

Subject and Full-Grade Acceleration

What it is: Acceleration is appropriate to consider for any student who is performing beyond his/her current grade level. Subject-based acceleration moves students ahead in one or two specific content areas. Full grade acceleration shortens the number of years a student spends in the K-12 or K-16 educational system.

Benefits:

- Challenges students to learn new things
- Provides an appropriate pace for learning
- Provides opportunities for more complex learning

Examples:

- Early entrance to kindergarten
- Talent Search programs
- Advanced Placement courses
- International Baccalaureate courses
- Dual college enrollment
- Post-secondary options
- Early graduation

Situations where the strategy is useful:

- When a student has already mastered most of the core curriculum in the subject area or grade level
- When a student is academically or intellectually advanced and is motivated to pursue a challenge

Pointers:

- Be aware that acceleration is not a panacea. Students continue to require differentiation to adjust the pace and provide depth.
- There are many factors (such as the age of the student, the offerings at the school, and whether the student has a sibling who will be in the same grade) that go into considering whether acceleration is an appropriate strategy. The ten-part *Iowa Acceleration Scale* provides a framework for making decisions.
- Two- to six-week trial periods in the accelerated environment can often be helpful.
- Some students for whom acceleration is appropriate may exhibit asynchronous development (please note that it's a myth that students with gifts and talents are socially inept and emotionally immature). This means that students may appear to be many ages at once: beyond their age peers cognitively, similar to their age peers socially, and behind their age peers in fine motor skills. This implies that the student could have a range of skills and might need a range of services that could include support, scaffolding, and compacting all at the same time.

References/Resources

- Assouline, S.G., Colangelo, N., Lupkowski-Shoplik, A., Forstadt, L., & Lipscomb, J. (2009). *Iowa acceleration scale, 3rd ed.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
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