

ASHLAND CITY SCHOOLS
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EARLY ENTRANCE TO KINDERGARTEN

Background

In order to provide for individual differences in school readiness, the state of Ohio and the Ashland City Board of Education have taken steps to allow children with advanced development to enter school early (Ohio Revised Code #3321.01) Guidelines and criteria for this practice are offered in the Minimum Standards for Ohio Elementary Schools, revised 2010. In the Ashland City School district, a child's eligibility for early entrance is determined through an evaluation process. The early entrance evaluation will take place in April/May.

Purpose

This program is not compulsory for all children. It was established to accommodate the requests of parents of children possessing marked high ability and maturity as compared to their chronological ages. It is designed as a measure to meet individual differences in school readiness, providing an educational program and a method of acceleration for those who can profit by it; it is NOT to see if children who just missed the cut-off date can do kindergarten work.

In general, most children will have the best chance for a successful school experience if they begin their schooling with children of their own age group at the usual time of entrance.

Results of research indicate that with rare exceptions, children adjust more adequately and later achieve better in classes of children of similar ages. Entering school early tends to bring social, emotional, and academic challenges that are minimized only when children show unusually high social and emotional maturity.

It is widely accepted that children vary greatly in their learning rates, styles, and preferences. Early exposure to academic-type material, which frequently leads to early acquisition of readiness skills, often leads to the feeling that a child is gifted and should be admitted to school early. Research shows that these differences tend to disappear at about the third grade, when

children not exposed early “catch up.” Knowing colors, names, numbers, letters or even being able to read, does not necessarily mean that a child should enter school before other children of his/her age. Factors such as logical thinking, reasoning skills, ability to use abstract concepts, and paper and pencil skills are more important in the long run. Thus, early academic acceleration can be transitory and can be only one factor to be used in determining early entrance.

In general, the children who profit from early entrance and who may be penalized if early entrance into school is delayed, fall within the upper five percent of the general population of children of their age with respect to mental ability and social and emotional maturity.

Eligibility

Any child who is 5 years old after August 1 of the upcoming school year may be evaluated for early entrance. Due to variability in district standards and student expectations, students moving in from other districts who have been accepted there, but who have not yet started school, must also meet the criteria set by the Ashland City Schools before early entrance is granted.

Criteria

The early entrance evaluation should not be considered a “psychological assessment” and the information obtained will only be interpreted in light of the early entrance question.

- The child must qualify for Early Entrance readiness through cognitive and socioemotional testing and observations.
- The child’s cognitive ability will be measured on an instrument of intelligence and must fall well above the average range.
- Evidence is established by the interviewer that the child’s understanding and use of vocabulary and his/her ability for verbal expression are well above average for the children in the grade he/she is about to enter.
- During the testing, the child shall demonstrate social and emotional characteristics which conform with the pattern of behavior found in children in the grade he/she is to enter. Such factors include cooperation, self-confidence, attention span, and the ability to relate to adults and peers.
- The examiner’s observations include an assessment of the child’s general health, physical growth, and physical well-being, along with the development of visual-motor perception and muscular coordination. The underage child shall possess motor development and visual-motor perception typical of the children in the grade he/she is to enter.

The Evaluation Program

- Screening assessment will be provided to all children being considered for early entrance. This activity includes a norm-referenced cognitive screening which is used to screen those children who appear gifted in mental development.
- Supporting readiness evidence is gathered regarding the social, emotional, verbal and physical characteristics of the child. This is done as part of the evaluative procedure. Immaturity in the areas of physical, emotional, verbal and social development are valid reasons for withholding acceptance.
- Parents are notified as to the acceptance of their child.
- For children who qualify for acceptance to the Early Entrance Program, school records are established to record the results of the evaluation.