



Dear Parent:

We appreciate the interest you have show in the Evaluation Program to identify students who qualify for early entrance to Kindergarten.

Please review the parameters set forth the by the Medina City School District for early entrance, as well as the additional resource information provided on our website. If you should feel that your child qualifies for assessment, please contact the Office of Student Services at 330-636-3090 after August 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year in wish you wish to have your child enter school. At that time, you will be put in touch with the school psychologist who works at the building in which your child will attend school. An appointment for testing will be scheduled at the individual psychologist's discretion.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Student Services at the 330-636-3090 if you have further questions about our early entrance policy.

## MEDINA CITY SCHOOLS

Office of Student Services  
140 W. Washington St.  
Medina OH 44256  
330-636-3090

### EARLY ENTRANCE

#### Background:

In order to provide for individual differences in school readiness, the State of Ohio and the Medina City Board of Education have taken steps to allow children with advanced development to enter school early (Ohio Revised Code #3321.01 and Medina City Board of Education Policy #5112). Guidelines and criteria for this practice are offered in the Minimum Standards for Ohio Elementary Schools, Revised 1970. In Medina City, a child's eligibility for early entry is determined through an evaluation process. The early evaluation usually takes place in August, just prior to the beginning of the school year.

#### 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 cutoff date can do kindergarten work.

In general, most children will have the best chance for 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 like ages. Entering school early tends to bring social, emotional, and academic difficulties 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. Again, however, 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 and 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. Early entrance is probably best perceived as a form of acceleration which has the advantage over "skipping a grade" in that basic steps are not omitted from the school sequence.

In general, those children who can profit from the underage admission 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.

#### Eligibility:

Any child who is 5 years old after September 30 and on or before January 1 of the school year desired for entrance, 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 Medina City Schools before early entrance is granted. Requests for this service should be made by calling the Office of Student Services at 330-636-3090.

#### 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 possess a minimum I.Q. score of 127 on an individually administered instrument of intelligence.
- Evidence is established by the interviewer that the child's understanding and use of vocabulary and his/her ability for verbal expression are within the upper 50% of the children in the grade he/she is about to enter.
- During the screening, the child shall demonstrate social and emotional characteristics which conform with the pattern of behavior found within the upper 50% of children in the grade he/she is to enter. Such factors include cooperation, self-confidence, attention span, and the ability to relate to adults.
- 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 within the upper 50% 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 school entry. This activity includes a mental maturity measure which is used to screen those children who appear gifted in mental development and will be administered by a qualified school psychologist.
- An individual assessment of intelligence, administered by a qualified psychologist, is later given to those children who indicate that mental maturity is considered to be in the gifted range (above 127 I.Q.) Parents are notified of the date, time, and location for this individual session.
- 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.
- The Office of Student Services has been granted the authority to make the final decision regarding a child's readiness to enter school at an early age.

## *Ensuring a healthy start. Promoting a bright future.*

By Mary Ann Rafoth, PhD, NCSP, Erin L. Buchenauer, MEd, Katherine Kolb Crissman, MEd, & Jennifer L. Halko  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Is your child ready to begin school? Most adults remember kindergarten as a relaxed opportunity to learn the formal reading and math skills needed for first grade through guided play activities. However, because current public policy demands that schools meet higher standards, young children today often find themselves in increasingly rigorous academic programs beginning as early as kindergarten.

Beginning kindergarten students are now often expected to be ready to learn what was previously taught in first grade. Given these expectations, parents worry that their preschoolers may not have the preparation or maturity needed to succeed in today's kindergarten programs. Parents' worries regarding their child's school readiness have occasionally resulted in the delaying of kindergarten entry for their child in order to assure a higher level of readiness.

### School Readiness

The concept of school readiness typically refers to the child's attainment of a certain set of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills needed to learn, work, and function successfully in school. Unfortunately, this common philosophy of "ready for school" places an undue burden on children by expecting them to meet the expectations of school.

A more constructive way to consider school readiness is to remove the expectations from the child and place those expectations onto the schools and the families. Young children have wide ranging needs and require support in preparing them for the high standards of learning they will face in elementary school.

### Who Is Ready for Whom and When

States designate a specific, arbitrary cut-off date to create consistency in school entry practices. If a child reaches a certain age by the cut-off date (usually 5 for kindergarten and 6 for first grade), a child may begin school. However, cut-off dates vary considerably across states. In addition, age is not the best determinate or most accurate measure of how well a child will adjust to school. However, these policies are relatively fair because all students are treated equally.

Research about the relationship of school entry age to later school success suggests that children who do not meet the cut-off date and begin kindergarten do not suffer any harm in the long run.

It is difficult, though, to imagine that all entering kindergarten students will have similar skills and needs. Often school districts and communities hold kindergarten screening programs designed to help parents determine if their child is ready for school and to identify problems in development that might warrant attention or extra services. In spite of the kindergarten screening programs, young children are very difficult to evaluate accurately owing to their rapid development, short attention spans, and often inconsistent performance on demand. Children also may be entering the school system with, for instance, varying linguistic abilities, varying cultural heritages, and varying levels of both personal experience and cultural exposure.

In addition, because it is normal for children to learn different skills at different rates, it is inappropriate to judge school readiness based on a prescribed set of skills and abilities. While schools may reasonably expect that children enter kindergarten as active, curious, and eager learners, it is not reasonable to expect that all 5-year-olds have the same level of preparation needed to acquire early reading, math, and social skills, or have the same attention spans or motor dexterity. It is the school's job to teach children at their own level and to meet each child's needs, not the child's job to meet the school's expectations upon entry. School readiness should signify the need for educators to be ready for the child as much as it has come to signify the child's need to be ready for the school.

### Characteristics of School Readiness

Stated in simple terms, school readiness means that a child is ready to enter a social environment that is primarily focused on education. Research has suggested that many aspects of children's lives influence their preparation for formal school learning, including cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development, and, most importantly, early home, parental, and preschool experiences. Consideration of school readiness must take into account the range and quality of children's early life experiences,

the normal wide variation in young children’s development and learning, and the extent to which the school’s expectations of beginning kindergarten children are appropriate and respect individual differences.

The following list of behaviors and/or characteristics are often associated with early school success:

- Ability to follow structured daily routines.
- Ability to dress independently.
- Ability to work independently with supervision.
- Ability to listen and pay attention to what someone else is saying.
- Ability to get along with and cooperate with other children.
- Ability to play with other children.
- Ability to follow simple rules.
- Ability to work with puzzles, scissors, coloring, paints, etc.
- Ability to write their own name or to acquire the skill with instruction.
- Ability to count or acquire the skill with instruction.
- Ability to recite the alphabet (or quickly learn with instruction).
- Ability to identify both shapes and colors.
- Ability to identify sound units in words and to recognize rhyme.

## Parent and Family Influences on School Readiness

Family environment is very important in shaping children’s early development. Some family factors that can influence school readiness include:

- *Low family economic risk:* Poor readiness for school is often associated with poverty.
- *Stable family structure:* Children from stable two-parent homes tend to have stronger school readiness than children from one-parent homes and from homes where caregivers change frequently.
- *Enriched home environment:* Children from homes where parents talk with their children, engage them in conversation, read to them, and engage in forms of discipline such as time-out that encourage self-discipline have stronger readiness skills.

## What Parents Can Do to Help Prepare Children for School

A great deal of variability exists in developmental and skill levels within young children. This is normal, and many children will not have developed to the level of others at the same age. Nevertheless, parents can help their children develop the skills they will need to be ready for school. The following list is a collection of activities that parents can do with their children to increase their child’s general readiness for school:

- Read books to and with your child.

- Spend time with your child, including playing, cuddling, and hugging.
- Create and enforce a routine within your home that your child needs to follow (i.e., times of meals, naptimes, and bedtimes).
- Take time to talk to your child.
- Encourage and answer questions from your child.
- Engage in informal reading and counting activities at home.
- Promote your child’s cognitive development by showing and encouraging your child to think about the world around them.
- Promote play that helps develop literacy skills, problem-solving skills, creativity, and imagination.
- Familiarize children with the alphabet and with numbers.
- Ensure opportunity to develop social skills through playgroups or more formal preschool activities.
- Encourage behaviors that demonstrate respect and courtesy.
- Encourage children to accept responsibility and build competence through simple chores such as putting toys away and picking up clothes.

## Promoting Readiness to Read

Children’s readiness to read, in particular, has gained greater attention recently from educators as the developmental precursors to reading have become more evident.

Children are ready to read when they have developed an ear for the way words sound, can identify rhyme and alliteration, can blend sounds, recognize onset rhyme (initial sounds), and can identify sound units in words. Together these skills are called *phonological awareness* and usually emerge in children between ages two and six. Children with good phonological awareness skills usually learn to read quickly. Children who are poor readers often have weak phonological skills.

**Phonological awareness.** There are many things that parents can do to facilitate phonological awareness and improve their child’s readiness to read:

- Read nursery rhymes, sing songs, and clap along with the rhythm.
- Play games with words that sound alike as you experience them in everyday life. (“We’re passing ‘Mike’s Bikes,’ that’s a funny name because they sound alike!”)
- Demonstrate how sounds blend together in familiar words. (“Let’s sign your name on Grandma’s card, T-o-m --- Tom.”)
- Play a game where the goal is to find objects with names that begin with a certain initial sound; this is a great game for walks or car rides.
- Play clapping games and clap with each distinct sound. (“‘C-a-t’ is a three clap word; so is ‘fam-i-ly.’”)

**Comprehension.** Parents can build the following comprehension skills: attending to short stories by reading

short high interest books and reading the same favorites over and over; connecting story and titles by predicting the story from the title; making predictions about stories and following simple plots by asking questions while reading (“What’s going to happen now?”) and allowing children to retell stories; and communicating feelings and ideas by allowing children to talk and tell stories even when they do not appear to make much sense.

**Print awareness.** Another important readiness skill that helps children learn to read is called print awareness. *Print awareness* means that the child:

- Knows the difference between pictures and print.
- Recognizes environmental print (stop signs, McDonald’s, Wal-Mart).
- Understands that print can appear alone or with pictures.
- Recognizes that print occurs in different mediums (pencil, crayon, ink).
- Recognizes that print occurs on different surfaces (paper, computer screen, billboard).
- Understands that words are read left to right.
- Understands the lines of text are read top to bottom.
- Understands the function of white space between words.
- Understands that print corresponds to speech word-for-word.
- Knows the difference between letters and words.

Parents can build print awareness by pointing out print as distinct from pictures in everyday life (e.g., “That’s a sign for ‘women.’ That says ‘women.’”); pointing out store and restaurant marquees; pointing out print with and without pictures (e.g., “Here’s a page with just words!”); pointing out words written in different media and on different surfaces (e.g., “Look, someone wrote on that wall with spray paint!”); occasionally tracing words with your finger as you read; note that we begin reading at the top (point to the top and say, “Here’s where we start!”); playing find the word games with your child; and teaching the alphabet via songs and rhymes and talking about which letters make up familiar words.

**Book handling.** Children also need to learn book handling skills such as orienting a book correctly and recognizing the beginning and the end. Giving children their own books or letting them take books from the local library helps. Allowing children to hold books while being read to and asking them to open the book at the beginning and close the book at the end of the story facilitate book handling skills.

## Ten Signs of a Great Preschool

Placing your child into a preschool program will supply further reinforcement of your child’s general school readiness skills. However, as with anything else in life, some preschool programs are better than others. What follows is adapted from a list of 10 indicators of quality preschools prepared by the National Association for the Education of Young Children:

1. Children are mainly active in the classroom; that is, playing and/or working with other children or materials.

2. Children have access to various hands-on materials and activities.
3. Children receive individual and small-group time with the teachers, and not solely large-group time.
4. Children’s work is displayed in the classroom.
5. Children learn numbers and the alphabet throughout the entire day; that is, their learning of these constructs is embedded into everyday activities.
6. Children are given at least an hour to play and explore with little worksheet use.
7. Children are provided a daily opportunity to play outside.
8. Children are read to by teachers, individually, and in small-groups.
9. Children receive adapted curriculum dependent upon their own individual needs.
10. Children and parents are excited about the preschool; that is, children are happy and do not regularly cry or complain.

## Resources

- Crosser, S. (1998). *He has a summer birthday: The kindergarten entrance age dilemma*. *ERIC Digest*. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED423079 98.) Available: <http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content5/kindergarten.entrance.html>
- Dinwiddie, S. (1999). Kindergarten readiness. [Online]. Available: <http://www.kidsource.com/better.world.press/kindergarten.html>
- Golant, S., & Golant, M. (1999). *Kindergarten: It isn’t what it used to be* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 077302534.
- Nurss, J. (1987). Readiness for kindergarten. *ERIC/EECE Digest*. Available: [http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/readiness\\_for\\_k.html](http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/readiness_for_k.html)

## Websites

- National Association for the Education of Young Children—  
[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)  
See Position Statement on School Readiness and Signs of Quality Programs.

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