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

**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

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

**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


Winebrenner, S. (2001). *Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom: Strategies and techniques every teacher can use to meet the academic needs of the gifted and talented (revised, expanded, updated).* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.