

EARLY ACCESS, ACCELERATION, AND GRADE SKIPPING

- 1.0 **Acceleration.** The District recognizes that some children may benefit academically, socially and/or emotionally from accelerating and/or grade skipping. Students may be granted early entrance into kindergarten or first grade and accelerated in District academic programs as provided in this policy.
- 2.0 **Early Access for Highly Advanced Gifted Children.** The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) states that “highly advanced gifted child” means a gifted child whose body of evidence demonstrates a profile of exceptional ability or potential compared to same-age gifted children. To meet the needs of highly advanced development, early access to educational services may be considered as a special provision. “Early access” means early entrance to kindergarten or first grade for highly advanced gifted children under age six. Children for early access are exceptionally precocious and ready for school earlier than their same-age peers. Academic achievement, reasoning ability, performance and motivation are keen (97th percentile or higher) compared to other gifted children. The following procedures will be followed to determine whether a highly advanced gifted child who is age four (4) by October 1 may be enrolled in kindergarten, or age five by October 1 may be enrolled in first grade, prior to the age requirements established in District Policy 5230.
 - 2.1 A parent/guardian residing within District boundaries initiates the evaluation process by submitting an application to the Advanced Academic & Gifted Services (AAGS) Department between December 1 and noon on the last business day of January of the school year prior to which fall enrollment is desired. This date coincides with the deadline for the first round of the choice of schools process. Beyond the testing window, applications will be handled on a case by case basis if personnel are available to administer the screening process, but no applications will be considered beyond April 1. The process will involve a fee to cover the cost of testing materials and personnel time to administer the screening. This fee may be waived for families that qualify for free/reduced lunch programs, if they provide documentation of eligibility for free/reduced lunch programs with their applications. The District may accept outside testing results as outlined in Section 2.3.
 - 2.2 The AAGS Department will contact the parent/guardian to set up a screening appointment.
 - 2.3 The children will spend approximately three hours with a determination team of gifted/talented (GT) and/or early childhood professionals during the screening process, which may involve a small group of children being considered for early access. At the conclusion of the screening, if the child’s body of evidence indicates performance on nationally normed assessments in the highly gifted range (97th percentile or higher), the District will schedule an appointment with the child for Intelligence Quotient (IQ) testing with a licensed psychologist. If the child has already undergone IQ testing by a licensed psychologist, the AAGS department may consider these results, but the student will still need to undergo screening for the achievement, readiness, and other components as outlined in Section 2.4. There will be a fee to cover the costs of testing materials and personnel time to administer the screening, which may be waived as outlined in Section 2.1.

- 2.4 Once all testing is concluded, the determination team will compile a screening portfolio on the child. The screening portfolio shall include the following information:
 - 2.4.1 Aptitude – This is typically an IQ assessment. As a part of the early access application process, this norm-referenced cognitive assessment may be administered by a licensed psychologist. A child’s performance must be in the highly gifted range (97th percentile or higher) for consideration.
 - 2.4.2 Achievement – Data will be gathered through a screening process using assessments of early reading, writing and math ability and other cognitive screening instruments. A child’s performance must be in the highly gifted range (97th percentile or higher) for consideration.
 - 2.4.3 Performance – Parents and preschool teachers (as appropriate) will be asked to complete an inventory that addresses many of the child’s abilities and characteristics. A child’s performance must be in the highly gifted range (97th percentile or higher) for consideration.
 - 2.4.4 Behavior, readiness, social behavior and motivation – interactive behavioral observations and/or other instruments may be administered as part of the screening process. A child’s performance must be in the highly gifted range (97th percentile or higher) for consideration.
- 2.5 The determination team will utilize the screening portfolio to determine whether the child should be enrolled in kindergarten or first grade as per CDE criteria, which consists of scoring at the 97th percentile or higher in all four categories: aptitude, achievement, performance and behavior. A student may score at the 97th percentile or higher on aptitude and achievement tests but not have data that supports school readiness. Every child with a score above 97th percentile may not benefit from early access to kindergarten or first grade. A cognitive score of 97th percentile or higher is required along with performance, behavioral, and achievement scores of 97th percentile or higher in reading, writing and math. A copy of the final assessment summary will be mailed out to the family within 60 days of completion of all testing. A copy of the final assessment summary will be retained by the AAGS Department.
- 2.6 An Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) will be completed by September 30 of the first year of enrollment (Kindergarten or first grade as appropriate) for students granted early access. Progress of the student granted early access will be monitored every five (5) weeks during the first year of enrollment.
- 2.7 Following the mailing of reports, parents will have 30 days to express disagreement with the decision to the AAGS Director. The Director will review the data and any additional information the parent submits for consideration to determine if the decision should be reconsidered. The Director shall issue a decision within 10 business days following receipt of all information provided by or requested from the parent.
- 2.8 A parent/guardian who disagrees with the Director’s decision shall be informed of the appeal process described in Section 5.0.

- 3.0 **Acceleration/Grade Skipping Grades K-8.** Acceleration and/or grade skipping in grades K-8 shall be based upon the professional judgment of a review committee whose composition will be the child's classroom teacher, the GT building coordinator, the school principal, the parents, and any other school personnel the school principal deems appropriate.
- 3.1 The following procedures will be followed to determine whether a student in grades K-8 shall be accelerated in their academic program:
- 3.1.1 A parent, teacher or student may initiate the evaluation process by submitting a written request for review to the building principal. The principal may also initiate a review following a referral by a staff member. The principal shall gather relevant data and meet with the student's parent to discuss whether the child is likely to qualify as gifted/talented following formal evaluation. If both parent and principal agree that formal evaluation is warranted, the principal or gifted and talented building coordinator will contact the AAGS Department at the District to obtain the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) to begin organizing the student's data.
- 3.1.2 The building coordinator and/or principal will work with the parents and classroom teacher to complete the IAS on the student in consideration.
- 3.1.3 The review committee, consisting of principal, gifted and talented building coordinator, parents, teacher, and AAGS Director or his/her designee will meet to review the data and determine if the child is a good candidate for acceleration.
- 3.1.4 The review committee shall consider the following criteria:
- 3.1.4.1 Academic achievement – The child is functioning above grade level in most academic areas;
- 3.1.4.2 Attendance – The child has a history of strong, regular attendance.
- 3.1.4.3 Attitude toward acceleration – The child's and parents' attitudes toward acceleration have been considered.
- 3.1.4.4 Intelligence – The child has been found to operate above the normal range of intelligence. The child should have been identified as gifted and talented through the District identification process.
- 3.1.4.5 Maturity – The child is generally mature for his/her age and is comfortable and successful in interactions with older children. It is recognized that few children will meet all of the above criteria; however, the greater the number of criteria present, the more advisable the acceleration. The District will utilize the Iowa Acceleration Scale to help to organize the data into qualifiable and quantifiable criteria for consideration.
- 3.1.5 A decision will be made by the AAGS Director based on the data and support of the review committee for the child's acceleration. If the decision is made to accelerate the student, the team will design a transition plan and set appropriate dates for the acceleration to take place. The parent/guardian shall be provided a written copy of the decision within 60 days of completion of all testing and a copy shall be placed in the child's cumulative records and District GT file.

- 3.2 A parent/guardian who disagrees with the Director's decision shall be informed of the appeal process described in Section 5.0.
- 4.0 **Acceleration/Grade Skipping Grades 9-12.** Students in grades 9-12 will be permitted to enroll in courses targeted for students in higher grade levels when supported by the student's record of academic achievement. High school students who satisfy the District's graduation requirements may be graduated prior to the completion of four years of high school.
- 5.0 **Appeals and Review Process.**
 - 5.1 The parents shall submit a written request for a review to the Executive Director of Schools. The request shall identify any items of noncompliance with this policy and the reasons why the AAGS Director's decision should be modified or changed.
 - 5.2 A review of the AAGS Director's decision regarding acceleration, early access, grade skipping and/or gifted/talented identification shall be done by the Executive Director of Schools. The parent/guardian, principal, teacher, building coordinator and Director will be asked to attend a meeting to provide additional information to the Executive Director.
 - 5.3 The parent/guardian will be informed in writing of the decision of the Executive Director of Schools. The decision of the Executive Director shall be final.

CROSS REFERENCES:

Code: 5230

Code: 5260