



## **6.8 Early Entrance & Grade Acceleration Policy**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy and process is to identify children who have characteristics associated with advanced development in the areas of academic, behavioral, social, and intellectual functioning. The Early Entrance/Acceleration Evaluation Process attempts to minimize risk associated with beginning school or an advanced grade level before a child is ready and to identify the children most likely to be successful.

Strong candidates for early entrance display skills beyond their expected age level. While pre-academic and academic skills are important (i.e. letter awareness and/or reading), advanced development in multiple areas is critical. For example, it is important for children to interact with peers appropriately, handle parent/guardian separation and behave appropriately in situations which produce frustration.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Kindergarten applicants must be 4 years 8 months by September 1, first grade applicants must be 5 years, 8 months by September 1.

Children may be considered for early entrance to according to the following procedures:

1. Contact the Executive Director in the year preceding that which the parent or guardian wishes their child to enter the identified grade level early.
2. The Executive Director will meet with the parent or guardian to discuss goals, learn about the child, and provide information regarding the implications of early entrance for a child as well as clarifying the process and criteria for early entrance.
3. Parent(s) or guardian(s) may choose to complete and return this application form to the Executive Director of the school.

Applications will be accepted between February 1 and May 1 of the year preceding anticipated, initial enrollment.

The Executive Director shall have the option to select appropriate evaluators for the early entrance assessment of students. All evaluators assessing the intellectual functioning and the social competencies will be required to have a current school psychologist license. Evaluators assessing the academic readiness skills will hold a current Minnesota teaching license. Early entrance evaluation of students shall not be performed by any school district personnel during regular school hours.

Oak Hill Montessori Community School will contract with an approved school psychologist and licensed teacher to perform the necessary assessments. As this service is provided outside of regular school



services, any associated evaluation costs must be paid by the parent or guardian requesting the evaluation. Parents/guardians who are not able to pay the fee should contact the Executive Director to discuss possible options.

### **EVALUATION PROCESS**

1. Parent calls the office of the school to schedule a meeting with the Executive Director and acquire application materials.
2. Upon receiving a completed application form and fee, the form should be returned to the Executive Director who will forward the information to appropriate evaluators.
3. After the May 1 deadline, the evaluators will contact the parent or guardian and schedule a time for the evaluation.
4. After the assessment is complete, the Early Entrance Team, a group of professionals comprised of district administrators, licensed teachers, and a licensed school psychologist will convene to review assessment results and make the final placement decision.

Data in the following areas will be considered:

- Intellectual Functioning: Superior general cognitive functioning as measured by a technically sound standardized test of intelligence. Children will need to score at or above the 99th percentile to be considered for early entrance.
- Academic Readiness: Superior school readiness skills. Must meet Oak Hill Montessori Community School's Read Well by Third Grade winter benchmarks for kindergarten students. Some skills assessed include letter identification, letter sounds, early reading skills, and number recognition.
- Social Competencies: Scoring above average in all areas of the Social Skills Improvement System (which is a parent questionnaire) AND above average on the social development teacher questionnaire used by Oak Hill Montessori Community School (which is completed by a preschool teacher).
- Pre-School History: Information regarding the child's performance in any preschool program.
- Previous Testing (if any): The results of any individual psycho-educational testing completed prior to the initiation of this process.

5. The Early Entrance Team will make the final decision and provide the decision, in writing, to parents no later than July 30, providing all testing has been completed.

- A written report from the licensed professionals, which is also shared with the Evaluation Team, will be included with the written decision.
- Current residents missing the May 1 deadline will be expected to send children at the age appropriate time to kindergarten or their assigned grade, unless there are extenuating circumstances.



Early Entrance & Initial Admission (continued)

**GRADE LEVEL PLACEMENT**

The final decision regarding the early admittance of a student is made by the Early Entrance Team. The team will review written records that pertain to the student’s previous school experiences and level of functioning.

This decision is final, and will be made with the best interest of each child in mind. If a parent/guardian has a question regarding the placement decision, they may contact the Executive Director.

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To Be Completed by Person Initiating Acceleration Request

Person Initiating Referral \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Student \_\_\_\_\_

Please address the following questions regarding the decision to pursue an acceleration request.

**Social-Emotional Factors:** Would acceleration be socially and emotionally appropriate for the student?

Please explain the effect you believe acceleration will have in relation to the candidate’s ability to interact and relate to older peers:

Academics: Why do you believe this candidate is ready academically to be advanced? How will the candidate benefit more from acceleration than from the implementation of differentiation strategies and other educational options in the current placement. Please give specific examples.

Former/Current Teacher Recommendation: What evidence do you have that the candidate’s former/current teacher would support this request? (Include a teacher recommendation if at all possible.) Please include the name of the teacher in your response.

Other Factors: Are there any other factors to be considered in the acceleration of this candidate?