

Acceleration

Parent factsheet: gifted and talented education

Acceleration is a developmentally appropriate placement process to advance students' academic enrolment ahead of their chronological peers in one of more subjects or by one or more whole learning years.

Twice exceptional students should also be considered for acceleration. The type and severity of a disability or difficulty are important but should not be the only focus for discussion about whole-grade acceleration. Support for students with twice exceptionalities, as with all individuals, means considering the *whole* person: providing accommodations for the one or more disabilities or disorders *together with* appropriate academic challenges.

Acceleration research shows that gifted students benefit academically and may also benefit socially and emotionally (Feldhusen, 1986). Acceleration allows students to progress in line with their natural or preferred rate of learning and provides them with the opportunity to be intellectually stimulated.

Whole grade acceleration

Whole grade acceleration or year skipping is a placement process for gifted and talented students who are advanced in all subjects compared to their chronological peers. It can occur at any stage of schooling. Acceleration is well supported by current research which demonstrates that gifted and talented students benefit from being with intellectually 'like-minded' peers rather than similarly aged peers.

Acceleration has the potential to enhance:

- the learning challenge
- engagement with schoolwork
- motivation
- self-esteem
- social and emotional wellbeing
- success

A key to the success of whole grade acceleration is careful evaluation of evidence gathered about the student and continued monitoring and evaluation to ensure that acceleration continues to be an appropriate educational strategy.

A decision to accelerate should be a consultative process and involve all relevant stakeholders.

A range of evidence may include but is not limited to:

- teacher/parent checklists
- student checklists
- psychological testing/standardised testing
- anecdotal evidence
- student work and school history
- curriculum-based assessments

A tool, such as the Iowa Acceleration Scale may be used as part of the evidence.

Subject based acceleration

Subject-based acceleration or partial acceleration is undertaken when learners are gifted and talented in a particular subject area.

Subject acceleration allows a gifted student who has demonstrated sufficient subject ability to proceed to the next year level in that specific subject, for example, science. In most cases, the student continues to progress in other subjects at the age-appropriate level.

A gifted and talented student being subject accelerated would remain with their regular class for most of their lessons and either attend another class in their strength area or continue with their advanced curriculum while the rest of the class works on the age-appropriate curriculum.

Principals decide how the subject acceleration will be managed, who will supervise the student's progress, how the individual's achievements will be documented, and future learning pathways and transition processes. This process should be completed in consultation with parents, students and relevant professionals.

The gifted student most likely to be successful with subject acceleration:

- is performing well above age peers in the specific academic area(s)
- enjoys a variety of methods of learning and challenges in the specific area(s)
- is self-directed, independent and motivated to learn
- has a strong passion in the specific area(s)
- reads extensively in the specific area(s).

Monitoring the student should be frequent throughout the initial semester to ensure that: the student is keeping up; is learning the new skills and knowledge base adequately; is working independently when required, or in the older class; and, has sufficient opportunity to interact with like-minded and age peers.

Feldhusen, J.F., Proctor, T.B. and Black, K.N. (1986) Guidelines for grade advancement of precocious children. Roper Review.