



Boulder RE1J, St. Vrain Valley - 07010

## Early Access Addendum

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THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS REQUIRED IF THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT PERMITS EARLY ACCESS TO KINDERGARTEN OR FIRST GRADE. Refer to ECEA rules 12.08 for describing all sections and provisions required for early access.

**Early Access: Rule Section 10.02(1)(H) and 12.08 Gifted children who qualify for grade level acceleration and are age 4 for kindergarten, or age 5 for first grade, by October 1**

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**Directions:**

**Address each section and the provisions of the early access ECEA Rules 12.08.**

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/lawsregs>

**In each section below, describe the methods and/or tools that the administrative unit will implement for early access communication, criteria and process. Type your response in the white boxes referencing the topics.**

## Communication

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In the winter of each academic school year, a notice is placed in the local paper and on the district website notifying parents of an informational meeting regarding the Early Access process. In addition to this parent meeting, Gifted Services attends the pre-school/kindergarten teacher meetings to remind them of the Early Access process, and build their understanding regarding characteristics of precocious young students. Documents outlining the timeline, protocol steps, frequently asked questions, and fees incurred during the process, are disseminated to administration, school secretaries, and the GT representative in every building. Professional development sessions have been created and are shared with parents, teachers, and administration each winter. In addition to public schools within the district, an informational packet is shared with local pre-schools.

Screening questions completed by parents set the process in motion for the initial portion of the Early Access review. A "portfolio of evidence" packet is provided to parents after screening questions have been reviewed by the team, and the student is deemed a viable candidate for the rigorous testing process. (This portfolio packet contains information pertaining to the timeline, fees, frequently asked questions, informational fact sheet, skills that represent highly gifted kindergarten or first grade students, flowchart for decision making progress, characteristics of giftedness survey to be completed by parent, Gifted Rating Scale completed by teacher, adapted IOWA Acceleration Scale for Early Access, and pertinent articles regarding young gifted children for parent review.)

Early Access determinations are formulated with the assistance of a review team which includes experts in the field of elementary and early childhood education after the entire body of evidence has been gathered. Status decisions are further reviewed and approved by the Executive Director of Student Services.



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Fees charged in the Early Access process are used to compensate district psychologists for the time they spend outside their contract hours to test and document narrative reports. Students who qualify for free and reduced lunch are evaluated without charge.

Students are taken through a process designed to provide information regarding their cognitive ability, achievement level, and learning/social/emotional skills. Cognitive testing (typically WPPSI, KABC, or DAS) is administered by the district psychologist, achievement data is gathered using tools such as; Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Qualitative Reading Inventory, and Test of Mathematical Ability of Gifted Students. The Aprenda achievement test is administered for any second language applicants. Achievement tasks/tests are administered in a situation replicating the general classroom. Observers take notes regarding learning behaviors and social reactions. Hands-on tasks are implemented in an effort to provide data regarding number sense, and reading skills.

Once the Early Access determination is confirmed, a meeting is set up at the receiving school to create an ALP and transition plan for the new student. Information about characteristics of young, gifted children and their academic/affective needs is shared with the receiving team. Stakeholders collaborate to develop an ALP focusing on meaningful goals, outlining programming options and best practice differentiation strategies for the student. Achievement and performance data is gathered at least five times a year, student's progress is carefully monitored to confirm that the acceleration is sustained and social/emotional status is appropriately supported. The ALP is prepared and provided to stakeholders by the end of September.

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## Criteria

### **Aptitude:**

Ability testing provides a picture of the cognitive ability of a child that is not dependent on skills taught. District psychologists assist Gifted Services by administering aptitude testing for each Early Access candidate. Tools designed to measure cognitive abilities in young children (typically WPSII, DAS, or KABC for second language learners) are administered individually. Data reports containing a narrative explanation of observations and test results are created for parents, and for use in guiding the decision making process. Scores in all areas of the cognitive assessment are disaggregated to correlate with strength areas, (97th percentile denotes qualifying criteria).

If recent outside testing results (within past 3 months) are available for the child, the district psychologist and the Early Access Decision Team, will review the data to determine if further assessments are required. A comparable body of evidence to those candidates tested in-district is needed to make an appropriate status determination.

### **Achievement:**

Achievement is a measure of attainment of skills and knowledge based on a specific grade level or information to be taught at a given level. A variety of achievement data is gathered in order to build the body of evidence. Evidence begins with samples of work provided by the pre-school or kindergarten, and surveys from teachers. Measures of achievement administered when gathering the body of evidence include; Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Qualitative Reading Inventory, and Test of Mathematical Abilities of Gifted Students. Scores in the 97th percentile represent highly advanced gifted students and are considered as qualifying criteria in the body of evidence.

### **Performance:**



Performance is demonstrated through tasks related to learning, but measured through a series of hands-on tasks focusing on number sense and language arts skills. Performance tasks are administered to students individually by staff familiar with early childhood education and characteristics of young gifted children. Observations and anecdotal evidence is gathered (especially regarding social emotional readiness) by the test administrators and licensed psychologists who administer the cognitive data.

**Readiness, social behavior and motivation:**

Attention to school readiness, motivation, and social/emotional maturity is important in projecting the overall success of a child placed in an acceleration with older peers. Gifted Rating Scales (GRS) are completed by pre-school/kindergarten teachers or other early childhood educators. In addition to the GRS, the Adapted IOWA Acceleration Scale: Early Access for Highly Advanced Gifted Children Under Age 6, is completed by parents and teachers. The Advanced Learning Plan is developed with an emphasis on promoting skills of self-advocacy. Mini-sessions are provided to the student and parents regarding developmentally appropriate advocacy skills.

**Support system:**

Once a child meets the criteria for Early Access, a meeting is scheduled with GT personnel and classroom teachers at the receiving school to outline best practice strategies and appropriate programming options within the Advanced Learning Plan. Academic and affective goals are developed, and information about transition concerns are discussed. Counselors are provided with information about the student in order to play an informed role in the social/emotional transition and development. Teachers are provided information about best practice strategies for use with precocious young students, and training around gifted characteristics.

## Process

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**Timelines:**

The timeline for the Early Access process begins in early winter with an article in the local newspaper, and information shared at all schools regarding an informational meeting being held for parents in the district. In concert with the newspaper article and community parent meeting, schools share notices about the Early Access process and timeline with parents and staff.

Nominations are accepted from early January through March, although students are reviewed on a case by case basis if they fail to meet the April 1 deadline. Screening questions are gathered from parents of nominated children in an effort to insure children possess basic academic skills necessary for successful testing outcomes. A portfolio filled with information about gifted young children, their characteristics, timelines, fee schedules, and surveys is given to parents. Samples of work and evidence from the portfolio is returned to Gifted Services for review right before spring break each year. Children progressing through the Early Access protocol must meet the state age guidelines of no younger than 4 by the first day of school for kindergarten, and age 5 for first grade.

Throughout the month of April, a team of educators and the GT Coordinators evaluate evidence and make recommendations about the skill level of the child as evidenced by samples and surveys within the portfolio. Parents are contacted regarding the results of the screening process. Achievement testing is scheduled and administered through the Gifted Services Department.

Cognitive testing is scheduled at the end of April or early May for each candidate. District psychologists administer all cognitive measures. (Should parents seek outside testing, that data is reviewed at this time).



Narrative reports of all testing is reviewed by the Early Access team and a status decision is made by the end of May once data has been reviewed by the GT Coordinators and the Executive Director of Student Services. Copies of all documents and a verification letter is sent to parents via certified mail before June 30th. A "disagreement procedure" is in place for parents who have concerns about the final decision. An ALP will be developed for those kindergarten age students who meet the criteria for gifted identification, but do not meet the criteria for Early Access. Every effort will be made to differentiate in the classroom in response to their gifted potential. Subsequent to parent notification, receiving schools and GT personnel are contacted to clarify their role in the Early Access process. An ALP meeting is set up where a collaborative conversation about goals and transition measures takes place. The Advanced Learning Plan is in place by the end of September, regardless of when the student enrolls.

**Personnel:**

The Elementary GT Coordinator is responsible for collecting referrals. Gifted Services personnel are endorsed as GT Specialists and Early Childhood Educators. Achievement testing is administered by the GT Coordinators, cognitive testing is administered by district psychologists. Surveys and work samples to be reviewed by the Early Access team and incorporated into the body of evidence are submitted by pre-school/kindergarten teachers, and parents. The Determination Team is made up of early childhood experts, GT endorsed staff, and district administration. The strengths and needs of children granted Early Access are supported by their general classroom teachers, administration, counselors, and the GT representative in their building.

**Evaluation:**

The Early Access Determination Team (comprised of GT coordinators, early childhood experts, elementary education teachers, and GT endorsed staff) is responsible for reviewing screening questions, administering achievement testing, evaluating portfolio of evidence, deciphering cognitive data and narrative report, and determining the final status of each Early Access applicant. The data, and status determination is reviewed with the Executive Director of Student Services for approval. A comprehensive report is developed containing details of achievement scores, anecdotal data, and the cognitive narrative. This report is provided to parents via email and again by certified mail. The "disagreement procedure" is shared with parents who are invited to contact the Executive Director of Student Services or Assistant Superintendent for Student Achievement should they have concerns about the final decision or do not agree with the determination.

**Monitoring:**

Student progress is consistently monitored, with formal data collection taking place at least five times per year. Information regarding growth/academic progress and the Advanced Learning Plan are outlined in the data warehouse, Alpine Achievement (APAS). Specific details about progress are shared with parents during fall/winter conference appointments, or upon request during the academic year.

**Dispute Resolution: Will the AU be using the same procedure for disagreements process as in the main Program Plan?** Yes

**The administrative unit's program plan is due with the Comprehensive Program Plan or no later than January 1 prior to early access implementation.**