

# The Gifted Program

- In grades K-8, the gifted program works in cooperation with the regular education program to offer a continuum of service that may include targeted interventions, academic acceleration, or development of a Student Learning Plan that identifies individual student learning goals.
- Referrals to the Intervention Team may be made by teachers or parents.
- Students may participate in targeted interventions or academic acceleration without being enrolled in the program for gifted and talented students, as deemed appropriate by the school's Intervention Team.
- The school's Intervention Team is the group responsible for determining if a student meets the eligibility for the gifted and talented program.
- An assessment of eligibility for children in grades 3-8 may include a review of academic achievement data, IQ testing, creativity assessment, and consideration of other relevant factors.
- For students in middle school and beyond, enrollment in above-grade coursework is permitted with Intervention Team approval.
- Early enrollment in college classes requires appropriate scores on placement tests and adherence to the policies and procedures of the local college. School guidance counselors can provide assistance to students interested in this option, and a student does not need to be identified as "gifted" to access these opportunities, but must demonstrate appropriate skills, commitment, and maturity.

# Family Considerations...

- Does the child usually choose older friends or intellectual peers to be with?
- Has the child been counseled by parents or teachers about what it means to have more challenging work?
- Is the child interested in accelerating beyond the typical scope and sequence of instruction?
- Are parents supportive of the higher expectations being placed on the child?
- Is there a plan to ensure the child has access to curriculum or content that may be skipped in an acceleration?
- Is a plan in place to ensure the child maintains a balance between school work, family activities, and other recreational activities?
- Is the child involved in non-academic pursuits which require a great deal of time, energy, and focus? Are there other demands on the child which may already be placing stress on the child?
- How will the child feel if everyone else at school can drive or date, and he or she cannot?
- Have parents considered the social and emotional implication of having the child with peers who may be much older and given more freedom or privileges?
- Will the success of the acceleration be determined by a mix of considerations including academic, social, and emotional?



# An Introduction to Academic Acceleration



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# Academic Acceleration... An Introduction

Acceleration is matching the curriculum to the learning rate and level of mastery of the student. When we do not allow advanced children to progress at their own rate, when we force them to sit in classes relearning what they already know, we are holding children back from learning; in other words, we are decelerating the learning process.

Acceleration provides opportunities for continuous academic progress at a rate that matches the needs of the child. When new content or skills are presented too slowly or too quickly for any given student, a student often responds in one of two ways: The student either rises to the challenge, with or without the help of a teacher; or the student disengages and finds other things to occupy his or her mind and time. Acceleration that is well planned can positively impact student engagement, motivation, and of course, academic achievement.

Academic acceleration requires teachers to be knowledgeable about above level standards skills, and content. Student progress must be carefully monitored, and gaps in learning must be swiftly addressed. Plans must be made to ensure that in the future, the student will not have to repeat large chunks of content because a teacher does not know how to appropriately accelerate the teaching and learning process or is unaware of the child's previous learning experiences. Collaboration among professionals is the cornerstone to ensuring each student has access to the curriculum most appropriate for his or her educational needs.

If a teacher, parent, or student believes that acceleration may be needed, an Intervention Team meeting should occur so data regarding the student's performance can be reviewed alongside other information and appropriate course of action can be identified.

## What Are Some Ways of Accelerating a Student?

There are many different types of acceleration. Those most frequently in use are:

- Accelerated Content: Students advance in a particular discipline.
- Telescoping: Students cover two years of curricula in one.
- Accelerated Grade: Student skips all or part of an entire grade level.
- Middle School students enrolling in high school level courses.
- High school students enrolling in college level courses.
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## How Do We Know If Acceleration May Be Needed?

- Pre-assessments reveal the student already has mastered the content or skills at an acceptable level.
- Scores at the 99th percentile on nationally normed assessments.
- Careful observations and interviews reveal the student may be under-achieving.
- The student masters new information much more quickly than his or her peers, quickly learns complex new skills, or processes large amounts of information at rates beyond his or her peers.

## When Might Acceleration Not Be Appropriate?

- When a student is experiencing major life changes or upheaval that already cause stress.
- When a student demonstrates excellence that is limited to a particular strand of a content field.
- When a student or their family is not in support of acceleration.

## Are there Alternatives to Acceleration?

Enrichment or enrollment in a program for gifted and talented students are two other options that may be appropriate to consider. *Acceleration* gives students the chance to proceed through curriculum at a more rapid pace than their same age peers of more average aptitude. *Enrichment* activities provide opportunities for extended study or deeper application of skills. Enrichment activities are beneficial and appropriate for many students. However, enrichment should not delay a student's academic progress or be used to maintain grade level placement when such placement does not present appropriately challenging and engaging learning opportunities. Enrollment in a program for gifted and talented students can provide opportunities for both enrichment and acceleration, as well as meet the unique social and emotional needs of children with unusually high IQs.