

# Acceleration

"Acceleration is an educational intervention that moves students through an educational program at a faster than usual rate or younger than typical age" (*A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students*, Colangelo, et al., 2004, Vol. 1, p. 5).

Research (Rogers, 2008) shows that acceleration is a highly effective intervention method for many gifted students because gifted students are capable of working with curricula two or more grade levels higher than their age-level peers in their area(s) of strength.

Many students who are accelerated experience success socially and psychologically as well as academically. Gifted students often prefer older companions whose maturity is more like theirs. More advantages of acceleration include:

- Students do as well as the older students in their classes.
- Gifted students may be more satisfied when challenged at an appropriate level.
- Social-emotional development is not adversely affected (Neihart, 2007).
- Students are more likely to aspire to advanced educational degrees.
- Early entrance to college has shown only positive benefits (Nobel, et al., 2007).
- Can be used in any school.
- Is a virtually cost-free intervention.

The many kinds of acceleration are categorized in two broad groups:

- Grade-based acceleration – shortens the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system.
- Subject-based acceleration – allows for advanced content.



The **Types of Acceleration** table defines the categories of acceleration and lists guiding principles, practitioner tips, parental involvement, and special considerations about each type.

Decision about the type of acceleration appropriate for any student requires collection of a comprehensive body of evidence (BOE) and collaborative dialogue among all stakeholders (including students, parents, current teachers, possible receiving teachers, administrators, etc.) in the decision. The BOE must include, but is not limited to, data about:

- academic readiness skills
- social-emotional development
- achievement – preferably from off-level testing
- ability
- student interests
- learning environment support
- family support

The *Iowa Acceleration Scale* (Assouline, Colangelo, Lupowski-Shoplik, Lipscomb, & Forstadt, 2009) is a resource that can be used to gather information and guide acceleration decisions for students in grades K-8.

Acceleration must be continuous and coordinated to generate successful outcomes for gifted learners. Acceleration requires long-term planning to meet the students' needs from the time of acceleration until graduation from high school. It is monitored to see that it is effective for the individual.

A policy about how the acceleration process is conducted, monitored, and reviewed should exist in all school districts to ensure high quality programming for gifted students. The National Work Group on Acceleration (2009) has created guidelines for developing an academic acceleration policy. Additional resources about implementing acceleration can be found in the [CDE Gifted Education Guidelines](#). They include:

- Suggestions for District Leaders in Gifted Education About Acceleration
- Parent Involvement in Acceleration Decisions



## Research on Instructional Management: Acceleration Permutations

Effect Size (ES) indicates the growth in achievement beyond a year's growth (ES = 0 represents a year's growth) for gifted students. ES >.3 denotes significant impact.

The first ES denotes academic achievement; the second is increase in self-efficacy.

|                                       |                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| ⊕ Early Entrance to School            | (ES= .30, .10) |
| ⊕ Subject Acceleration                | (ES= .48)      |
| ⊕ Grade Skipping                      | (ES= .37,.42)  |
| ⊕ Early Admission to College          | (ES= .25)      |
| ⊕ Concurrent Enrollment               | (ES= .22, .35) |
| ⊕ Advanced Placement Courses          | (ES= .62, .10) |
| ⊕ International Baccalaureate         | (ES= .54, .03) |
| ⊕ Credit by Examination               | (ES= .59)      |
| ⊕ Summer College Programs             | (ES= .45, .36) |
| ⊕ Saturday College Programs*          | (ES= 1.56)     |
| ⊕ Talent Search Program Participation | (ES= .34)      |

\*All day, every Saturday

Information from: Karen B. Rogers, Ph.D., University of St. Thomas. *What's New in Gifted Education Research and What Does This Tell Us About Best Practices?* Presentation for Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented, 2008.

