



# Assessment of Young Gifted Learners for Early Entrance to Kindergarten or First Grade

April, 2020

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) defines distance learning as “students have access to appropriate educational materials and receive daily interactions with their licensed teachers.” Supporting young gifted learners during school closure provides some challenges and opportunities. This document builds on the delivery systems outlined in the MDE Guidance on Distance Learning and applies them to the assessment of children for early entrance to kindergarten and first grade.

## Early Entrance to Kindergarten and First Grade

When compared to children of similar age, some children are ready to begin school early. The decision to do so has long-term impact on the child’s academic achievement, social emotional development, and possibly career trajectory (Assouline et al., 2015). This process, known as early entrance to kindergarten or first grade makes it possible for a student to enter school before turning five. Early entrance shortens the waiting time to start school and may ultimately affect the number of years a student will spend in the K-12 system.

Minnesota Statutes, [section 120B.15](#), requires school districts and charter schools to have a procedure in place for the assessment of children for early entrance to kindergarten. The process must establish a comprehensive evaluation procedure to determine the child’s cognitive, social, and emotional development and the child’s ability to meet kindergarten grade expectations and progress to first grade the following year.

During this unprecedented time, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) seeks to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students while prioritizing their health and well-being.

Research indicates that many gifted children experience heightened sensitivity to environmental stimuli because of their rapid information-processing (Mendaglio, 2007). Children, especially those who are unfamiliar with testing or are experiencing high levels of anxiety, may fail to demonstrate their abilities or capabilities when assessed at this time. To ensure the best educational outcomes, districts who did not complete their assessment of students for early entrance prior to school closure are encouraged to adjust their timeline to minimize the impact of COVID-19. The completion of evaluations in which all data had been collected prior to school closure may proceed to the final decision-making stage. If face-to-face assessments or observations have not been completed a delay in decision-making is recommended.

## Important Considerations

- Did the deadline to request assessment for early entrance occur before or after school closure?

- If the deadline occurred after school closure, do families have an opportunity to request assessment for early entrance? How have they been notified of the opportunity?
- How many families have requested assessment for early entrance?
- At what time of year does assessment for early entrance typically occur? Where are you now in the assessment process?
- What flexibility is available within the current procedure?
- Is it possible to delay the decision-making process by assessing students over the summer or in the early fall? If the decision-making process is delayed, how might that have an impact on the date students begin kindergarten or first grade? What dates might be best for students to begin school (e.g., after the fall or winter break or at some other natural transition point)?
- What staff will be required to conduct a comprehensive evaluation to help determine the child's cognitive, social, and emotional development and the child's ability to meet kindergarten grade expectations and progress to first grade the following year?
- Will adjustments to the procedure or timeline compromise the validity of the assessment?
- How will data-informed decisions be made?
- How will changes in the process be communicated to families and staff?

## Resources to Consider

The Acceleration Institute website informs parents, educators, researchers and policymakers of the research and practices concerning academic acceleration. [Visit the Acceleration Institute website.](#)

Assouline, S., Colangelo, N., Lupkowski-Shoplik, A., Lipscomb, J., and Forstadt, L. (2009). [Iowa Acceleration Scale manual: A guide for whole-grade acceleration](#) K–8 (3rd ed.). Great Potential Press.

Assouline, S. G., Colangelo, N., and VanTassel-Baska, J., and Lupkowski-Shoplik, A. (2015). [A nation empowered: Evidence trumps the excuses holding back America's brightest students](#) (Vol. 1 and 2). The University of Iowa, The Connie Belin and Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development

Lupkowski-Shoplik, A., Behrens, W. A., and Assouline, S. G. (2018). Developing academic acceleration policies: Whole grade, early entrance, and single subject. National Association for Gifted Children. [View Developing Academic Policies: Whole Grade, Early Entrance and Single Subject.](#)

Mendaglio, S., and Peterson, J. S. (Eds.). (2007). [Models of counseling gifted children, adolescents, and parents.](#) Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, Inc.

Address any questions to Wendy Behrens, Gifted and Talented Education Specialist at [mde.academicstandards@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.academicstandards@state.mn.us)