An Important Tool in the Toolkit: Academic Acceleration

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Acceleration is...

a progression through an educational program in a shorter time or at a younger age than is typical.
Acceleration is...

“...one of the cornerstones of exemplary gifted education practices, with more research supporting this intervention than any other in the literature on gifted individuals.”

National Association for Gifted Children position statement on acceleration
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Why Accelerate?

Equity
-all students have the right to learn something new

A better match between a student’s abilities & the curriculum

Research supported

Accelerated students do well academically and socially

Low Cost
When should acceleration be considered?

The first intervention for bright, highly capable students.

Consideration of all other interventions (e.g., enrichment; differentiation) should follow after considering accelerative options.

Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska
Forms of Acceleration

Subject-Based Acceleration

Student moves up for one or more subjects, stays in regular grade for others

Grade-Based Acceleration

Moves up a grade to be with older students full-time
Subject Acceleration Examples

- Move up a grade for Math/Science
- Advanced Placement Courses
- Talent Search Programs
- Online Learning
- Independent Study or Mentorships
- Compacted Curriculum
Grade-Based Acceleration Examples

- Grade-skipping
- Multi-grade classrooms
- Early entrance to kindergarten/first grade
- Grade telescoping (2 years in one)
- Early entrance to college
Myths about Acceleration
Can you think of some?
Myths about Acceleration

- Acceleration is “bad” for students, esp. for social development
- Students will miss something (academic or social)
- People focus on one negative story and ignore research on thousands of students
- Many teachers and administrators did not learn about acceleration in pre-service training
- “Gifted students will make it on their own” without an intervention

As we will see, the evidence is clear that acceleration works.
Acceleration Works: Short-Term Benefits

Accelerated students are more challenged and therefore more engaged in school.

Accelerated students must work harder, learning good “habits of mind”

Academically talented students who enter K or college early do very well compared to their older classmates.

Students accelerating in math and science often continue studying those subjects (no burnout)
Grade skipping works!

“Not only was academic achievement more positive for the grade skipped learners, but also their social adjustment and academic self-esteem were more positive.”

Karen B. Rogers
Acceleration Works: Long-Term Benefits

Acceleration has long-term beneficial effects, both academic and social.

Accelerated students tend to be more ambitious, earning graduate degrees at higher rates.

Students who skipped a grade performed even better when acceleration was accompanied by other educational opportunities.

...higher rates of productivity, work in more prestigious occupations, are more successful and earn more money and increase income faster than older, similar ability, non-accelerated peers.

Looking back, an overwhelming majority of accelerated students say acceleration was the right decision for them.
Acceleration Supports Students’ Social Development

Placed with academic peers with similar interests & intellectual level

Research on social development and academic acceleration is positive overall

2020 Bernstein, Lubinski, & Benbow. Soc/emo concerns are “fruitless”
Where do I find the research?

www.accelerationinstitute.org
More Tools for Acceleration
A Nation Empowered

→ Free download
→ Volume 1: Stories of acceleration
→ Volume 2: The research
→ www.nationempowered.org
Iowa Acceleration Scale (3rd edition, 2009)

Authors: Susan Assouline, Ph.D.
        Nicholas Colangelo, Ph.D.
        Ann Lupkowski-Shoplik, Ph.D.
        Jonathan Lipscomb, B.A.
        Leslie Forstadt, B.A.

Available from Gifted Unlimited

Paper and pencil survey to assist with acceleration decisions

Required by the state of Ohio for grade-skipping decisions
A new (2021) tool designed to assist educators and families through the decision-making process about acceleration
The **Integrated Acceleration System** focuses on 4 forms of acceleration:

1. **Grade Skip**
   A student moves to a grade that best matches ability rather than age.

2. **Early Entrance to Kindergarten**
   A child starts school at a younger age than typical.

3. **Subject Acceleration**
   A student needs additional challenge in a particular subject area.

4. **Early Entrance to College**
   A student begins college a year or more early.

→ The experts from the Belin-Blank Center are available to assist with acceleration questions for students who are twice-exceptional
The Integrated Acceleration System

Online
The System is entirely online, including email capabilities and ability to produce a report at the conclusion of the team meeting.

Interactive
Team members can contribute to data collection easily; they respond to emails and complete online forms. Classroom teacher, parent/guardian, and others who know the student well.

Access
Access to the Belin-Blank Center experts on twice-exceptionality.

Student
Student interview questions. Sample interview protocol.

Report
Multi-page individualized report. Produced at the conclusion of the team meeting. Emailed to team members.
Building the Case for: Luisa TestStudent Modules

A. Getting Ready  
B. Build Your Team  
C. Demographics and Related Student Information  
D. School Information  
E. Student Answers  
F. Current Grade Level Performance  
G. General School Ability (IQ) Test Results  
H. Indicators of Performance in the Next Grade  
I. The Meeting  
J. The Report
The *Integrated Acceleration System* Survey includes items addressing...

- Student’s performance in school
- Friendships
- Motivation
- Physical development (small and large motor skills, size)
- Student’s attitude about being challenged in school
- Communication between parent/school
- Student’s ability, aptitude, and achievement
Acceleration Meeting Agenda (sample)

- Review information previously provided
- Discuss important questions.
  For example:
  • Questions/hesitation expressed by student
  • Social/emotional aspects
- Answer additional questions as a group, come to consensus
- Review information
- Produce and review report and recommendations
- Develop plan for transition to the accelerated grade
The Power of the Process

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Transition Procedures: Pointers

Discussion
Include discussion of transition in team meeting

Monitor
Assign a person to monitor (the “transition monitor”)

Trial Period
Allow about 6-8 weeks as a trial period

Regular Communication
Transition monitor checks in with parent/guardian, teacher, and student
Teacher checks in with parent/guardian
Would you like to receive updates about the Integrated Acceleration System?

→ Sign up here:

https://tinyurl.com/SignUpAcceleration
Training video and upcoming webinars about the Integrated Acceleration System

https://tinyurl.com/accelerationwebinar
Acceleration Policies: Key to Equity
Developing Academic Acceleration Policies

• Checklists for developing policies:
  – Whole grade acceleration
  – Subject acceleration
  – Early entrance to kindergarten or first grade

• Authors:
  – Ann Lupkowski-Shoplik
  – Wendy A. Behrens
  – Susan G. Assouline

• Online. Free.

• Sample policies on the website
  – [www.accelerationinstitute.org/guidelines](http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/guidelines)
State Policy information on the Acceleration Institute website

https://tinyurl.com/StateAccelPolicy
An important catalyst for work on academic acceleration
Above-Level Testing: Discovering High-Ability Students

- www.belinblank.org/testing
- www.i-excel.org
- 4th – 6th graders take I-Excel
- 7th-9th graders take ACT
- https://tinyurl.com/GiftedBestKeptSecret
Resources for Educators & Families

NAGC Tip Sheet for Parents on acceleration: https://tinyurl.com/NAGCaccel

NAGC Position Statement on Acceleration https://tinyurl.com/NAGCaccelerate

Hoagies Gifted blog hop: https://tinyurl.com/HoagiesAcceleration

Davidson Institute: Search “acceleration”
We teach a whole course on academic acceleration

Academic Acceleration (PSQF:4123)
Usually meets in the summer
Entirely online, asynchronous

For more info, email: acceleration@belinblank.org
Is your school interested in doing acceleration better?

NCRGE is seeking schools serving grades 2-5 interested in **FREE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES** and assistance in making acceleration decisions.

ncrge.uconn.edu/acceleration
Connect with us!

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