

Early Entrance to Kindergarten or First Grade

Application Guide

Applications Due May 1
of desired school year of entry



Things for parents to consider

Because you are considering early entrance to kindergarten, you probably have observed some behaviors in your child that lead you to think he or she might be ready for kindergarten. Indeed, some children are ready, and that's why our school district provides a process for early entrance.

It's an important decision that can affect your student's academic and social performance for the remainder of his or her school career, so we urge you to take it very seriously. Here are some things to consider:

- Research indicates that early entrance and/or early reading ability is not a predictor of success in school.
- Children with strong early reading skills often plateau by third grade.
- Children who enter kindergarten early may demonstrate social or emotional difficulties due to their relative immaturity.
- As they progress through school, children who are young for their grade level may have more difficulty fitting in with their peers in social situations.
- They may be less likely to excel in sports because of their age and/or their smaller size.

Why is a special process required for early entrance?

The assessment process helps determine whether children whose birth dates are September 1 are likely to succeed *if offered early entrance to kindergarten*. Even a few weeks can make a difference in a child's readiness.

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY ENTRANCE

A Parent's Viewpoint.

Parents sometimes assume that an early start in school provides an educational advantage for their child. This assumption runs counter, however, to research that indicates that *children who start early enjoy no long lasting advantage over those of equal ability who start later*. While pursuing what they believe is best for their child, parents may not be considering all of the dimensions of child development; they might also overlook the importance of early success in building confidence for the future.

After considering the possible effects of early entrance, some parents choose not to go through with the evaluation. Those who continue with the process understand that the vast majority of children do not meet the criteria for acceptance *but still have normal development*. Frequently, parents of students who are accepted for early entrance choose to enroll later because they recognize the implications of starting early and want their child to have a positive first school experience.

A Teacher's Viewpoint.

Many experienced teachers express concerns about early entrance into kindergarten based on their experience and research on learning. Even the most well-rounded, mature children encounter frustration when exposed to the rigors of a daily school routine, competition with older children, and the challenges of learning. Younger children may also experience social difficulties in a predominantly older group.

Early entrance into kindergarten is further complicated by the pressure children feel to excel in school. Sometimes, because children are bright, parents expect them to do well and may fail to recognize what the child has accomplished just by starting school early. Some children react by withdrawing from such pressure. They may try to blend in with the group and become average learners.

Teacher observations are part of the early entrance assessment process, and extend into the first six weeks of school. Progress and social adjustment are carefully monitored to ensure that the child can cope with the demands over a prolonged period. Parents are encouraged to keep in close contact with the teacher and to provide input.

A School Psychologist's Viewpoint.

Most school psychologists have strong opinions about the topic of early entrance. As child advocates and professionals who spend considerable time with children who have learning issues, they are very concerned about early learning experiences and their impact on school success. School psychologists tend to be conservative in making a determination in favor of early entrance in an effort to reduce the likelihood of unpleasant or unsuccessful school experiences.

The role of the school psychologist during the assessment process is to gather information regarding the child's independence and readiness, responses to standardized assessment of cognitive functioning and, in some cases, adaptive behavior.

The importance of early school success and self-image are stressed by the school psychologist. Parents are encouraged to minimize pressure to "pass" and to present the experience more like a visit for an annual physical where measurements are taken to document growth.

KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE EXPECTATIONS 03

Families, early childhood teachers, and caregivers all contribute to a child's readiness for a positive kindergarten experience. The development of skills varies from child to child. It is expected that children will meet most of these expectations before entering kindergarten.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL:

- The child is able to attend to task/listen for 10-15 minutes in a group setting.
- The child is able to manage transitions and accept changes in routines.
- The child is able to respond appropriately to limits and directions.
- The child interacts easily with one or more children in a variety of activities.
- The child is able to interact easily with adults asking for help or making their needs known.

SELF-HELP:

- The child is able to perform self-care tasks such as using the bathroom, wiping nose, and washing hands independently.
- The child is able to dress self including outdoor clothing.
- The child takes care of personal items and classroom materials.
- The child has practiced ways to accept disappointment and mistakes.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY:

- The child listens and responds to stories and books.
- The child is able to follow simple 2-3 step directions.
- The child is able to communicate needs, wants, and thoughts through words and age-appropriate sentence structures.
- The child begins to associate sounds with words or letters.
- The child is able to recognize and name some letters of the alphabet, especially those in own name.
- The child has engaged in writing activities using scribbles, pictures, shapes, or letters using a variety of tools such as crayons, pencils, and paintbrushes.

MATH/PROBLEM SOLVING:

- The child names basic colors and common shapes.
- The child demonstrates understanding of one-to-one correspondence through counting objects.
- The child sorts objects into groups by color, shape, or size.
- The child understands math concepts of "above, under, in front, behind, beside, few, more, big, little, long, and short".
- The child recognizes and names some numbers.

FINE MOTOR:

- The child has practiced using pencils, crayons, and scissors.
- The child has used play dough, Legos, puzzles, and stringing beads to strengthen hand muscles.

If you have any questions regarding kindergarten entrance expectations, please contact the Director of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Julie van Wijk

vanwijkJ@Lynden.wednet.edu

360-354-4443 extension 3404

PREPARING FOR ASSESSMENT

Once parents have become informed about Early Entrance into kindergarten and decided to proceed with assessment, the child should be given every opportunity to perform well. Prepare the child physically by getting him or her to bed early the night before, providing breakfast, comfortable play clothes, and gym shoes. Parents should maintain a positive, relaxed attitude rather than emphasizing pieces of information for the child to memorize in order to "pass." Trying to study or "cram" in order to help your child prepare for the assessment often produces confusion and anxiety rather than confidence.

The best approach is usually a straightforward one. Tell your child that he or she will be working with someone who helps the teachers at school and that there may be other children waiting to do the same activities. The activities are fun, and they should enjoy the session while doing their best. Bring things for your child to work on quietly if they have to wait a few minutes for their appointment.

Remember, the focus is on gathering information to help adults make decisions about your child's readiness to enter school early and have a successful and positive school experience. Many children who participate in the assessment are developing normally, but may not meet the criteria for Early Entrance. Be supportive of your child, and help him or her have a good experience.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will my child feel if he/she is not among the children who met the criteria for acceptance?

A child's reaction usually depends on how the situation has been presented and how parents react to the admission decision. Parents who react strongly to the results may send the message to the child that he/she has failed or done something wrong. The child will maintain self esteem if parents present the information positively and stress how much better prepared the child will be after another year in preschool.

What are some reasons children do not meet the criteria?

The basic reason is that most children are developing normally or at a rate that is only slightly above average. Occasionally, results indicate that a child may be delayed in some area of development included in the screening. In such cases, parents are advised of the specific findings the day of the evaluation or by a phone call soon afterward.

Why are the standards for early entrance so rigorous?

Past experience and research have shown that most children do better when they enter school with their age group. Children who enter early are placed in a highly competitive situation with others who may be a year older who have had the advantage of additional life experience and development. Only a few advanced children are ready to compete on this level where emotional stress can be intense. High standards in the assessment process help ensure that kindergarten readiness is demonstrated consistently among several areas of development.



LYNDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Tradition + Pride + Excellence

Dear Parent:

Age requirements for kindergarten and first grade entry are established by the State of Washington, based upon the average age of readiness. However, each child is an individual and not all children are at the same readiness level at a particular chronological age. The age requirement is mandated by the State in order to standardize all public schools in Washington and to facilitate decision making. For kindergarten entry, children must be 5 years of age **prior** to September 1 of the year of entry. For first grade entry, children must be 6 years of age **prior** to September 1 of the year of entry.

Districts have the option of permitting some children to enter kindergarten or first grade on an early entry basis. Children born between September 1 and September 30 (may apply for early entrance).

The decision regarding your child's readiness for early kindergarten or first grade entry is a complex one and should be made with care. The Lynden School District recognizes individual differences in children's development; we believe that achievement of each child's potential should be the common goal of parents and school staff. The purpose of assessing your child's development before allowing early kindergarten or early first grade entry is to ensure that your child will be able to achieve academically and socially to his or her potential. We want each student to have a successful and rewarding school experience that promotes academic achievement, social growth, and feelings of self-confidence and self-worth.

The assessment that we require for early entry to kindergarten or first grade includes evaluation of cognitive abilities, fine and gross motor skills, visual and auditory discrimination and social/emotional development. The Lynden School District has established a criterion that a child achieve consistently in all of these areas at a level equivalent to the average of children at the 5 year, 6 month level for kindergarten entry and at the 6 year, 6 month level for first grade entry. In our experience, children applying for early entry are generally average to above average intellectually. However, children's skills may not be at the same level in other areas such as fine motor coordination, early literacy skills, or social development.

Applications for early entrance for children living within the Lynden School District will be accepted through **May 1st** of the desired entry year. Please read and complete this packet, and submit completed application and fee to the Director of Teaching & Learning, whose address is indicated on the application form. You will be contacted for an appointment with one of our school psychologists for an Early Entrance Screening.

Lynden School District
Early Entrance to Kindergarten Application Checklist

1. Complete this packet and turn it in to the Director of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Julie van Wijk, at the District Office, 516 Main Street, Lynden, WA 98264.

- Include Proof of Age
- Include Proof of Residency
- Include \$475 fee

(Families for whom the cost of an assessment would cause an undue hardship may request an exemption or reduction from fees by submitting a "Free and Reduced Meals" application.)

Applications Due before May 1 of Desired Year of Entry

(Families new to the district who cannot meet this deadline may apply. However, the student cannot be registered until the process is completed and it is possible that the child will start school late.)

2. Upon receiving your completed application the Lynden School District will contact you to make an appointment for evaluation in late Spring.
 - Evaluation will be conducted by a School Psychologist and Early Learning staff.
 - Parent/guardian will be notified of the results no later than 7 days before school begins.
3. Upon notification of approval, parents/guardians may register their child at the school.

LYNDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 504

Application for Early Entrance to Kindergarten Evaluation

| | | |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Students Name: Last First Middle | | |
| Female: | Male: | Date of Birth: |
| Parent/Guardian Name: | | |
| Address: Street City Zip | | |
| Phone: Home | Phone: Cell | Phone: work |
| Email: | Best method of contact: | |
| List Preschool Experience (Below) | | |
| Name of School | City | Number of Years |
| Name of School | City | Number of Years |
| School Child will be attending if admitted: | | |

Please enclose the \$475 *non-refundable* evaluation fee

(Make checks payable to Lynden School District)

Checks can be mailed to:

**Lynden School District
Attn: Director of Teaching and Learning
Dr. Julie van Wijk
516 Main Street
Lynden, WA 98264**

Request for fee reduction (Please fill out and attach District Application for Free/Reduced lunch) Request application from Narlene VanBeek, Food Service Director | Email: vanbeekn@Lynden.wednet.edu

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____ **Date:** _____

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| For Internal Use Only | | |
| _____ Date received | | |
| _____ Check no. | _____ Evaluation Date | |

LYNDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 504

Early Entrance to Kindergarten

Parent Questionnaire

Please complete this questionnaire if you would like your child to be considered for early placement in kindergarten. Early admittance will be considered for children born after September 1 of the desired year of entry and demonstrate above-level behaviors in the following areas: academic achievement, social, emotional and physical maturity.

Child's Name _____ Birth Date _____
Last First

| Parent Checklist | | | |
|---|------------|-----------|-------|
| This checklist will help in determining your child's readiness for our kindergarten program. Please read each statement and indicate your child's abilities as listed below by checking the appropriate column. | | | |
| | Frequently | Sometimes | Never |
| Physical Well – Being and Motor Development | | | |
| Performs self-help tasks independently (dressing, zipping and tying). | | | |
| Uses eye/hand coordination to perform fine motor tasks (drawing, writing and cutting). | | | |
| Uses balance and control to perform large motor tasks (walking, jumping and skipping). | | | |
| Personal and Social Development | | | |

| | Frequently | Sometimes | Never |
|---|------------|-----------|-------|
| <i>Shows eagerness to learn (is curious, likes to investigate).</i> | | | |
| <i>Follows rules and routines (cleans up at play time).</i> | | | |
| <i>Handles change and transition (dinner time to bedtime).</i> | | | |
| <i>Interacts easily with one or more children.</i> | | | |

Language and Literacy

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Listens for meaning in stories, discussions and conversations. | | | |
| Speaks clearly to share ideas and thoughts. | | | |
| Can identify letters. | | | |
| Can identify beginning sounds. | | | |
| Uses letters and words to write. | | | |
| Writes name. | | | |

Mathematical Thinking

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Can recognize numbers 0-20. | | | |
| Can orally count forward to 30. | | | |
| Can recognize, duplicate, and extend simple patterns (circle-triangle, circle-triangle, circle-triangle). | | | |
| Can recognize and describe attributes of shapes. | | | |

Scientific Thinking

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Uses a magnifying glass to look at different objects. | | | |
| Identifies, describes and compares properties of objects. | | | |
| Describes characteristics and basic needs of living things (food, water, shelter). | | | |

Social Studies

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Recognizes self and others as having same and different characteristics. | | | |
| Describes roles and responsibilities of people (firefighters put out fire). | | | |

| | Frequently | Sometimes | Never |
|---|------------|-----------|-------|
| Recognizes the reasons for rules. | | | |
| The Arts | | | |
| Likes to paint and draw. | | | |
| Likes to sing and dance. | | | |
| Can share ideas about a drawing/painting. | | | |

Parent Questionnaire

Please answer each question below. If additional space is needed, use the back of this form.

1. Why do you feel your child should be considered for early entrance into kindergarten?

2. What responsibilities does your child have at home? What do you do when your child does not follow through?

3. How long does your child maintain interest in a play activity or game at a given time?

4. How does your child respond when he/she tries but cannot do something?

5. What does your child know about numbers, shapes and patterns?

6. What types of reading activities does your child engage in at home?

7. What kinds of experiences has your child had with writing and writing tools?

8. How does your child handle transitions and new situations?

9. How does your child interact with other children? Please explain and consider whether or not your child shares, takes turns and cooperates with peers.

10. What experiences has your child had that have required separating from you?

LYNDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT #504
PRESCHOOL/DAYCARE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
EARLY ENTRANCE TO KINDERGARTEN

Student's Name _____ Date _____

Teacher's Name _____ Preschool _____

Parent, please deliver and have your Preschool complete the following confidential questionnaire and have **Preschool return** to the Lynden School District, Attention Director of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Julie van Wijk, 516 Main Street, Lynden, WA 98264. Email: vanwijkJ@Lynden.wednet.edu This completed form must be received by the teaching and learning department by May 1.

Please circle the appropriate symbol:

- + **plus = shows significant or consistent skills, (behavior/progress)**
- ✓ **check = shows moderate or inconsistent skills (behavior/progress)**
- **minus = demonstrated little or no skills at this time.**

1. Describe the student's basic skills:

- | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|
| + ✓ - | Academic skills | + ✓ - | Language skills |
| + ✓ - | Social skills | + ✓ - | Emotional skills |
| + ✓ - | Fine motor skills | + ✓ - | Gross motor skills |
| + ✓ - | Basic readiness | | |

Additional Comments _____

2. Do you feel that early entrance would benefit this student? Yes No

Why? _____

3. Which of the following best describes the student's current program or school

Check all that apply.

- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Montessori | Full/Half days | Days per week: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool | Full/Half days | Days per week: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare | Full/Half days | Days per week: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please explain if necessary:

Student's Name : _____

Describe the student's work habits.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| + ✓ - Works independently | + ✓ - Completes assignments |
| + ✓ - Manages materials | + ✓ - Follows oral directions |
| + ✓ - Uses problem solving skills | + ✓ - Listens to discussions |
| + ✓ - Participates in group activities | + ✓ - Contributes to discussion |

4. *Describe the student's personal development.*

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| + ✓ - Demonstrates self confidence | + ✓ - Listens to directions |
| + ✓ - Displays a positive attitude | + ✓ - Cooperates with others |
| + ✓ - Shares materials | + ✓ - Takes turns |
| + ✓ - Primarily a leader | + ✓ - Follows school rules |
| + ✓ - Primarily a follower | + ✓ - Plays with other children |

5. *Give an example of how the student solves conflicts with other children.*

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| + ✓ - Expresses emotions verbally | + ✓ - Empathizes |
| + ✓ - Gets adult to solve the conflict | + ✓ - Uses words |
| + ✓ - Expresses emotions physically | + ✓ - Cries |
| + ✓ - Problem solves- "You can have it when I'm finished" | + ✓ - Gives up |

6. *Describe the student's self-help skills*

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| + ✓ - Dresses self | + ✓ - Toilets self |
| + ✓ - Can wash hands | + ✓ - Can put coat on |
| + ✓ - Can clean up after self | + ✓ - Can problem solve |
| + ✓ - Can snap and zipper to re-dress self | |
| + ✓ - Can manage shoes (put them on, tie, buckle, Velcro,...) | |
| + ✓ - Can keep track of belongings (coat, pack, materials, etc...) | |

Please note any other information that would be important in considering this child's placement for the coming year