

Acceleration Policies

Many schools have policies relating to gifted education that specify how to identify and serve gifted students and how to evaluate gifted education programs. However, gifted education policies don't necessarily specify how to identify and serve students for acceleration; in fact, some policies inadvertently endorse an enrichment approach to serving gifted students and thus acceleration is not presented as an option. An acceleration policy and recommendations for acceleration are not intended to take the place of enrichment opportunities. Some students will be served best by enrichment, some by acceleration, and some by a mix of the two (Neihart, 2007; Rogers, 2002; Schiever & Maker, 2003).

Acceleration (and an acceleration policy) contributes to a broad, comprehensive gifted and talented program. An acceleration policy should complement existing gifted and talented programming and services. Acceleration is not a replacement for gifted education services or programs.

Some schools may not have a gifted and talented program. It is also possible that a student might not qualify for a school's gifted and talented program because he or she did not obtain a qualifying composite score. Students with an uneven profile of achievement scores (significantly advanced in one area but not others) are not likely to obtain a qualifying score but may be served well by content acceleration in their area(s) of strength.

A policy should be characterized by accessibility, equity, and openness. A formal procedure should be established that considers all student assessment data, the student's social-emotional maturity, and academic strengths when making decisions about acceleration. In each instance, the best interest of the student predominates.

All districts with a state approved policy are strongly encouraged to have a board approved policy establishing acceleration as a positive instructional option for students.

Guidelines for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy, National Work Group on Acceleration -Nicholas Colangelo, Chair, Susan G. Assouline, Maureen A. Marron - Representing the Belin-Blank Center Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration (IRPA); Jaime A. Castellano, Pamela R. Clinkenbeard, Karen Rogers - Representing the National Association for Gifted Children; Eric Calvert, Rosanne Malek, Donnajo Smith - Representing the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, Volume 21 ❖ Number 2 ❖ Winter 2010 ❖ pp. 180–203

Sample Policy

The district will assist students so that they progress academically in accordance with their capabilities. Acceleration refers to educational strategies which provide opportunities for students to more rapidly achieve their education goals. It means matching the level, complexity, and pace of the curriculum to the readiness and motivation of the student. Acceleration could include but not be limited to: Grade skipping, Continuous progress, Self-paced instruction, Subject matter acceleration, Combined Classes, Curriculum Compacting, Telescoping Curriculum, Mentoring, Extracurricular programs, Distance Learning Courses, Dual enrollment, Advanced Placement Courses, International Baccalaureate Courses, STEM Residential High School, Credit by Examination, Early entrance to Middle School, or High School, Early Graduation from High School.