



Kansas Effective Practices Instructional Toolkit

Implementing Research and Resources Into Action Research Lesson 3: Subject/Grade-Based Acceleration

Acceleration

When taking into consideration the balanced programming needs of gifted learners, acceleration interventions are essential and should be included so that gifted students may develop to their highest potential during their school years. Specific information on acceleration is addressed in the following sections.

Acceleration is the appropriate movement of a student and/or curriculum by pace or place which matches learning opportunities with student's demonstrated readiness and needs.

Gifted and talented students learn at pace considerably faster in their area(s) of strength than their age-level peers. Further, gifted and talented students are able to work with curricula two or more grade levels higher than their age-level peers. Acceleration must be continuous and coordinated to be successful.

Acceleration requires comprehensive assessment data in a body of evidence and collaborative dialogue among all stakeholders in the decision. The body of evidence must include, but is not limited to, data about: student academic readiness skills, social-emotional development, achievement, ability, student interests, learning environment support, and family support. The *Iowa Acceleration Scale* is a resource to guide some acceleration decisions.

Advantages of appropriate acceleration:

- Gifted students are inclined to select older companions because their levels of maturity are often more similar.
- Acceleration can be used in any school.
- Accelerated students do as well as the older students in their classes.
- Gifted students may be more satisfied when challenged at an appropriate level.
- Social and emotional adjustment is generally high, in most reports above average, when accelerated.

Suggestions for District Leaders in Gifted Education:

- Pre-assess student learning and accommodate the level of instruction and pacing needs based on the individual student data.
- Develop school board policies and/or district protocol to ensure that acceleration is a systemic and comprehensive option.
- Build understanding of acceleration options and flexibility among staff.
- Coordinate vertical collaboration and curriculum mapping to facilitate long term planning
- *Create transition teams in order to provide appropriate support for the classroom teacher and student as acceleration options are implemented.
- Provide students with exit options.
- Involve parents and students in the decision-making process for the success of the student. Flexibility of programming is important; what works for one child may not work for all.
- Provide on-going training and support for teacher involved.

Parent Involvement:

- Involve parents, students, and teachers in the decision to accelerate.
- Develop a plan for the continuum of service for the acceleration with counselor, student, teacher, and parent.
- Understand the requirements of an acceleration program; for example, transportation and cost.
- Monitor student progress and satisfaction.
- Commit to attend parent, teacher, student conference to review academic achievement and social-emotional development.

Special Considerations:

Rural/Outlying Towns, Gender: Examine options such as mentorship, alternative assessments, local higher education resources, and distance learning.

Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Learners: Implement acceleration strategies for ESL students in an area of demonstrated need while English skills are being developed.

Economically Disadvantaged Learners: Consider the importance of age-level peers and cultural biases.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is acceleration?

“Acceleration is an educational intervention that moves students through an educational program at a faster than usual rate or younger than typical age.”

Colangelo, et. al., *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America’s Brightest Students*.

Who should be accelerated?

Advanced students whose responses are beyond grade level expectations, more complex, more rapid, fluent, and at higher levels than peers’. Take into consideration cognitive functioning, personal characteristics, learning preferences, and interests of the student. Specific considerations for each of the prior acceleration options are addressed in Rogers, *Re-Forming Gifted Education*, (Chapters 5 & 6). The Iowa Acceleration Scale provides scales to determine if whole grade acceleration is the appropriate option.

What forms of acceleration are appropriate for students?

Subject-based /Grade-based

- Compacting curriculum.
- Single subject acceleration.
- Concurrent enrollment.
- Talent search programs.
- Correspondence courses.
- Independent study.
- Distance learning.
- Advanced placement courses.
- International Baccalaureate Program.
- College-credit-in-the-school programs.
- Mentorships.
- Post secondary options.
- Early entrance to kindergarten or first grade.
- Grade skipping.
- Non-graded classrooms.
- Multi-grade/age classrooms.
- Grade telescoping.
- Testing out.
- Early admission to college.

Who makes the decision regarding various types of acceleration?

It is critical that decisions regarding acceleration be a collaborative process using the data in the body of evidence supporting student strengths and needs. The teacher, student, or parent may initiate the process.

- Refer to the Acceleration Table