

# Acceleration

**Acceleration helps match the level and pace of the curriculum to the needs of academically talented students.**



By definition, gifted students are ready to progress more quickly and to a higher level than their age mates. Acceleration allows students to do this; it provides academic challenges for students who are ready. As demonstrated by extensive research, accelerated students demonstrate impressive short- and long-term achievements.

Parents might consider investigating acceleration if their child is studying content in school that they have already mastered. Students do not need to be labeled "gifted" to benefit from these opportunities. For example, mathematically talented students might not qualify for language arts-oriented gifted programs, yet could benefit from moving up a grade for math.

Acceleration policies vary widely. Some states require schools to have policies in place. Others do not permit certain forms of acceleration, such as early entrance to kindergarten, despite the fact that research supports acceleration for carefully selected students. Many states leave policies up to the local district.

## 20 TYPES OF ACCELERATION

Twenty different forms of acceleration range from early entrance to kindergarten to acceleration in college, allowing options for tailoring acceleration to the individual. One student might experience several different forms of acceleration (such as grade skipping plus subject acceleration in a talent area) over time.

Hundreds of studies indicate that accelerated students perform better academically than older students in their classes *and* equally able same age students who were not accelerated. Accelerated students retain what they learn, pursue more challenging majors, earn higher salaries, and produce more creative products than comparison students. Acceleration helps students stay engaged in school and develop life skills that help them face challenges and overcome setbacks.

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ample evidence indicates that accelerated students do fine socially and psychologically; parents and students report few regrets about acceleration, even years later. Because many gifted learners are more mature than age peers and have developmentally advanced skills and interests, acceleration can provide access to classmates whose interests and stages of friendship development are more aligned with theirs. For those parents and educators who hesitate to accelerate students, it is important to remember that doing nothing is not the same as doing no harm.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

» Don't succumb to the myths about academic acceleration. There are facts and tools to help make good decisions.

» Sample acceleration options include: early entrance; early graduation; grade skipping; curriculum compacting or telescoping; self-paced instruction; subject acceleration; distance learning; advanced placement; dual enrollment; and extracurricular programs.

» When accelerating, be sure to discuss how knowledge gaps, if any, will be addressed.

### Read and Share

Find these resources at [accelerationinstitute.org](http://accelerationinstitute.org):

*A Nation Deceived*

*A Nation Empowered*

*Acceleration Policies by State*

*Guidelines for Developing an Academic*

*Acceleration Policy*

# Acceleration

## *My child may be a good candidate for acceleration. What steps should I take?*

- Meet with your child's classroom teacher. Share work samples, books your child is reading, outside tests results, and your child's thoughts on accelerating. Ask the teacher to share standardized test data, classroom work, and informal assessments indicating how your child performs compared to other same-age students.
- Ask the classroom teacher, gifted resource teacher, counselor, and administrator to meet as a team and use a research-based tool such as the *Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)* to evaluate the child and consider best fit and long-term goals. Results from above-level testing through school or talent search programs can help make an objective decision.
- Ask for a copy of meeting notes and test results for your records.
- Request a written acceleration plan that includes the date the new placement will begin, plans for transition, and information on who will help identify and fill in any gaps.
- Ask for a no-fault trial period with a 30-day follow-up to determine if the new placement is working for your child both academically and socially.

## *Which options should I pursue if my child is not a good candidate for grade skipping?*

Your child may not be ready to move up an entire grade level, but may benefit from moving up in a specific subject. Extracurriculars, including talent searches, can offer challenging experiences in the summer, on weekends, and online. Other options: individually paced instruction in strength areas, contests, competitions, and independent study projects.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What is the process for making decisions about academic acceleration? What objective information is required? When is the best time for acceleration?
- Can my child visit the class before we make a final decision (if grade or subject acceleration)? Is there another student who will accelerate with my child?
- What if I'm not satisfied with the decision?
- How will the team measure my child's success? How will any academic gaps be addressed? Which state assessments will my accelerated child take?
- Is there a written acceleration plan? Will there be a trial period?
- What if acceleration is not working?



## FOR MORE INFO

Go to [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org) and search using these key words:

Acceleration  
Acceleration Position Statement  
Acceleration Guidelines  
Glossary of Terms

Acceleration Institute: *Parents*.  
[accelerationinstitute.org/parents.aspx](http://accelerationinstitute.org/parents.aspx)

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

Solow, R., & Rhodes, C. (2012). *College at 13: Young, gifted, and purposeful*. Tucson, AZ: Great Potential Press.



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