**Guidance for Gifted Education**

**Early Entrance to Kindergarten**

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has developed a guidance document, “Early Entrance to Kindergarten,” to provide districts with information on KRS 158.030. The legislation was passed in 2012 and requires a child enrolling in kindergarten in 2017 to turn five-years-old by August 1st, rather than the former cut-off date of October 1st. The purpose of the guidance is to provide technical assistance through research, best practice and practical suggestions regarding children who have high potential but are not age-eligible for kindergarten.

Parents and guardians may contact districts and request their child be considered for a waiver for early entrance to kindergarten, if they believe the child is ready for kindergarten. For districts to make informed waiver decisions, it is important that districts have a policy and process in place for early entrance. The following information may be used in assisting districts, parents and others in making appropriate decisions.

One of the first questions asked is, “How do I know if a child has high potential and is ready for academic challenges?”

Here are several general characteristics:

* Early verbal ability
* Strong mathematical skills
* Ability to maintain attention
* Early ability to reason abstractly
* Early interest in time

These characteristics should not be viewed as a complete list of traits. Rather, they suggest the common traits that may be apparent for children who demonstrate early potential.

Many children will have some of these qualities, but for students with high potential, the traits are found in a greater degree and combination. The focus should be on a range of behaviors. The children should be observed in daily conversations, activities and interactions with objects, people and ideas over an extended period of time.

It is also important to understand some high ability students may develop at different rates academically, socially and physically. This is known as [asynchronous](http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/social-emotional-issues/asynchronous-development) development. For example, a four-year-old child may function at a third-grade level in math, but still be developing at a typical rate socially and physically. For a younger student to perform successfully in kindergarten, it is critical that teachers understand asynchronous development and provide supports for the student.

Another point to consider is the difference in immaturity and intensity. A child may appear immature because he or she is blurting out information and asking questions, rather than waiting his turn or raising her hand. The child may appear immature, but may actually be very excited or knowledgeable about the topic. This may indicate it is intensity the child is displaying, not necessarily immaturity.

**Measures to be considered for waiver determination:**

* A committee comprised of experts in the areas of gifted education and early childhood are essential to the process of thoughtful decision-making. The following committee members are recommended:
  + A principal and receiving teacher(s)
  + A gifted education teacher, gifted coordinator or both
  + An early childhood expert, such as a preschool coordinator, Head Start director, preschool or Head Start teacher

A gifted education coordinator is an important part of the committee, as the coordinator will guide the team regarding the nature and needs of young children who have high potential. Likewise, an early childhood expert will have deep knowledge about the development of young children to share with the committee.

* Multiple measures should be used to identify young children who are ready for early entrance into kindergarten, with no single criteria used to keep a child from being selected. Rather, multiple pieces of information should be used for holistic evaluation.
* A behavioral checklist must be used with cultural sensitivity. An unexpected or anticipated behavior may be appropriate in one culture but inappropriate in others. The use of artifacts and props that are culturally familiar to the child are also recommended.
* Anecdotal information provided by parents for identification and programming should be considered by the team. Information from parents may illustrate characteristics of advanced learners, such as early verbal ability, strong mathematical skills, long attention span, extraordinary memory, abstract reasoning ability (the ability to generalize and make connections between areas of learning) and an early interest in time.
* Individual intelligence, aptitude, and achievement tests with a high ceiling may be considered for use. The team should expect above-average scores for intellectual ability or aptitude, but should not require achievement far beyond the beginning kindergarten level for early entrance to kindergarten.

**Points to Consider:**

* If a child is not accepted for early entrance, consider providing developmentally appropriate supports and making placement referrals to childcare, preschool, Head Start, library and county extension agency services.
* If a child’s academic and developmental needs are being met in an early childhood setting, such as childcare, preschool or Head Start, think carefully about waiting and exploring accelerated placement in first grade at a later date.
* Consider the Primary Talent Pool at the same time as early entrance to kindergarten and begin to collect evidence such as diagnostic data, continuous progress data and anecdotal records. Other evidences are listed in 704 KAR 3:285 Section 3.
* Parents have up to 60 days under the statute to decide if a child is ready for kindergarten. Once a child is approved for early entrance to kindergarten, it can be helpful to set up ~~f~~requent classroom monitoring, with instruction continuing or revised, based on the data gathered. This will furnish information about the child’s adjustment or the child’s need to wait until the next school year.
* Consider the child’s physical ability and stamina when writing, cutting, drawing or participating in class activities. While the child’s physical development may seem slower than classmates, it may be age-appropriate for the child. The same applies to the child’s stamina.

**Assessments that may be used in conjunction with other multiple criteria:**

* Metropolitan Readiness Test
* Test of Early Mathematics Ability (TEMA)
* Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA)
* Kaufman Survey of Early Academic and Language Skills (K- SEALS)
* Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS)
* Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test - (NNAT)

**Resources:**

* [A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America’s Brightest Students Volume 1](http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Nation_Deceived/ND_v1.pdf)
* [Asynchronous Development](http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/social-emotional-issues/asynchronous-development)
* [National Association of Gifted Children – Common Characteristics](http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/my-child-gifted/common-characteristics-gifted-individuals)
* [Selection of Candidates for Early Admission to Kindergarten and First Grade](http://www.davidsongifted.org/Search-Database/entry/A10123)