



Early Entrance Frequently Asked Questions

To be sure children are ready for the demands of school, students must be five by September 30 to enroll in Kindergarten and six to enroll in Grade 1. This date is appropriate for most children, but there are times when a younger child is academically and socially advanced. In accordance with state law, the district has established a process for children to be considered for early entrance to school. Here are common questions about the process. If you have additional questions, please contact the Gifted & Talented Office at 614-365-6626.

1. *How common is early entrance placement?*

Early entrance is typically reserved for the *exceptional* child. Although students do not need to be gifted for early entrance placement, students who are ultimately eligible often fall in the gifted range of ability. The goal of all placement decisions is to ensure that students entering Kindergarten/Grade 1 are ready for what this big year has in store academically and socially. Because the September 30 date is appropriate for most children, there often are very few students who demonstrate eligibility for early entrance.

2. *Who can request a child be considered for early entrance?*

Referrals may come from parents, family members, educators, or health professionals, such as a psychologist or pediatrician, if the child will be 5 years by December 31. The referral *must* come from an educator, pediatrician, or psychologist if the child turns 5 on January 1 or later (age 6 if early entrance is to Grade 1). All parents must sign a consent form for assessment. Forms are available from the Gifted & Talented office, local school, or the district website.

3. *Do evaluations apply to different districts?*

Each district or charter school handles their own early entrance to school process. Therefore, we can only conduct evaluations for children who intend to enroll in Columbus City Schools. In addition, we will not accept placement decisions made by other districts without careful review through our own process.

4. *When does someone request assessment for early entrance?*

Assessment requests for the following school year should be made between April 1 and May 15 to ensure time for assessment and any necessary placement prior to the start of the school year. Referrals may not be accepted after May 15.

5. *Can a family apply for their potential early entrance student to attend a lottery school?*

School lottery applications may be submitted after placement decisions are made. A copy of the letter indicating early entrance placement must be attached to the lottery application.

6. *How does the process work?*

There are multiple phases to the process, and students must meet criteria for the previous phase in order to move forward with the remainder of the evaluation. The basic steps are:

- The referral is made and parents grant permission to test. The Gifted & Talented office will follow-up to schedule the screening appointment. This typically occurs in early June for fall placements.
- The initial appointment is a cognitive ability screener, which takes about 30 minutes. The test is scored immediately and shared with the parents to determine next steps. Students must score at least 112 to continue with the process.
- If the child meets the initial screening criteria, testing continues to include more complete cognitive ability and academic achievement testing. This session lasts approximately 2 hours and includes breaks.
- Once all data is collected, the Gifted & Talented Office will arrange a placement meeting that includes a building principal, Kindergarten teacher, gifted coordinator, and parents.

7. *Is the process the same for early entrance to preschool?*

No. There is no process that allows for early entrance to preschool. Students must meet minimum age eligibility requirements to enroll in a Columbus City Schools preschool program. For more information, contact the Early Childhood Office at (614) 365-5822.

8. *When does assessment take place?*

Students referred before May 17 will be assessed during early June.

9. *Who conducts the assessment?*

A district school psychologist conducts most of the assessments. The placement team completes the Iowa Acceleration Scale, the tool used to summarize all data and generate placement recommendations.

10. *What information is used to determine if a child may enter Kindergarten/Grade 1 early?*

Assessment for early entrance uses information from an intelligence test that measures a child's ability to think, problem solve, and understand new ideas. The assessment also includes a test of academic skills and an evaluation of the child's social, emotional, and physical maturity.

11. *How long does the assessment take?*

The assessment process varies in length. Students who are eligible to go through the entire evaluation will go through about 3 ½ hours of actual testing. A placement meeting to review assessment and other data will occur within the same week.

12. *What is on the test?*

The cognitive ability test looks at a child's ability to follow directions, communicate through speaking, problem solve, understand how shapes and space go together, and recognize patterns and relationships among ideas and objects. The achievement testing measures a child's basic reading and writing skills and understanding of math concepts. The tests are designed to allow the child to go as far as possible in order to gauge how the child compares to other children the same age as well as the average Kindergartener/First Grader.

13. *What are the criteria for early entrance placement?*

Columbus City Schools use the *Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)* for making placement decisions. This instrument makes recommendations based on points assigned to certain test scores and certain behaviors. Along the way are required minimum scores in order to continue with the process. Based on the guide established in the *IAS*, students must have a cognitive ability score of at least 115 to even be considered in the process. To put that into perspective, 100 is considered average, 130 is considered gifted, and 115 is considered to be above average/bright. Also, students must have enough advanced academic skills to earn the required rating points to continue the process. Typically, students need to score at or above the 90th percentile in most subject areas when compared to students of the same age and at or above the 75th percentile in most subject areas compared to students two grades above to get enough points to continue with the assessment. These base scores do not guarantee early entrance placement. That decision is based on the total profile of the child. These scores simply serve as a guide for continued consideration. *Students considered for early entrance are expected to score much higher than an average child entering Kindergarten/Grade 1.* This is based on research on child development and acceleration practices and in accordance with state guidelines.

14. *Who makes the decision to place or not place a child in Kindergarten/Grade 1 early?*

A placement team, which typically includes the parents, gifted coordinator, building principal, and a teacher, will make decisions about placement for any child who completes the *entire* assessment process. The decision is a result of group consensus based on the data gathered during the assessment process. If consensus cannot be reached, the majority opinion will be used.

15. *What if a parent disagrees with the final decision?*

Any appeals must be made in writing (please state reason and any additional information) within 30 days of the date of this decision to: Executive Director, Office of Teaching and Learning, Columbus City Schools, 3700 S. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43207.