerated placement at the start of the second semester. In all other cases, evaluations of a referred child shall be scheduled at the student's principal's discretion and placed in the accelerated setting(s) at the time recommended by the acceleration evaluation committee – if the committee determines the child should be accelerated. Pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code 3321.01, all children who will 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 be evaluated upon the request of the child's parent or legal guardian. 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 preschool educator who knows the child, or pediatrician or psychologist who knows the child. 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 may also be evaluated for possible early admittance at the discretion of the principal of the school to which the student may be admitted."

- Willoughby-Eastlake Schools criteria for Early Entrance to Kindergarten

  - Cognitive ability (RIST-2, RIAS-2, NNAT3) score of at least 115
  - Brigance Early Childhood Screen III
  - Beery Visual Motor Integration (Beery VMI) score of at least 12
  - Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschoolers (DECA-P2) score of typical

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*. The key to determining whether or not early entrance is appropriate is developmental readiness. Even though a child may have a lot 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 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 with children who are one year older than him or her?
- 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)?
- 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?

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 new material.

Once the decision has been made for early entrance, the choice is difficult to reverse. 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.

- Parents/guardians can easily access the *Early Learning Content Standards* on the *Ohio Department of Education* website at:
  http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1389&ContentID=1629&Content=135483

- Parents/guardians may also review the new Common Core State Standards in Math and ELA and Ohio Department of Education's new State Standards in Science and Social Studies for Kindergarten students by visiting:
  http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEPrimary.aspx?Page=2&TopicID=1695&TopicRelationID=1696

- The *Ohio Department of Education's* website contains useful information about kindergarten, in particular, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). There is a family guide on the Early Learning and School Readiness (ELSR) link about the KRA, which all kindergarten students will take within the first six weeks of school.
  http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Kindergarten/Ohios-Kindergarten-Readiness-Assessment/Kindergarten-Readiness-Assessment-for-Family

- Kindergarten in the W-E City School District is a *full-day program*. Students are expected to participate in the academic program throughout the day. Accommodations for partial day Kindergarten which must meet Ohio Department of Education criteria may be available, however mid-day transportation is not provided by the district to and/or from the school.

Ohio Department of Education (ODE)

(http://www.ode.state.oh.us)

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. If they cannot do something this week, you may see them do it a couple of weeks later.

Is your child ready for kindergarten? Ask yourself these questions:

Development Area	Tips and Activities to Prepare Your Child
Physical Skills Does your child… ● enjoy outdoor play such as running, jumping and climbing ● draw and trace basic shapes ● cut with scissors ● bounce a ball	● Materials that will help your child develop the motor skills needed to learn to write include crayons, markers, pencils, glue, scissors, paper and paint, puzzles, Legos and blocks ● Activities that will help your child's coordination include climbing, jumping, skipping, playing ball, using playground equipment and riding a tricycle.
Health and Safety Needs Has your child… ● had required shots (or provide a signed waiver) ● had a dental exam ● had a vision exam ● learned own first and last name ● learned first and last name of parent ● learned to watch for cars when crossing the street ● learned to not talk to strangers	● Help your child learn his or her full name, address and telephone number. ● Help your child to look both ways when crossing the street. ● Talk with your child about strangers and who to go to for help. ● Use bedtime as the opportunity to read to and talk with your child.

Personal Needs Without your help, can your child… ● use the bathroom ● wash hands ● brush teeth ● use tissue to blow nose ● button and zipper shirt and pants ● put on and take off coat ● tie and/or use Velcro shoes	● Create morning and bedtime bathing and tooth-brushing routines. ● Allow your child to dress themselves. ● Practice putting on shoes. ● Help your child learn to use their words to tell other grownups when they are feeling sick or hurt.
Social and Emotional Skills Does your child… ● play well with other children; ● separate from a parent without being upset; ● share with other children; ● care about the feelings of others; ● follow routines; ● put toys away when asked?	● Give your child small chores to learn responsibility. ● Help your child learn to follow directions by giving simple steps. ● Encourage your child to share. ● Praise your child when he or she does something well. ● Provide guidance when your child is having difficulty.

Applying for Early Entrance to Kindergarten

If you believe that your child may be a good candidate for Early Entrance to Kindergarten, this information and application form can be obtained from the website. Go to Enrollment > Early Entrance > Referral Forms.

- Appointments may be requested by completing the application form on the website. Once the application is received, you will be contacted to schedule a screening appointment with the psychologist at your child's future elementary school.. The following timeline will be used, which adheres to our district Acceleration Policy:
    - **March Screening:**
        - **Those received between January 1st and building-scheduled Kindergarten Registration date will ordinarily be completed and a written report issued no later than the end of April.**
    - **May/June Screening:**
        - **Those received after building-scheduled Kindergarten Registration dates and no later than June 1st will ordinarily be completed and a written report issued within 45 days to inform decisions to be made before the start of the school year in the year for which admission is being requested.**
    - **Individual Screening during the Summer & First Semester of the School Year:**
        - **Those received between June 1st and December 31st will ordinarily be completed and a written report issued within forty-five (45) calendar days of submission of referral to the school principal or Gifted Coordinator.**
- Students who will turn age 5 after January 1st of the school year to be enrolled are considered Grade Acceleration candidates and require the submission of a written referral from an educator within the district, a preschool educator who knows the child, or pediatrician or psychologist who knows the child, in addition to testing for the purpose of gifted identification. (If you are unable to access any of these individuals to gain a referral, please indicate this in writing and submit with your child's registration information.) Your child may require an observation by a district representative (elementary guidance counselor and/or school psychologist). *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 Regular Early Entrance to K evaluation of a student who will turn age 5 after January 1st of the school year to be enrolled is complete, an acceleration evaluation committee will convene for the purpose of conducting a fair and thorough evaluation of the child. This committee may include the following: *the home school principal or assistant principal*, *a kindergarten teacher or a gifted intervention specialist*, *a parent and/or legal guardian of the referred student or a representative designated by a parent or legal guardian of the referred student*, *a gifted education coordinator or gifted intervention specialist*, *a school psychologist or guidance counselor.*

How will my child be evaluated for Early Entrance to Kindergarten?

- Our district screens with the Reynolds Intellectual Screening Test (RIST-2). Additional screening is done with the Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scales (RIAS-2). If warranted, students are given the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test.

- Regular Early Entrance to Kindergarten Screening begins with an individual screening in which the child is assessed in the area of Cognitive Ability (innate ability that cannot be practiced or learned) using a nationally standardized ability assessemnt, which assessess verbal skills, non-verbal reasoning skills, and spatial skills.

- If a student scores 110-114, they will be given an additional ability test. A score of 110-114 **does not** qualify them for Early Entrance to Kindergarten but warrants an additional assessment.

- Assessed students who have a score which is at least **115** will have the option of additional testing:

    - Brigance Early Childhood Screens III (kindergarten readiness skills)
    - Beery Test of Visual Motor Integration (visual motor skills)
    - Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschoolers (DECA-P2) (social and behavioral readiness)

- The *Ohio Department of Education* website can give you more information about kindergarten expectations, including a checklist for kindergarten readiness. When looking at whether early entrance is appropriate for a child, the same readiness guidelines should be considered.

IMPORTANT

Very few children qualify for early entrance to kindergarten. Please make sure you proceed with childcare arrangements as a contingency. If you are selecting a Preschool program, please understand that those programs routinely fill up quickly. Please register your child a you normally would, but let the Preschool Office know that your child is being screened for early entrance ot kindergarten.

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