

Academic Acceleration: Summary of Research and Policy Considerations Informational Brief

Prepared by New York Comprehensive Center

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Prepared by New York Comprehensive Center, Candice Bocala & Adam Tanney

Abstract

Acceleration is an “educational intervention intended to present talented youth with appropriate levels of academic challenge” (Wells, Lohman, and Marron, 2009, p. 248). There are two broad forms of acceleration: content-based and grade-based acceleration, and “the primary distinguishing feature between content-based acceleration and grade-based acceleration is whether the accelerative intervention shortens the number of years that a student spends in the K–12 system” (Colangelo et al., 2010, p. 183). The research on academic outcomes of acceleration appears to be largely positive, especially when comparing accelerants to their same age peers and in subjects such as mathematics and science. Additionally, the studies reviewing the social and emotional impact of acceleration generally report no negative effects of acceleration on outcomes like student self-concept or interactions with peers. However, researchers note that many teachers and educators are not in favor of acceleration due to concerns about the social maturity of students and perceptions about the “undemocratic” process of acceleration itself (Kulik & Kulik, 1984b). From a policy perspective, acceleration appears to be of minimal cost to educational systems. Most existing policies concern grade-based acceleration, and it is recommended that local policymakers form written acceleration policies that contain guidelines “to ensure fair and systematic use of accelerative opportunities” (Colangelo et al., 2010, p. 181). This brief summarizes the various definitions of acceleration, reviews the research on acceleration effects on both academic and social and emotional outcomes, and provides policy recommendations.

Introduction

Commissioner’s regulations on K-12 acceleration practices are on the 2012 Regents Regulatory Review Agenda. New York State Education Department staff in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) requested support from the New York Comprehensive Center (NYCC) to write an informational brief to inform NYSED staff’s exploration of revision to acceleration policy. In conversations between C&I and NYCC staff preceding the first draft of this brief, C&I staff explained that the acceleration item on the Review Agenda was originally brought forward to address a specific type of content-based acceleration, namely regulations on when and how students below ninth grade may earn high school credit for passing Regents Examinations.

During C&I and NYCC’s preceding conversations they also discussed the variety of other accelerative practices in K-12 education. Some noteworthy acceleration practices, such as early kindergarten entrance and dual secondary and post-secondary enrollment, are being addressed by NYSED in other initiatives. However, C&I staff determined that it would be appropriate and useful for NYCC to widen its review of research and policy covered in this brief to also address three other types of acceleration: whole grade-skipping, telescoping curriculum, and curriculum compacting (these and other acceleration practices are explained in the succeeding section).

Much of NYCC’s authorship in this brief is less about original writing (and certainly less about making original recommendations) than it is about attempting to summarize the research on acceleration and its implications for state and local policy. We have tried to condense the research and policy literature into a format accessible for busy policy-makers without oversimplifying ideas so that they lose meaning, or worse, become misleading. The aim of this brief is to give an accurate sense of the global findings and issues on acceleration while serving as a steppingstone for those seeking to make a thorough examination of research and policy. To that end, we reference sources so those seeking fuller treatments can easily obtain them. We have also included selected documents containing policies and other information about acceleration practices in several appendices.

Definitions

Overview

Various definitions of acceleration exist in the literature. According to Hattie (2009), “An alternative to special classes for gifted children is to accelerate students through the curricula: ‘Accelerated instruction enables bright students to work with their mental peers on learning tasks that match their abilities’ (Kulik & Kulik, 1984b, p. 84). It typically involves progress through an educational program at rates faster or ages younger than is conventional (Pressey, 1949), although there are many options, such as curriculum compacting or telescoping, and advanced placement” (p. 100). Wells, Lohman, and Marron (2009) explain that “[a]cceleration is an educational intervention intended to present talented youth with appropriate levels of academic challenge” (p. 248). Finally, Gallagher (2004) proposes that there are two primary goals for acceleration: first, to “[p]ut the student with older students who will be more competitive with, and stimulating to, the accelerated student” and to “reduce the time the student has to spend in the educational system” (p. 39).

Distinctions

It is important to note that acceleration is not the same as ability grouping for gifted students or enrichment. The Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration (IRPA) notes that enrichment programs typically add depth and breadth to the regular curriculum (e.g., through special interest clubs); they do not move students more rapidly through the curriculum (2007). Hattie (2009) explains that ability groupings for gifted students typically involve delivery of a different curriculum rather than moving through the same curriculum at a faster pace. The federal definition of gifted education specifies that it involves “*services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.*”¹

The merits and practices of both homogenous ability grouping and enrichment have their own research bases and (especially in the case of homogenous ability grouping) marshal their own cadres of vocal defenders and opponents. While in both research and policy discussions acceleration is sometimes melded with ability grouping or enrichment, this brief focuses on acceleration.

Typologies

¹ No Child Left Behind Act, P.L. 107-110 (Title IX, Part A, Definitions (22) (2002); 20 U.S.C. Sec. 7802 (22) (2004))

Content-versus grade-based acceleration. There are two broad forms of acceleration: content-based and grade-based. “The primary distinguishing feature between content-based acceleration and grade-based acceleration is whether the accelerative intervention shortens the number of years that a student spends in the K–12 system” (Colangelo et al., 2010, p. 183). Moreover, the categories can take several forms that vary the level, pace, and complexity of the curriculum. “For example, single-subject acceleration, dual enrollment, and Advanced Placement coursework are all forms of content-based acceleration. Whole-grade acceleration and early entrance to school are forms of grade-based acceleration” (Colangelo et al., 2010, p. 183).

Southern and Jones (2004, p. 6) identify 18 forms of acceleration (see Table 1).

Table 1. List of 18 forms of acceleration identified by Southern and Jones (2004)

1. Early Admission to Kindergarten	10. Mentoring
2. Early Admission to First Grade	11. Extracurricular Programs
3. Grade-Skipping	12. Correspondence Courses
4. Continuous Progress	13. Early Graduation
5. Self-Paced Instruction	14. Concurrent/Dual Enrollment
6. Subject-Matter Acceleration/Partial Acceleration	15. Advanced Placement
7. Combined Classes	16. Credit by Examination
8. Curriculum Compacting	17. Acceleration in College
9. Telescoping Curriculum	18. Early Entrance into Middle School, High School, or College

The Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration (2009, pp. 12-13, citing Southern and Jones, 2004) provides the following explication of the distinction between content- and grade-based acceleration and into which category each of the 18 forms fit.

Category 1: Content-based acceleration provides students with advanced content, skills, or understandings before the expected age or grade level (Southern & Jones, 2004). Students typically remain with peers of the same age and grade. Content-based acceleration can also refer to allowing a student to work on higher grade level instruction in their regular classrooms in lieu of grade-level instruction.

Forms of content-based acceleration

- Single-subject acceleration
- Curriculum compacting
- Concurrent/dual enrollment
- Correspondence courses
- Credit by examination or prior experience
- Mentoring
- Extracurricular programs
- Advanced Placement
- International Baccalaureate

Category 2: Grade-based acceleration typically shortens the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system. In practice, a student is placed on a full-time basis in a higher grade level than is typical given the student’s age for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities. Grade-based acceleration is commonly

known as “grade skipping,” but it can include other means to shorten the number of years a student remains in the K-12 school system (Rogers, 2004; Southern & Jones, 2004). The exception is early entrance to kindergarten, which does not shorten the number of years the student spends in the K-12 system but shortens the wait time to start school.

Forms of grade-based acceleration

- Early admission to school (Types are early admission to kindergarten & early admission to first grade)
- Whole-grade acceleration
- Continuous progress
- Self-paced instruction
- Telescoping curriculum
- Combined classes
- Early entrance into middle school, high school, or college
- Early graduation
- Acceleration in college

Appendix 1 provides definitions and examples of each of the 18 types of acceleration.

Search Method for Literature Review

To conduct this literature review, researchers began with the section on acceleration in Hattie’s (2009) comprehensive literature review and synthesis of meta-analyses in key topics in education. We located the key articles from Hattie’s overview, then used a “snowball sampling” strategy, whereby we identified the other studies mentioned in those articles. We limited our search to academic articles published in scholarly journals or doctoral dissertations that had been cited in peer-reviewed journals. We iteratively read and compared notes on all the articles used in this summary. We sought and found studies that report on the effects of acceleration in general as well as for grade-based or content-based acceleration in particular. Table 2 summarizes the effect sizes from different facets of acceleration on academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

Table 2. Summary of the effect sizes from different facets of acceleration on academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

	Academic outcomes	Social / emotional outcomes
Acceleration in general		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ES = 0.13 on the social & emotional development of gifted elementary students (Kent, 1992) • ES = 0.46 in social effects of acceleration (e.g., social maturity) and ES = 0.12 in emotional effects (e.g., self-concept) of acceleration (Neihart, 2007) • Negative effects noted are: decline in self-concept, higher anxiety, and decline in grades (Neihart, 2007)
Content-based acceleration in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for acceleration for minority students with mathematical talent (Seon-Young, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Peternel, 2010) • Benefits for long-term productivity in mathematics & science research (Park, 2011) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ES = 0.58 in emotional effects for subject-based acceleration (Rogers, 1992, cited in Neihart, 2007)
Grade-based acceleration in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ES = 0.88 when comparing against same-age peers (Kulik & Kulik, 1984) • ES = 0.05 when comparing younger accelerants with older peers (Kulik & Kulik, 1984) • $g=0.180$, when comparing high-ability learners with nonaccelerated same-age peers (Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011) • ES = 0.80 when comparing against same-age peers (Kulik, 2004) • ES = -0.04 when comparing younger accelerants against older peers, but effect sizes mostly trivial (Kulik, 2004) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconclusive results regarding “nonintellective” outcomes, e.g., students’ attitudes toward school or popularity with peers (Kulik & Kulik, 1984) • No social & emotional difficulties, e.g., making friends (Seon-Young, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Peternel, 2010) • $g= 0.076$ (Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011) • No negative or emotional effects for nearly all accelerants (Neihart, 2007)
Grouping alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ES = about zero (Kulik, 2004) • $d=0.12$ for whole-class ability grouping (Hattie, 2008) • $d=0.16$ for within-class ability grouping (Hattie, 2008) • ES = 0.10 for homogeneous grouping (Walberg, 1984) 	
Telescoping		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ES = 0.15 (Kent, 1992)

Outcomes of Acceleration: Summary of Research

Research studies of the effects of acceleration examine both academic and socio-emotional outcomes. “For academic achievement, the most common outcome variables in the primary studies were standardized achievement test results, college GPA, educational background (e.g., the degrees obtained, the status of higher-education institutions attended), career status, ages when certain degrees were obtained or when some career goal was reached. For social–emotional development, the most widely studied variables were self-concept, self-acceptance, self-reliance, self-esteem, self-confidence, social relationship, participation in extracurricular activities, locus of control, life satisfaction, and educational or vocational plans” (Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011, p. 43).

Some types of students are more likely to be accelerated than others. Wells, Lohman, and Marron (2009) analyzed data from the two nationally representative longitudinal databases: the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS, 1988-1992) and the Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS, 2002-2004). They found that “[o]ther things being equal, females, Asian Americans, and students living on the U.S. east or west coast were more likely to be grade accelerated. For example, females had odds of being accelerated that were 1.3 times higher than the odds of males being accelerated. Students from the northeastern region of the U.S. had odds of acceleration that were nearly twice (1.9 times) as high as Midwest students’ odds of acceleration” (p.249).

While the effects of acceleration tend to be socially and emotionally positive, many teachers and administrators view it unfavorably (Wells, Lohman, & Marron, 2009). Kulik and Kulik (1984a) summarized the concerns of acceleration opponents as questions about which students should be accelerated, whether students would be socially and physically mature enough, whether there is a detriment to the other students who are not accelerated if their academically talented peers are removed, and whether acceleration is “undemocratic, promoting snobbery and a sense of elitism & inferiority” (p. 410).

Academic effects of acceleration

Kulik and Kulik (1984a) conducted one of the first meta-analyses of the effects of acceleration using 26 comparison studies involving elementary or secondary school students. There were two types of studies. One half of the studies compared accelerated students (accelerants) to comparable same-age students who were not accelerated (nonaccelerants); the other half compared younger accelerated students to older non-accelerated students at the same grade level. They argue that “talented students are able to handle the academic challenge that accelerated programs provide. Two major findings supported this conclusion. First, talented youngsters who were accelerated into higher grades performed as well as the talented, older pupils already in those grades. Second, in the subjects in which they were accelerated, talented accelerates showed almost a year's advancement over talented same-age nonaccelerates” (p. 421). According to their analyses, “[t]he average ES [effect size] in these 13 studies was 0.88. This means that achievement scores of accelerated students were, on the average, 0.88 standard deviations higher than were scores of same-age nonaccelerates” (Kulik & Kulik, 1984b, p. 86). However, “[i]n striking contrast to studies with same-age controls, studies with older control groups reported only small differences in achievement between accelerates and nonaccelerates. In some of the studies, the accelerated students had slightly higher achievement scores; in some studies, the accelerants had slightly lower scores. The average ES in the 13 studies with older control groups was 0.05” (Kulik & Kulik, 1984b, p. 86-87).

Steenbergen-Hu and Moon (2011) update Kulik and Kulik's 1984 meta-analysis on acceleration with a new meta-analysis of 38 primary studies conducted between 1984 and 2008. They find results consistent with previous meta-analysis studies: "acceleration had a positive impact on high-ability learners' academic achievement (abstract). Additionally, "[t]he effects of acceleration appeared to be more discernible when accelerated high-ability learners were compared with their nonaccelerated same-age peers" (p. 46).

Kulik (2004) argues that further research demonstrates that acceleration is more effective than other programs for gifted students. "Bangert, Kulik, and Kulik (1983) found an average ES of 0.10 in 51 studies of individualized teaching in Grades 6 through 12. Kulik (2003) reported only slightly more positive results from studies where talented students were taught in homogeneous classes without acceleration. The average ES was 0.33 when curricular adjustments were made in the homogeneous classes for learning rate; average ES was essentially zero when grouping was used alone without curricular adjustment. The average ES was 0.41 for special programs of enrichment for gifted and talented students. None of these efforts to meet the special needs of talented students produced effects anywhere near as strong as those from acceleration" (p. 20)

Last, it appears that there may be more positive long-term outcomes for accelerated students: "longitudinal research has demonstrated that accelerants attain advanced degrees, produce scholarly works, and contribute professionally at rates well above societal baselines (Lubinski, Benbow, Webb, & Bleske-Rechek, 2006; Lubinski, Webb, Morelock, & Benbow, 2001)" (Colangelo et al., 2010, pp. 187-188). Additionally, Park's (2011) dissertation also provides some support that skipping grades benefits mathematically talented individuals and positively effects their productivity (as measured by publication record) if they pursue science, technology, and mathematics (STEM) research. "Results from each phase of this study are supportive of key hypotheses of the time-saving theory (Pressey, 1946b), suggesting that grade-based acceleration, appropriately applied with mathematically precocious individuals, can have lasting effects on the productivity of those pursuing STEM fields" (p. 71).

Socio-emotional effects of acceleration

Seon-Young, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Peternel (2010) note that "[f]ew psychosocial disadvantages of acceleration have been documented although nonacademic aspects of acceleration have not been studied as extensively as educational ones (Neihart, 2007). Studies involving school-aged students have generally shown that acceleration, particularly grade skipping and early entrance to school/college, did not result in social and emotional difficulties including difficulties making friends with older students (for summaries, see Benbow et al., 1996; Colangelo et al., 2004; Gross & van Vliet, 2005; Ingersoll & Cornell, 1995; Neihart, 2007; Rogers, 2002)" (p. 190).

In their original meta-analysis, Kulik and Kulik (1984) find inconclusive results for what they called "nonintellective outcomes" of acceleration, meaning students' attitudes towards school or subject matter and perceived popularity with peers (p. 422). However, Steenbergen-Hu and Moon's (2011) newer meta-analysis concludes that "the social-emotional development effects appeared to be slightly positive" (abstract).

Kent's (1992) dissertation is a meta-analysis of the empirical research studies available

before January 1992 about the social and emotional effects of acceleration of elementary gifted students. She concludes, “[t]he 388 effect sizes were averaged to obtain an effect size of .13 for the research to answer the question of available evidence on the effect of acceleration on the social and emotional development of gifted elementary students. To further evaluate the question, several sub-group analyses were performed. The method of telescoping produced the greatest effect size (.15) with combined methods showing the least (-.01); kindergarten accelerants had the most positive effect size (.14); research conducted on accelerated students after college revealed the greatest gains (.28) and in the six (of 23) studies that performed analyses by gender of the pupil, boys showed greater gains (.21) than girls overall (.15)” (p. 8).

Neihart (2007) reviewed the literature for the socioaffective impact of acceleration and peer ability grouping. He concludes that studies of the three most commonly studied forms of acceleration—early entrance to school, early entrance to college, and grade skipping “consistently fail to find evidence of any negative social or emotional effects for nearly all accelerants ... and numerous studies have identified social or emotional benefits” (p. 331). Further, he noted that “Rogers (1992) reviewed 81 studies that investigated the social or emotional impact of acceleration and, using Slavin’s (1986, 1987) *best-evidence synthesis* technique, found positive effects in both social (mean effect size = 0.46) and emotional (mean effect size = 0.12) aspects. Social effects were typically examined via social maturity scores, teacher ratings of social skills, participation in extracurricular activities, and leadership positions held. Emotional effects typically referred to measures of self- concept or teacher or parent ratings of risk taking, independence, and creativity. Rogers (1992) noted significant emotional effects (effect size = .58) for subject-based acceleration in particular” (p. 331-332). Neihart commented that “[a]mong the hundreds of studies on acceleration, only three have observed negative emotional effects for accelerated children as a group. The negative effects noted are as follows: decline in academic self-concept (Marsh, Chessor, Craven, & Roche, 1995; Marsh & Hau, 2003; Zeidner & Schleyer, 1999), higher anxiety (Zeidner & Schleyer, 1999), and decline in grades (Zeidner & Schleyer, 1999)” (p. 332).

Minority students and acceleration

To consider the effects of acceleration specifically on minority students, Seon-Young, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Peternel (2010) conducted a qualitative study of the perceptions and experiences of academically talented minority students and their teachers, including classroom teachers, regarding an accelerative program (Project EXCITE) in math, which helps prepare minority students in elementary to middle school for advanced work in high school. Students were chosen from two cohorts, those who were already accelerated in math and those who had not yet been accelerated but would be considered for acceleration within 1-2 years. “Overall, the findings of this study supported the use of acceleration for minority students with mathematical talent. Like many majority students in accelerated classes, the minority students viewed taking accelerated math courses as exciting, beneficial, and challenging and liked working ahead and having a ‘leg up’ compared with other students. It was striking that many of the students felt bored at school; they were looking for challenges that made them excited and stimulated and that also put them ahead of others in high school. These were the primary reasons for seeking academic acceleration and the favorite aspects of being in the accelerated math courses” (p. 202).

The only major difference in interviews between students who successfully accelerated (as measured by higher grades in accelerated classes), and those who did not, was “all five students who failed in the accelerated class did not feel ready for accelerated math at the time

they were placed in it” (p. 202). Teachers were also more outspoken in expressing worry that students would experience negative effects from peers than the students themselves, who did not report any negative peer pressure.

Policy Considerations: State and Local

Caveats

This section summarizes policy considerations and recommendations offered by researchers who have examined acceleration. This paper conveys these recommendations and does not offer our own. We have tried to temper ideology from coloring this present review of policy considerations by only including information from professional researchers, setting aside the crowd of non-researchers that compose a hearty portion of the pronouncements on acceleration. We acknowledge that researchers are by no means immune from bias. The editorial agency we exercise in this section lies largely in deciding which considerations and recommendations to include and how to excerpt them with economy. This requires pairing back the luxuriant literature in the acceleration field with enough austerity to keep this summary accessible yet meaningful.

As noted earlier, Southern and Jones identify 18 forms of acceleration, some distinct and some overlapping. We concentrate in this section on the four considerations (or recommendations) within NYSED's current areas of interest on acceleration:

- a) Content-based acceleration
- b) Grade skipping
- c) Telescoping
- d) Compacting

In some cases, however, expurgating comments that pertain to acceleration forms outside NYSED's current focus (e.g., early kindergarten) would result in omitting content valuable to topics within NYSED's current focus. Asking the reader's patience, therefore, we include some considerations and recommendations whose scope may extend beyond NYSED's four current focus areas. We break this section into seven subsections, encapsulated below (the actual subsection headings are in underlined boldface font):

1. **Introduction:** the divide between research findings on acceleration and its actual implementation
2. An examination of the financial costs of acceleration
3. Comments on the singular importance of establishing an acceleration policy
4. Considerations for state-level acceleration policy
5. Considerations for local acceleration policy
6. Tools and guidelines for implementing acceleration, including an overview of the Iowa Acceleration Scale
7. **Other noteworthy policy considerations, which** summarizes policy considerations and recommendations from academics beyond those captured in the above section.

Introduction: The Divide between Research and Practice

The foregoing section on the research on the impacts of acceleration notes the highly positive academic and essentially neutral socio-emotional impacts of acceleration that researchers have found. Meanwhile, practitioners are generally squeamish about acceleration

practices. James Borland at Teacher’s College encapsulates the issue: “Acceleration is one of the most curious phenomena in the field of education. I can think of no other issue in which there is such a gulf between what research has revealed and what most practitioners believe” (Borland, 1989, p. 185).

The disconnect between research findings and practitioner beliefs on acceleration has a multi-decade history. Kulik (2004, p. 14) surfaces some of the earlier reflections on this divide:

Gold (1965) added, “No paradox is more striking than the inconsistency between research findings on acceleration and the failure of our society to reduce the time spent by superior students in formal education (p. 238). “Perhaps what is needed,” Gallagher suggested in 1969, “is some social psychologist to explore why this procedure is generally ignored in the face of such overwhelmingly favorable results” (p. 541). Getzels and Dillon in 1973 also lamented the lack of interest in acceleration and offered a social psychological explanation:

Apparently the cultural values favoring a standard period of dependency and formal education are stronger than the social or individual need for achievement and independence. This is an instance of the more general case one remarks throughout education: When research findings clash with cultural values, the values are more likely to prevail. (p. 717)

Gallagher (2004, p. 43) offers a graphic (Table 3) to summarize why many academicians are nonplussed that acceleration policy is not more widely implemented.

Table 3. Decision Making Factors for Educational Acceleration, adapted from Gallagher (2004)

Educational Acceleration				
Cost	Needed Personnel	Research Evidence	Public Beliefs	Educator Views
Minimal	None	Highly positive	Generally negative	Strongly negative

In contrast to acceleration, as Gallagher’s graphic frames it, gifted and talent programming is commonly delivered, yet, has non-trivial associated financial costs (Bhatt, 2001). Thus, past research suggests costs are likely to be higher for gifted programming than costs for acceleration, while student achievement effects, all factors held equal, will be lower.

Hattie’s synthesis of meta-analyses (2009) finds that among three general methods for serving gifted and talent students, acceleration is the most effective overall:

- Acceleration—effect size=0.84 (across 37 studies)
- Enrichment—effect size=0.39 (across 214)
- Ability grouping for gifted students—effect size=0.30 (across 125 studies)

This comparison prompts Hattie to ask “why acceleration is the least implemented of the three?” At least two simplistic answers can be ventured.

First, the underuse of acceleration stems in part from mistaken perceptions about its harm to students (Seon-Young, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Peternel, 2010). The foregoing section summarizing the research on acceleration's impacts on students, however, reveals this is generally unfounded. Second, that "many educators do not feel comfortable" with how acceleration processes should be managed also contributes to underuse (Gallagher, 2004).² This section offers concepts and tools (for both state and local actors) that may facilitate ultimately better support local policy and management.

Cost

The cost-effectiveness of a program or intervention and not only its impact on student achievement are key factors in policy decisions. Academics report that acceleration is a cost-effective option for serving gifted students (Gallagher, 2004; Southern & Jones; 2004). Gallagher (2004) reports that the costs of acceleration strategies "are minimal, in fact saving money for the school system in the long run" (p. 43)³ Others have qualified that cost-savings for the school district are generated when acceleration is enacted early in a student's academic career⁴ (Kuo & Lohman, in press)⁵. We found no research indicating that acceleration raises costs.

Beyond the short-term cost-efficiencies that districts may enjoy there is evidence of wider societal benefits. In a study of grade-skipping for mathematically precocious students Park (2011) evinces that not only does acceleration yield cost-savings and increased efficiencies to the education system, but furthermore, "increased scientific productivity," which in turn he deduces, yields "benefits for society at large" (p. 82).

Hattie's question of "why acceleration is the least implemented" among acceleration, enrichment, and gifted and talented ability grouping is even more difficult to answer when one considers that acceleration appears to require little-to-no added costs, while gifted and talented ability grouping does require non-trivial financial resources. In fact, it has been noted that a proper acceleration policy is particularly important in rural areas because of its cost-effectiveness in comparison to enrichment and/or gifted programs (Howley, et al., 1986).

Importance of Establishing an Acceleration Policy

Discussion of establishing an acceleration policy should be prefaced by underscoring that acceleration, enrichment, and gifted and talented programs are not interchangeable. As our preceding section on definition describes, neither enrichment nor gifted and talented programs are synonymous with acceleration. Each serves different purposes. The literature indicates that some students are served best by enrichment, others by gifted and talented, others by acceleration, and some by a mixture (Colangelo, et al., 2010; Neihart, 2007; Rogers, 2002). An

² Although practitioner reluctance toward acceleration is well documented, teachers by no means universally gainsay acceleration. For example in a study on the use of acceleration for gifted minority students in math Lee, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Peternel, (2010, abstract) found that "teachers believed that acceleration provides necessary challenges for students, makes them committed to schoolwork, and enhances their academic achievement."

³ Neither Southern & Jones (2004) nor Gallager (2004) share any supporting mathematical computations.

⁴ The authors do not state that later acceleration raises costs.

⁵ Citing Colangelo, Assouline, & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2004; Feldhusen, Proctor, & Black, 1986; Robinson, 2004; Robinson & Weimer, 1991; Saylor & Brookshire, 1993; Schiever & Maker, 2003.

acceleration policy should complement, not supplant, enrichment and gifted and talented services.

The literature indicates that “rules and regulations established at the state or local level can either facilitate or inhibit the use of educational acceleration” (Gallagher 2004, p. 40), and that the establishment of well-guided state and local policies can contribute to increasing the use of acceleration. Policies for identifying students for and operating *gifted programs* are common (Colangelo et al., 2010). However, “many states and school districts have no formal policies that address the desirability of acceleration or specify the procedures to be followed in making decisions about acceleration for particular students” (Colangelo et al., 2010, p. 180). (n.b., we have not analyzed state or local acceleration policy in New York State and thus make no assumptions about how this general finding applies in New York).

State-level Acceleration Policy

The Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration (IRPA) (2009) summarizes a national survey on acceleration policies and practices, *State of the States in Gifted Education 2008-2009* (National Association for Gifted Children & The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2009). Excerpts from that summary relevant to this brief are shared below.

The survey results indicate that acceleration policies are infrequent at the state level and highly variable at the district level.

Much policy work remains to be done in making sure that policies exist to serve those students who should be accelerated but for various reasons are not. The existence of a state or local policy does not necessarily mean that the policy is based on research or favorable toward acceleration.

The results of the NAGC/CSDPG nationwide survey are summarized in the following table. Policies specific to each state are included in comprehensive tables in the *State of the States* report [(National Association for Gifted Children & The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2009)].

As the numbers in the table [4] indicates, only 8 states have a state policy that allows acceleration; 7 states have a policy that formally relegates the decision to local education agencies (LEAs); 28 states have no policy, thus leaving any decisions about acceleration to LEAs by default⁶. (Note: 3 states plus the District of Columbia did not respond to the survey; not all states responded to each question.)

Even among the 8 states that explicitly allow acceleration, the forms of acceleration are not uniformly embraced. (p. 15)

⁶ The survey indicates that New York falls into this category.

Table 4: Tabulation of state policies on acceleration (National Association for Gifted Children & The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2009, p. 15)

	State Policy Permits	State Policy Does Not Permit	State Policy Leaves to LEA to Determine	No State Policy; Up to LEA to Determine
Acceleration Policy	8	0	7	28
Early Entrance to Kindergarten	10	13	11	10
Alternate High School Diploma	3	22	5	13
Dual or Concurrent Enrollment in Community College, College or University	29	0	5	9
High School Credit for Courses Completed at a Community College, College or University	25	0	9	9
Middle School Students Permitted Dual/Concurrent Enrollment in High School	9	2	8	22
Middle School Students Receive Credit Toward High School Graduation for Dual/Concurrent Courses	13	1	8	12
Proficiency-Based Promotions for Gifted & Talented Students	11	2	13	17
State Allows Credit Toward High School for Demonstrated Proficiency	13	3	9	15

Most extant policies concern grade-based acceleration (whole-grade acceleration, early entrance to kindergarten, or early entrance to college). Notably missing from most policies is a consideration of content-based acceleration for elementary and middle school students. Policies concerning the education of talented high school students make greater mention of content-acceleration, especially Advanced Placement coursework and concurrent/dual enrollment options. However, even these policies for secondary students vary on the age or grade at which a student can take a class and who is responsible (the school or the student) for fees of out-of-school courses.

In regard to state-level acceleration policies, only one state- Ohio- has both a legislative mandate requiring all districts to have an acceleration policy and a model policy (Model

Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners) with research-based recommendations that districts can use to serve students. [See **Appendix 2** for a copy of Ohio’s model policy in full]

In 2007, the Minnesota legislature required all school districts to adopt acceleration procedures that specify how students will be assessed for acceleration and how the curriculum will be modified to serve students identified for acceleration. Ohio and Minnesota are rare examples of statewide action in support of acceleration. (p16)

Current Ohio resources. We find that the Ohio Department of Education appears to have expanded the resources it offers on acceleration since the IRPA’s above comments were published in 2009. **Appendix 3** provides a reproduction of the text, along with the live links, residing on Ohio’s current website on academic acceleration (<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?Page=3&TopicRelationID=962&Content=122168>). **Appendix 4** reproduces example language from state acceleration policies reported by the IRPA (2009).

Local Policy Considerations

The National Work Group on Acceleration developed guidelines for developing an acceleration policy (Colangelo et al., 2010), stating a goal of assisting “schools in writing and modifying an acceleration policy that adheres to research-based best practices and is suited to local needs” (p. 199). From the National Work Group, below are some general considerations for local policy followed by more specific recommendations.

General local acceleration policy recommendations. “Each school district should have a written acceleration policy stating that acceleration is an appropriate and effective intervention for select highly able students who have demonstrated high performance in one or more academic areas... It should provide guidelines for the implementation of acceleration, including administrative matters, to ensure fair and systematic use of accelerative opportunities and recognition for participation in those accelerative opportunities. Finally, the policy should provide guidelines for preventing nonacademic barriers to the use of acceleration as an educational intervention and include features that prevent unintended consequences of acceleration” (Colangelo et al., 2010, p. 181).

Specific recommended elements of an acceleration policy. The National Work Group on Acceleration recommends “17 elements in five key areas that can help schools develop a comprehensive, consistent, and research-based policy” (Colangelo et al., 2010, p. 188).

Below are excerpts that delineate the 17 elements in five areas (All boldface and italicized font is from the original.)

1. The policy is characterized by accessibility, equity, and openness.

- *Access to referral for consideration of acceleration is open to all students.*
- *All student populations are served.*
- *Student evaluation is fair, objective, and systematic.*
- *Parents or guardian(s) are allowed open communication about the policy and procedures.*

- *The community has ready access to the policy document and procedure guidelines.* (pp. 189-190)
2. **The policy provides guidelines for the implementation of acceleration.**
 - *The categories, forms, and types (where appropriate) of acceleration are specified.*
 - *The entire process to obtain acceleration services is detailed in the policy.*
 - *Acceleration decisions should be made by child study teams, not individuals.* An acceleration policy should be informed by research-based best practices, not personal opinions or anecdotal evidence. A common impediment to acceleration occurs when acceleration decisions are made by one person, a gatekeeper, who may harbor negative personal views about acceleration (Southern & Jones, 2004a).
 - *The child study team creates a “Written Acceleration Plan.”*
 - *The policy specifies that the acceleration process include a monitored transition period within which decisions can be reversed.* (pp. 190-191)
 3. **The policy provides guidelines on administrative matters to ensure fair and systematic use of accelerative opportunities and recognition for participation in those accelerative opportunities.**
 - *Short-term needs are addressed.*
 - *Long-term needs are addressed.*
 - *The process of awarding credit to students is specified.* (pp. 191-192)
 4. **The policy provides guidelines for preventing nonacademic barriers to the use of acceleration as an educational intervention.**
 - *Extracurricular opportunities, especially interscholastic sports opportunities, should not be withheld or denied to students who are accelerated.*
 - *Use of acceleration should not negatively affect school funding.* (p. 193)
 5. **The policy includes features that prevent unintended consequences.**
 - *An appeals process should be specified for decisions made at any step during the process.*
 - *The acceleration policy should be regularly evaluated on its effectiveness.* (p. 193)

The IRPA (2009), in conjunction with the National Association for Gifted Children, and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted developed a “Checklist for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy,” which is reproduced in **Appendix 5**.

Tools and Guidelines for Implementing Acceleration

Objective and comprehensive decision-making instrument: Iowa Acceleration Scale.

A crucial facet of an acceleration policy, according to The National Work Group on Acceleration, is the requirement and support for use of objective and comprehensive decision-making instruments (Colangelo et al., 2010). From our review, the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) appears to be the most credible decision-making instrument (Assouline, Colangelo, Lupkowski-Shoplak, Lipscomb, & Forstadt, 2009). The IAS supports educators in screening students for acceleration and guiding their decisions, including rating scales on the child’s

intellectual and emotional development, and areas of potential problems. The Acceleration Institute reports that the IAS “guides a child study team (including educators, teachers, parents, and other professionals) through a discussion of the academic and social characteristics of the student” by providing the following:

- “A more objective look at the student;
- An analysis of the major factors to be considered in making a decision;
- Guidelines for weighting the relative importance of the major factors;
- Documentation of the student’s strengths and concerns;
- A numerical range to guide the discussion and decision of acceleration; and,
- A standard of comparison with students who have had successful accelerations.”

Caveats, however, should be raised around the IAS. For one, the IAS is designed to help educators make decision around grade-skipping and has limited validity for evaluating other acceleration decisions. Its chief designer cautions using it for other acceleration forms, including single-subject acceleration (personal communication, Susan Assouline, September 6, 2012).

Second, it is not freely available online. Our review finds that it is available at amazon.com for 46 dollars.⁷

Third, the validation studies of the IAS are limited. Several papers endorse the IAS (e.g., Gallagher, 2004; Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration, 2009). Colangelo, Assouline, and Gross (2004) call it a “proven and effective instrument for helping schools make decisions about whole-grade acceleration” (p. 2). The endorsing papers we could identify cite two sources exclusively, which are two validation studies that have been conducted on the IAS. One is an unpublished doctoral dissertation (Lipscomb, 2003). The other, titled “The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS): Two validation studies” is cited as a “paper presented at the National Association for Gifted Children Conference.” (Assouline et al., 2003)⁸ An actual paper, however, does not exist, rather only a deck of PowerPoint presentation slides summarizing the findings. Our personal communication with the lead author confirms the inexistence of an actual paper (personal communication, Susan Assouline, April 19, 2012).

The research methodology that Lipscomb (2003) applies is limited and does not include a control group, rather, relying solely on a convenience sample of students being considered for acceleration. The scope of his conclusions, therefore, should be noted:

If it [IAS] is to be used as a primary device in determining the acceleration readiness of high ability students, the Iowa Acceleration Scale must show validity when employed to evaluate students of varying academic and social profiles. This study represented an initial step in the study of the IAS, and it generated some indications that when the instrument was used as intended, many elements of the IAS appeared to work as designed. The results of the study also reemphasized that the IAS needs to be capable of distinguishing among that small and potentially homogeneous group of students who are nominated for acceleration. To accomplish the task, some elements of the IAS may require a degree of change. Most importantly, further research of the instrument is needed and it is hoped that the results from this study may assist in providing a direction for that effort.

⁷ <http://www.amazon.com/lowa-Acceleration-Scale-Manual-Edition/dp/0910707928>

⁸ According to Gallagher (2004) the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) has been used in every state and several foreign countries.

In short, though the IAS is research based, it has only been subjected to initial validation exercises. Nonetheless, the results of initial validation tests have been positive and the instrument has generated favorable feedback from users. Furthermore, the IAS is the only tool available to support grade skipping.

It should, however, be underscored that those endorsing the IAS clearly explain that the IAS is a framework to guide a group-decision making process, not a declaratory test. As such, the inexistence of more rigorous research on the IAS is not necessarily indicative of a weakness in the IAS, but rather the challenges associated with conducting research that allows for more generalizable conclusions on a tool that is designed to guide, not dictate, and, to a certain degree, flex to local context.

Three implementation guidelines. The National Work Group on Acceleration highlights and summarizes three broad implementation guidelines raised in the AIS: referral and screening, assessment and decision making, and planning (Colangelo et al., 2010). Below are excerpts from the Work Group's summary. **Appendix 6** reproduces the National Work Group's summary in whole.

Referral and Screening. “Referral for acceleration is a separate process from referral to a school’s gifted program. Students who are referred for acceleration will not necessarily be part of a school’s gifted and talented program because the school may not have a gifted and talented program, or the student may not qualify for the program if the school uses composite test scores for acceptance into the gifted program.”⁹

Students who should be considered for evaluation for academic acceleration can be referred to a school administrator by any source, including but not limited to the student, teachers, administrators, school psychologists, school counselors, parents, and other students. Referral should be open to many sources so that one person does not serve as the gatekeeper for referral recommendations.” (pp.194-195)

Assessment and Decision Making. “School districts are expected to conduct a fair, objective, and systematic assessment of the student using the appropriate instruments for the type of acceleration being considered for the student. When assessing English language learners, appropriate instruments may include those in the student’s heritage language. The district should take care to ensure that assessment instruments are valid and reliable, and that the instruments measure the factors related to success with acceleration. Inability to pay for any tests related to the evaluation, such as ability tests conducted by an independent psychologist, should not exclude families or students from consideration. Indeed, it is precisely because some students are at risk of exclusion for consideration of acceleration that an objective policy should be implemented.

⁹ This point is made earlier in the paper as well: “Whether the acceleration policy stands alone or is incorporated into the gifted education policy, it should clearly state that participation in a school’s gifted education program is not a prerequisite for consideration of acceleration as an educational intervention... 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” (p. 183).

A child study team should consider cases of whole-grade acceleration and use valid and reliable instruments to guide the discussion and decide on placement. In an ideal child study team, at least one person is familiar with the research and best practices of gifted education and acceleration.” (p. 196)

“As part of the information gathering stage, the student being considered for acceleration can be consulted, depending on the student’s age and willingness to participate. (The student should not participate in the child study team’s discussion of the student.)

A child study team also should be assembled to consider cases of content-based acceleration. Because content-based acceleration does not involve a student’s full-time placement with older classmates, there may be fewer concerns about social and emotional development. Because of the less extreme nature of content acceleration, the child study team need not be made up of as many members as the team assembled for discussions of whole grade acceleration.” (p.197)

Planning. “A comprehensive written plan for the decision should be developed and provided to the parent or legal guardian of the student. The child study team should appoint a staff member of the school to oversee and aid in the implementation of the written acceleration plan and the transition process.” (p. 197)

Other Noteworthy Policy Considerations

This section summarizes policy consideration or recommendations from academics beyond those captured in the above section. Furthermore, **Appendix 7** summarizes strategies preferred by Gallagher (2004) on “Ways to influence policy on acceleration.”

Recommendations. Neihart (2007) examines several comprehensive reviews¹⁰ of the research on acceleration and offers recommendations for best practice. A selection of Neihart’s points is restated below. It should be noted that several of Neihart’s points are not relevant to the specific focus of NYSED’s acceleration interest and thus are excluded from the excerpts below. Moreover, we only restate points from Neihart that add to what has already been captured in this paper, thus redundant points are omitted.

- “Acceleration options should be available for capable students. No school district or school administrator should have a policy that prohibits accelerative options for students, including grade skipping.”
- “All school districts should have written policies or procedures in place to ensure that acceleration options (e.g., grade skipping, early entrance to kindergarten, and early admission to college) are available in all schools and to guide parents and teachers in the steps to follow for referral and evaluation of students.”
- “When possible, students who are grade skipping or making an early entrance to college should do so as part of a cohort. There appear to be benefits to cohort acceleration that are more difficult to replicate when students go it alone.”

¹⁰ (Brody, Muratori, & Stanley, 2004; Cornell et al., 1991; Gross & van Vliet, 2005; Kulik & Kulik, 1982, 1984, 1992; Lubinski, 2004; Moon & Reis, 2004; Proctor, Black, & Feldhusen, 1986; Robinson, 2004; Rogers, 1992; Slavin, 1987; Southern & Jones, 1991)

- “In selecting candidates for acceleration, educators should consider the possibility that a student who demonstrates low motivation, social withdrawal or isolation, and negative attitudes toward school or academic work might, in fact, be a good candidate for acceleration options.”
- “All gifted students are not good candidates for grade skipping, early entrance to kindergarten, or early admission to college.” (p. 336)

Dimensions. Southern and Jones (2004) describe five dimensions of around which acceleration practices differ: pacing, salience, peers, access, and timing. Below are salient excerpts from their discussion of acceleration dimensions.

Pacing. “The pacing (rate) of instruction defines acceleration, and it is along this dimension that acceleration practices diverge” (p. 7)

Salience. “Accelerative options vary by the degree to which they are noticeable to others, particularly to peers, and the acceptability of options is apt to vary depending on their prominence. The degrees to which accelerative options are readily noticeable are apt to raise concerns about the risks of acceleration to the student’s adjustment and achievement. The salience of acceleration may also bring it into conflict with values issues such as elitism and egalitarianism” (pp.7-8)

“Grade-skipping seems more salient and controversial. However, it is also possible to speculate that subject-matter acceleration is more salient in that the physical move may be required daily over an entire year rather than in one fell swoop. In point of fact, neither process has been demonstrated to cause academic or social/emotional difficulties (e.g., Kulik & Kulik, 1984; Rogers, 2002)” (p.8).

Peers. “The degree to which acceleration will result in social separation from peers is the issue that raises the greatest concern with parents, educators, and students themselves (Jones & Southern, 1991; Southern, Jones, & Fiscus, 1989a, 1989b). There is a lack of empirical research to support the notion that separation from age-/grade-level peers is associated with difficulties in adjustment or achievement (Kulik & Kulik, 1984; Southern, et al., 1993), but the concerns persist because the decisions to accelerate individual children are made by parents and educators regarding a child they know.”

“While marked divergence from age-peers would seem to be an extraordinary intervention and potentially could engage serious difficulties, the separation can be managed and its influence can be muted. Consistent with best practices, programs which employ radical accelerations only admit students who score extremely high on appropriate entrance criteria. Support services in counseling and academic adjustment are to be provided. Programs that recruit cohorts of students for radical acceleration have some advantage in dealing with the issue of separation from age-/grade-level peers compared to programs that are intended to provide for the needs of an individual student” (p. 8).

Access. “School districts vary widely in the kind of program offerings they make available to students. The number of AP classes is only a small part of the variance. The extents to which foreign languages are available (in range and depth) as well as the kind of mathematics courses that schools can offer students, differentiate how students access

accelerative options. Geographic isolation also limits the kinds of resources one might be able to access in given settings. Classically, rural schools have extensive bus networks to bring students to school. They also are more likely to have a limited number of teachers with advanced content expertise, thus offering fewer advanced courses in math, sciences, or foreign languages. Though a number of options are available to provide distance instruction, these often have cost implications that preclude their use by many families” (p. 8).

Timing. “The age at which the student is offered accelerative options is associated with additional complications. Skipping first grade might have vastly different consequences from early graduation from college” (p. 8)

Conclusion

The seven subsections that compose this review provide considerations and principles that will aid policy-makers. The most essential take-aways are the gap between the positive findings of research on acceleration and actual practice; the low financial cost of acceleration, both in absolute and relative terms; the importance of having an acceleration policy at both the state and local levels; the Iowa Acceleration Scale can be a reliable tool in the screening of some students for accelerations and warrants consideration for state and local use, even if research on it begs extension; and there is a cache of useable guidelines and considerations that can inform state and local actors. These guidelines are previewed in the body of this paper. Some aspects are conveyed more fully in the appendices and are accessible in full through our references, in most cases through a hyperlink and without cost.

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Appendix 1:
Definitions and Examples of Types of Acceleration

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Excerpted from Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration (IRPA). (2009, November). *Guidelines for developing an academic acceleration policy*. Co-authored by IRPA, the National Association for Gifted Children, and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. Iowa City, IA: Author. Retrieved from: http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/Policy_Guidelines/ pp. 12-14.

Content-Based Acceleration

Single-subject acceleration

This practice allows students to be placed in classes with older peers for a part of the day (or with materials from higher grade placements) in one or more content areas. Subject-matter acceleration or partial acceleration may be accomplished by the student either physically moving to a higher-level class for instruction (e.g., a second-grade student going to a fifth-grade reading group), or using higher-level curricular or study materials in the current classroom. Subject-matter acceleration may also be accomplished outside of the general instructional schedule (e.g., summer school or after school) or by using higher-level instructional activities on a continuous progress basis without leaving the placement with chronological-age peers.

Curriculum compacting

The student's instruction entails reduced amounts of introductory activities, drill, and practice. Instructional experiences may also be based on relatively fewer instructional objectives compared to the general curriculum. The time gained may be used for more advanced content instruction or to participate in enrichment activities. Instructional goals should be selected on the basis of careful analyses for their roles in the content and hierarchies of curricula. The parsing of activities and goals should be based on pre-instructional assessment (such as using a unit test as a pre-test).

Concurrent/dual enrollment

The student takes a course at one level and receives credit at a higher level (e.g., taking algebra at the middle school level and receiving credit at both the middle school and the high school level or taking a high school chemistry course that is of college-level difficulty and receiving credit for a university course upon successful completion).

Correspondence courses

The student enrolls in coursework delivered outside of normal school instruction. Instruction may be delivered traditionally by mail, but increasingly other delivery mechanisms such as Internet-based instruction and televised courses are used.

Credit by examination or prior experience

The student is awarded advanced standing credit (e.g., in high school or college) by successfully completing some form of mastery test or activity.

Mentoring

A student is paired with a mentor or expert tutor who provides advanced or more rapid pacing of instruction. Course credit may be an option.

Extracurricular programs

Students elect to enroll in coursework or after school or summer programs that confer advanced instruction and/or credit.

Advanced Placement

The student takes a course (traditionally in high school) that will confer college credit upon successful completion of a standardized examination.

International Baccalaureate

Advanced students may participate in the International Baccalaureate program, taking the corresponding university-level curricula. At the end of high school, the students complete an international examination, receiving advanced standing and course credits upon matriculation to university.

Grade-Based Acceleration

Early admission to school

Early admission to kindergarten: Students enter kindergarten prior to achieving the minimum age for school entry as set by district or state policy. The entry age specified varies greatly throughout the country and is generally stated in terms of birth date (for example, “entry to kindergarten will be allowed for prospective students who will achieve the age of five years on or before September 30 of their entry year”).

Early admission to first grade: This practice can result from either the skipping of kindergarten, or from accelerating a student enrolled in kindergarten into first grade.

Whole-grade acceleration

A student is considered to have been whole-grade accelerated (“grade skipped”) if he or she is given a grade-level placement ahead of chronological-age peers. Whole-grade acceleration may be done at the beginning of or during the school year.

Continuous progress

The student is given content progressively as prior content is completed and mastered. The practice is accelerative when the student’s progress exceeds the performance of chronological-age peers in rate and level. Provision for providing sequenced materials may or may not be with the discretion of the teacher or within the control of the student.

Self-paced instruction

With this option the student proceeds through learning and instructional activities at a self-selected pace. Self-paced instruction is a sub-type of continuous progress acceleration. Self-paced instruction is distinguishable from the more general continuous progress in that the student has control over all pacing decisions.

Telescoping curriculum

The student is provided instruction that entails less time than is normal (e. g., completing a one-year course in one semester, or three years of middle school in two). Telescoping differs from curriculum compacting in that time saved from telescoping always results in advanced grade placement. It is planned to fit a precise time schedule. Curriculum compacting does not necessarily advance grade placement.

Combined classes

While not, in and of itself, a practice designed for acceleration, in some instances (e.g., a fourth and fifth-grade split room), this placement can allow younger students to interact academically and socially with older peers. It may or may not result in an advanced grade placement later.

Early entrance into middle school, high school, or college

The student is awarded an advanced level of instruction at least one year ahead of normal. This may be achieved with the employment of other accelerative techniques such as dual enrollment and credit by examination or by determination of college teachers and administrators.

Early graduation

The student graduates from high school or college in three-and-a-half years or less. Generally, this is accomplished by increasing the amount of coursework undertaken each year in high school or college, but it may also be accomplished through dual/ concurrent enrollment or extracurricular and correspondence coursework.

Acceleration in college

The student completes two or more majors in a total of four years and/or earns an advanced degree along with or in lieu of a bachelor's degree.

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Appendix 2:
Ohio's Model Acceleration Policy

Appendix 2: Ohio's Model Acceleration Policy

Copied from original: Ohio Department of Education. (2006). *Model student acceleration policy for advanced learners*. Columbus, OH: Author.



**MODEL STUDENT
ACCELERATION POLICY FOR
ADVANCED LEARNERS**

**Ohio Department of
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Jr. G.R. "Sam"

Schloemer Jennifer

L. Sheets
Jane
Sonenshein

Carl
Wick
Martha W.
Wise

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Muthig, Curriculum and Instruction
Sarah Luchs, Policy and Accountability
Sue Rapier, Curriculum and
Assessment

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*Ohio Department of
Education
Office for Exceptional
Children
25 S Front
Street
Columbus, OH
43215*

Introduction

The *Model Policy for Academic Acceleration* has been developed to assist districts in meeting the requirements of Section 3324.10 of HB 66:

(A) Prior to June 30, 2006, the state board of education shall adopt a model student acceleration policy addressing recommendations in the department of education's 2005 study conducted under the gifted research and demonstration grant program. The policy shall address, but not be limited to, whole grade acceleration, subject area acceleration, and early high school graduation.

(B) The board of education of each city, local, and exempted village school district shall implement a student acceleration policy to take effect beginning in the 2006-2007 school years. The policy shall either be the model adopted by the state board under division (A) of this section or a policy covering similar issues that is adopted by the district board.

As noted in Ohio's Academic Content Standards:

No individual or group should be excluded from the opportunity to learn, and all students are presumed capable of learning. *Every Ohio student, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, disability or giftedness shall have access to a challenging, standards-based curriculum.*

The knowledge and skills defined in Ohio's academic content standards are within the reach of all students. Students, however, develop at different rates. *All children learn and experience success given time and opportunity, but the degree to which the standards are met and the time it takes to reach the standards will vary from student to student.*

Students who can exceed the grade-level indicators and benchmarks set forth in the standards must be afforded the opportunity and be encouraged to do so. Students who are gifted may require special services or activities in order to fully develop their intellectual, creative, artistic and academic capabilities or to excel in a specific content area. Again, the point of departure is the standards-based curriculum.

All children should be provided adjustments when necessary in order to address their individual needs. Identifying and nurturing the talents of all students will enable all students to reach the standards.

Appropriate use of accelerated learning opportunities supports compliance with requirements in Ohio

Administrative Code 3301-35-06:

(A) Educational programs and experiences shall be designed and implemented to provide a general education of high quality to *all students*...

Instruction shall include intervention that is designed to meet student needs. Instruction and instructional activities shall be:

- (1) Consistent with educational research and proven practices;

- (2) Appropriate to student ages, *developmental needs*, learning styles, *abilities*, and English proficiency;
- (3) *Designed to ease the transition of students from one educational environment to another*

Sections (D),(E), and (F) of OAC 3301-35-06 specify that instruction for students in grades K-12 shall be provided in curricular areas identified in sections 3301.07, 3313.60, 3313.602, and 3313.90 of the Revised Code that are “*appropriate for the student’s age and ability level...* and that reflect the mission and strategic plan of the district and school.”

Research conducted nationally and within Ohio’s public schools has demonstrated that academic acceleration can be a powerful and cost-effective strategy for providing appropriately challenging, standards-based instruction for students who are ready to learn above grade-level content. Acceleration has also been shown to increase motivation, reduce boredom, and enhance the social and emotional well-being of appropriately selected students.

However, acceleration is currently severely underutilized in Ohio. It is the hope of the State Board of Education and the Ohio Department of Education that this model policy will assist school districts in increasing their use of accelerated learning strategies to better meet the needs of advanced learners and help them reach their full potential.

Definitions

Whole-Grade Acceleration: The practice of assigning a student to a higher grade level than is typical given the student’s age on a full-time basis for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.

Example:

- After completing the first grade year, a student is placed in a third grade classroom (rather than a second grade classroom) on a full-time basis at the beginning of the next school year.
- After completing the fall semester of the fifth grade year, a student is placed in the sixth grade at the start of the second semester of the same school year.

Individual Subject Acceleration: The practice of assigning a student to a higher grade level than is typical given the student’s age for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities in one or more subject areas.

Example:

- A third grade student performing above grade level in reading and math goes to a fourth grade teacher every morning for instruction in these subjects and returns to the third grade classroom for instruction in other subject areas.
- A musically gifted sixth grade student is enrolled in a high school instrumental music course and returns to the sixth grade classroom for instruction in other subject areas.

Early Admission to Kindergarten: The practice of admitting a student to kindergarten who has not yet reached the typical age at which students are admitted to kindergarten for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.

Example:

- A child who can read independently and is socially similar to typical five year-olds is admitted to kindergarten, although he will not reach his fifth birthday until the end of the school year.

Early High School Graduation: The practice of facilitating completion of the high school program in fewer than four years for the purpose of providing earlier than typical access to post-secondary educational opportunities.

Example:

- An advanced student is granted a diploma after spending only five semesters in high school by accumulating credits on an accelerated basis through “dual-credit” coursework taken while in middle school and by satisfying some high school graduation requirements by completing “educational options” rather than traditional courses. The student then enrolls in college as a full- time student at age 16.

Research Summary

Acceleration, when used appropriately, is perhaps the most effective intervention for enhancing the academic growth of advanced students (Kulik & Kulik, 1989.) The landmark report “A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America’s Brightest Students,” published by the University of Iowa and the Templeton Foundation, noted that, “Acceleration is the most effective curriculum intervention for gifted children;” that, “For bright students, acceleration has long-term beneficial effects, both academically and socially;” and, “Acceleration is a virtually cost-free intervention” (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, eds., 2004.

Rogers (2002) conducted a meta-analytic review of the research on the academic, social, and emotional effects of acceleration, and found that gifted students who were admitted early to kindergarten showed approximately ½ years’ worth of additional growth in all academic areas compared to age peers of equal ability, and students who were accelerated in a single subject area were the equivalent of 3/5 of a year ahead of similar age peers in that subject area. Kulik (2004) conducted a similar review of research on acceleration dating as far back as 1932 and similarly concluded, “The meta-analytic results show that bright students almost always benefit from accelerated programs of instruction. Two major findings support this conclusion. First, on achievement tests, bright accelerated youngsters usually perform like their bright, older non-accelerated classmates. Second, the accelerated youngsters usually score almost one grade-level higher on achievement tests than bright, same-age non-accelerated students do.”

Yet, despite the overwhelmingly positive research findings on acceleration, acceleration is an intervention that is severely underused in Ohio’s public schools. In a study commissioned by the Ohio Department of Education’s Office for Exceptional Children, Southern and Jones (2005) reported that the majority of Ohio school districts did not accelerate a single student by early-admission to Kindergarten or whole grade acceleration (“grade skipping”) in the 2004-2005 school year. Yet, in the handful of districts that were employing these strategies, experiences with acceleration were viewed very positively by educators and students. Case study districts,

which ranged from small, rural districts to ethnically diverse urban districts, all reported successful use of acceleration as an intervention for high ability students and increasingly positive views toward acceleration among educators as use of acceleration increased and professional development was provided.

Southern and Jones (2005) and ODE gifted education staff have identified a number of barriers to the appropriate and frequent use of acceleration in Ohio. These barriers include:

- A pervasive lack of awareness of the research on acceleration and the pervasive myth among educators that, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary (e.g. Robinson, 2004; Gross, 1992), placing students with older peers is socially and emotionally harmful to bright children.
- District policies that included unreasonable criteria for acceleration or that explicitly discouraged the use of acceleration, sometimes using inaccurate information that is misleading to parents and educators.
- Structural barriers, particularly related to “single-subject” acceleration when acceleration would require a student to move back and forth between two school buildings.
- Confusion amongst educators regarding state and local policies.

The General Assembly’s call for the State Board of Education to adopt a model policy on acceleration has created an opportunity to address many of the above barriers and to encourage professional development on this subject. ODE will publish and disseminate a research-based “toolkit” to aid districts in effectively implementing the model policy. ODE will also develop and implement a process for comparing to age peers the score(s) on relevant state accountability measures of any student who is accelerated according to an ODE-approved acceleration policy during the first year of his or her accelerated placement.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive findings on the effects of acceleration, to ensure its successful use, acceleration should involve planning and support of the student in the accelerated setting following the placement of the student.

This model policy supports the use of research-based criteria for identifying students for accelerated placement (Assouline, Colangelo, et al., 2003), reflects procedures shown to help ensure the success of students in accelerated settings (Southern and Jones, 2005), and incorporates input and feedback on practical issues related to acceleration from educators across Ohio.

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Suggestions and Instructions for District Adoption of Model Policy

1. It is recommended that local boards of education adopt this policy.
2. If the district should revise any section of the model policy, such revisions shall be submitted to the Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children, Gifted Services, prior to implementing the changes.

Policy on Academic Acceleration, Early Entrance to Kindergarten, and Early High School Graduation

In accordance with the belief that all children are entitled to an education commensurate with their particular needs, students who can exceed the grade-level indicators and benchmarks set forth in the standards must be afforded the opportunity and be encouraged to do so.

The (District) Board of Education believes that such students often require access to advanced curriculum in order to realize their potential contribution to themselves and society.

All children learn and experience success given time and opportunity, but the degree to which academic content standards are met and the time it takes to reach the standards will vary from student to student. The (District) Board of Education believes that all students, including advanced learners, should be challenged and supported to reach their full potential. For many advanced learners, this can best be achieved by affording them access to curriculum, learning environments, and instructional interventions more commonly provided to older peers.

This policy describes the process that shall be used for evaluating students for possible accelerated placement and identifying students who should be granted early admission to kindergarten, accelerated in one or more individual subject areas, promoted to a higher grade level than their same-age peers, and granted early graduation from high school.

1) Referrals and Evaluation

- a) Any student residing in the district may be referred by a teacher, administrator, gifted education specialist, guidance counselor, school psychologist, or a parent or legal guardian of the student to the principal of his or her school for evaluation for possible accelerated placement. A student may refer himself or herself or a peer through a district staff member who has knowledge of the referred child's abilities.
- b) Copies of this policy and referral forms for evaluation for possible early entrance, whole-grade acceleration, individual subject acceleration, and early high school graduation shall be made available to district staff and parents at each school building. The principal of each school building (or his or her designee) shall solicit referrals of students for evaluation for possible accelerated placement annually, and ensure that all staff he or she supervises is aware of procedures for referring students for evaluation for possible accelerated placement.
- c) The principal (or his or her designee) of the referred student's school shall obtain written permission from the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to evaluate the student for possible accelerated placement. The district shall evaluate all students who are referred for evaluation and whose parent(s) or legal guardian(s) have granted permission to evaluate the student for possible accelerated placement.
- d) Children who are referred for evaluation for possible accelerated placement sixty or more days prior to the start of the school year shall be evaluated in advance of the start of the school year so that the child may be placed in the accelerated placement on the first day of school. Children who are referred for possible accelerated placement sixty or more days prior to the start of the second semester shall be evaluated for possible accelerated placement at the start of the second semester. In all other cases, evaluations of a referred child shall be scheduled at the student's principal's discretion and placed in the accelerated setting(s) at the time recommended by the acceleration evaluation committee – if the committee determines the child should be accelerated. Pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code 3321.01, all children who will be the proper age for entrance to kindergarten or first grade by the first day of January of the school year for which admission is requested shall be evaluated upon the request of the child's parent or legal guardian. Children who will not yet be the proper age for entrance to

kindergarten or first grade by the first day of January of the school year for which admission is requested shall also be evaluated for possible early admittance if referred by an educator within the district, a pre-school educator who knows the child, or pediatrician or psychologist who knows the child. Children who will not yet be the proper age for entrance to kindergarten or first grade by the first day of January of the school year for which admission is requested may also be evaluated for possible early admittance at the discretion of the principal of the school to which the student may be admitted.

- e) A parent or legal guardian of the evaluated student shall be notified in writing of the outcome of the evaluation process within 45 days of the submission of the referral to the referred student's principal. This notification shall include instructions for appealing the outcome of the evaluation process.
 - f) A parent or legal guardian of the referred student may appeal in writing the decision of the evaluation committee to the local Superintendent within thirty days of being notified of the committee's decision. The Superintendent shall review the appeal and notify the parent or legal guardian who filed the appeal of his or her final decision within thirty days of receiving the appeal. The Superintendent's decision shall be final. However, the student may be referred and evaluated again at the next available opportunity if he or she is again referred for evaluation by an individual eligible to make referrals as described in this policy.
- 2) Acceleration Evaluation Committee
- i) Composition
 - (1) The referred student's principal (or his or her designee) shall convene an evaluation committee to determine the most appropriate available learning environment for the referred student. This committee shall be comprised of the following:
 - (a) A principal or assistant principal from the child's current school;
 - (b) A current teacher of the referred student (with the exception of students referred for possible early admission to kindergarten);
 - (c) A teacher at the grade level to which the student may be accelerated (with the exception of students referred for possible early graduation from high school);
 - (d) A parent or legal guardian of the referred student or a representative designated by a parent or legal guardian of the referred student;
 - (e) A gifted education coordinator or gifted intervention specialist. If a gifted coordinator or gifted intervention specialist is not available in the district, a school psychologist or guidance counselor with expertise in the appropriate use of academic acceleration may be substituted.
 - (2) The acceleration evaluation committee shall be charged with the following responsibilities:
 - (a) The acceleration evaluation committee shall conduct a fair and thorough evaluation of the student.
 - (i) Students considered for whole-grade acceleration and early entrance to kindergarten shall be evaluated using an acceleration assessment process approved by the Ohio Department of Education. The committee shall consider the student's own thoughts on possible accelerated placement in its deliberations.
 - (ii) Students considered for individual subject acceleration shall be evaluated using a variety of data sources, including measures of achievement based on state academic

content standards (in subjects for which the state had approved content standards) and consideration of the student's maturity and desire for accelerated placement. The committee shall consider the student's own thoughts on possible accelerated placement in its deliberations.

- (iii) Students referred for possible early high school graduation shall be evaluated based on past academic performance, measures of achievement based on state academic content standards, and successful completion of state mandated graduation requirements. The committee shall consider the student's own thoughts on possible accelerated placement in its deliberations.
- (b) The acceleration evaluation committee shall issue a written decision to the principal and the student's parent or legal guardian based on the outcome of the evaluation process. If a consensus recommendation cannot be reached by the committee, a decision regarding whether or not to accelerate the student will be determined by a majority vote of the committee membership.
- (c) The acceleration evaluation committee shall develop a written acceleration plan for students who will be admitted early to kindergarten, whole-grade accelerated, or accelerated in one or more individual subject areas. The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the student shall be provided with a copy of the written acceleration plan. The written acceleration plan shall specify:
 - (i) placement of the student in an accelerated setting;
 - (ii) strategies to support a successful transition to the accelerated setting;
 - (iii) requirements and procedures for earning high school credit prior to entering high school (if applicable); and,
 - (iv) an appropriate transition period for accelerated placement for early entrants to kindergarten, grade-level accelerated students, and students accelerated in individual content areas.
- (d) For students the acceleration evaluation committee recommends for early high school graduation, the committee shall develop a written acceleration plan designed to allow the student to complete graduation requirements on an accelerated basis. This may include the provision of educational options in accordance with Ohio Administrative Code 3301-35-06(G), waiving district prerequisite requirements for enrolling in advanced courses, waiving district graduation requirements that exceed those required by the state, and early promotion to sophomore (or higher) status to allow the student to take the Ohio Graduation Test.
- (e) The acceleration evaluation committee shall designate a school staff member to ensure successful implementation of the written acceleration plan and to monitor the adjustment of the student to the accelerated setting.

3) Accelerated Placement

- a) The acceleration evaluation committee shall specify an appropriate transition period for accelerated placement for early entrants to kindergarten, grade-level accelerated students, and students accelerated in individual subject areas.
 - i) At any time during the transition period, a parent or legal guardian of the student may request in writing that the student be withdrawn from accelerated placement. In such

cases, the principal shall remove the student without repercussions from the accelerated placement.

- ii) At any time during the transition period, a parent or legal guardian of the student may request in writing an alternative accelerated placement. In such cases, the principal shall direct the acceleration committee to consider other accelerative options and issue a decision within 30 days of receiving the request from the parent or legal guardian. If the student will be placed in an accelerated setting different from that initially recommended by the acceleration evaluation committee, the student's written acceleration plan shall be revised accordingly, and a new transition period shall be specified.
- b) At the end of the transition period, the accelerated placement shall become permanent. The student's records shall be modified accordingly, and the acceleration implementation plan shall become part of the student's permanent record to facilitate continuous progress through the curriculum.

Adopted on the _____ day of _____ 2006

Signed: _____ President of Board

Signed: _____ Treasurer of Board

Appendix 3:
Reproduction of the text, along with the live links
residing on Ohio's current website on academic
acceleration

Appendix 3: Reproduction of the text, along with the live links, residing on Ohio's current website on academic acceleration:

(<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?Page=3&TopicRelationID=962&Content=122168> as of April 16, 2012

Academic Acceleration for Advanced Learners

The State Board of Education adopted a model acceleration policy for advanced learners at its April 2006 meeting. School districts are required to implement the model acceleration policy or alternative research-based policies approved by the Ohio Department of Education beginning in the 2006-2007 school year. Below is Information on the policy and tools and resources for implementing it.

- Testing Rules for Subject-Accelerated Students ([PDF](#))
- Acceleration Update ([PDF](#))
- Model policy text and introductory information ([PDF](#))
- Form for submitting district acceleration policies for review ([PDF](#)) ([Word](#))

Acceleration Policy Implementation Toolkit

The following tools and resources are designed to assist school districts in implementing the Model Student Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners developed by ODE and adopted by the State Board of Education. These items may not be compatible with locally developed acceleration policies or policies distributed by other organizations. Any district that has chosen not to implement the Model Student Acceleration Policy adopted by the State Board of Education should review these materials carefully to verify that the information they contain is compatible with the acceleration policy the district has chosen to implement.

State Board of Education Resolution on Acceleration and the Model Student Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners ([PDF](#))

Summary of an ODE-sponsored research study of Ohio school district policies and practices related to acceleration by W. Thomas Southern, Ph.D., and Eric Jones, Ph.D. ([PDF](#))

A newly created example of a referral form for early entrance to kindergarten or first grade may assist districts in clarifying for parents and others in the district the purpose of the early entrance acceleration option ([PDF](#))

Acceleration Case Studies

Ohio parents and educators involved in cases of accelerated students were invited to reflect on their experiences. The following case studies reflect the views of the individuals who submitted them. Names of students, educators, and schools have been changed or removed to preserve the privacy of students and others.

- Accelerating a Fifth Grader in a Rural School ([PDF](#))
- Completing Kindergarten and First Grade in One Year ([PDF](#))
- Skipping Second Grade ([PDF](#))

- A Seventh Grader Looks Back on Skipping a Grade ([PDF](#))
- Harry Held Back - A Case of Non-Acceleration ([PDF](#))
- Accelerating an Athlete ([PDF](#))
- A Case of Radical Subject Acceleration in Math ([PDF](#))

An Introduction to the Iowa Acceleration Scale

The [Iowa Acceleration Scale \(IAS\), Third Edition](#), is currently the only acceleration assessment process approved by ODE for evaluating candidates for early entrance to kindergarten and whole grade acceleration for students in kindergarten through Grade 9. Dr. Susan Assouline, co-author of the IAS, describes the purpose, content and development of the Iowa Acceleration Scale.

Model Written Acceleration Plans and Templates

The Model Student Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners calls for the creation of "written acceleration plans" for accelerated students. Below are sample acceleration plans:

- Whole-grade acceleration ([PDF](#))
- Subject acceleration in math ([PDF](#))
- Subject acceleration in science ([PDF](#))
- Early high school graduation ([PDF](#))

FAQs

- Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Model Student Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners ([PDF](#))
- Translations of the Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Model Student Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners in Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Somali and Spanish can be found [here](#).

Presentations

Districts that are implementing acceleration evaluation procedures often encounter questions about the best ways to evaluate students for possible acceleration through early entrance, subject acceleration, grade acceleration or early graduation from high school. The following presentations and handouts will assist districts in examining these procedures and clarifying the roles of the various evaluation committee members.

[Pathways to Acceleration: Signposts for the Evaluation Committee](#). This PowerPoint presentation is designed for the district acceleration policy administrator and also the facilitator of the acceleration evaluation committee. Individual slides may be used to assist evaluation committee members in understanding their roles in determining whether or not a student is a good candidate for acceleration.

[Pathways to Acceleration](#). This graphic “pathway” can be used as a handout to give district acceleration policy administrators facilitators of the acceleration evaluation committee a quick overview of the entire evaluation process.

Appendix 4:
Example Language from State Acceleration Policies

Appendix 4: Example Language from State Acceleration Policies

Source: Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration (IRPA). (2009, November). *Guidelines for developing an academic acceleration policy*. Co-authored by IRPA, the National Association for Gifted Children, and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. Iowa City, IA: Author. Retrieved from: http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/Policy_Guidelines/, modified from Appendix D Example Language from State Acceleration Policies. Example language in the original related to acceleration policies outside the scope of this brief have been omitted.

In this appendix, we provide examples from state acceleration policies, state gifted education policies that specifically mention one of the types of acceleration, and state regulatory language. Our examples are not exhaustive; for example, language from school district policies is not included because it is unique to local needs. We attempted to provide broad, representative language for these guidelines so that they would have maximum applicability to states and districts. We provide representative language for as many elements of the policy guidelines as possible.*

Sample Policy Language and Implementation

Information from Ohio

Ohio has been a national leader in legislating and regulating acceleration at the state level. The Ohio State Board of Education adopted “A Model Student Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners”

(<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?Page=3&TopicRelationID=964&Content=73076>). All districts were required beginning with the 2006-2007 school year to implement the model policy or a similar policy (subject to approval). Because Ohio has developed a comprehensive model policy and guidelines for implementing acceleration, we provide a link

(<http://education.ohio.gov/gd/templates/pages/ODE/ODEPrinterFriendlyPage.aspx?Page=3&TopicRelationID=964&Content=73076>) to their toolkit of materials as examples of how to write a policy and develop policy documents.

Information that can be accessed from the link includes the following:

- Testing Rules for Subject-Accelerated Students
- Acceleration Update
- Model policy text and introductory information
- Form for submitting district acceleration policies for review
- State Board of Education Resolution on Acceleration and the Model Student Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners
- Summary of an ODE-sponsored research study of Ohio school district policies and practices related to acceleration
- Acceleration Case Studies
- An Introduction to the *Iowa Acceleration Scale*

- Model Written Acceleration Plans and Templates for whole-grade acceleration, subject acceleration in math, subject acceleration in science, and early high school graduation
- Frequently Asked Questions about Acceleration and Ohio’s Model Student Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners

* Technical note: Internet links have been included to facilitate access to the examples and were active at the time of publication. In some cases, the link goes directly to the section of law or regulation in which the example appears. In other cases, the link goes to the web site that contains the language. In the latter case, a user will need to search within the document for the precise location of the language. In some cases there will be apparent errors or editorial oversights in the language of the law or regulation provided here. Since the language was taken directly from the published law or regulation, the authors have chosen not to make any changes.

Sample Policy Language about the Forms and Types of Acceleration

Grade-based acceleration

■Example 1: Alabama

Policy Language:

(6) Placement and Service Delivery Options. LEAs must utilize a variety of service delivery options that may include but are not limited to resource room pull-out, consultation, mentorships, advanced classes, and independent study. Gifted students’ need for complexity and accelerated pacing must be accommodated for in the general education program. Accommodations may include strategies such as flexible skills grouping, cluster grouping with differentiation, curriculum compacting, subject and grade acceleration, dual enrollment, and advanced classes. Each LEA must establish and implement a procedure for considering any requests for subject or grade acceleration. The procedures must be approved by the State Department of Education and will be included in the LEA Plan for Gifted.

Citation: AAC 290-8-9-.12(6)

<ftp://ftp.alsde.edu/documents/65/Gifted%20AAC.pdf>

Content-based acceleration

■Example 1: Alabama

Policy Language:

(6) *Placement and Service Delivery Options.* LEAs must utilize a variety of service delivery options that may include but are not limited to resource room pull-out, consultation, mentorships, advanced classes, and independent study. Gifted students’ need for complexity and accelerated pacing must be accommodated for in the general education program. Accommodations may include strategies such as flexible skills grouping, cluster grouping with differentiation, curriculum compacting, subject and grade acceleration, dual enrollment, and advanced classes.

Each LEA must be approved by the State Department of Education and will be included in the LEA Plan for Gifted.

Citation: AAC 290-8-9-.12(6)

<ftp://ftp.alsde.edu/documents/65/Gifted%20AAC.pdf>

■ Example 2: Ohio

Policy Language:

Students who can exceed the grade-level indicators and benchmarks set forth in the standards must be afforded the opportunity and be encouraged to do so. Students who are gifted may require special services or activities in order to fully develop their intellectual, creative, artistic and academic capabilities or to excel in a specific content area. Again, the point of departure is the standards-based curriculum.

...

Sections (D),(E), and (F) of OAC 3301-35-06 specify that instruction for students in grades K-12 shall be provided in curricular areas identified in sections 3301.07, 3313.60, 3313.602, and 3313.90 of the Revised Code that are “*appropriate for the student’s age and ability level...* and that reflect the mission and strategic plan of the district and school.”

...

Accelerated Placement

a) The acceleration evaluation committee shall specify an appropriate transition period for accelerated placement for early entrants to kindergarten, grade-level accelerated students, and students accelerated in individual subject areas.

i) At any time during the transition period, a parent or legal guardian of the student may request in writing that the student be withdrawn from accelerated placement. In such cases, the principal shall remove the student without repercussions from the accelerated placement.

ii) At any time during the transition period, a parent or legal guardian of the student may request in writing an alternative accelerated placement. In such cases, the principal shall direct the acceleration committee to consider other accelerative options and issue a decision within 30 days of receiving the request from the parent or legal guardian. If the student will be placed in an accelerated setting different from that initially recommended by the acceleration evaluation committee, the student’s written acceleration plan shall be revised accordingly, and a new transition period shall be specified.

b) At the end of the transition period, the accelerated placement shall become permanent. The student’s records shall be modified accordingly, and the acceleration implementation plan shall become part of the student’s permanent record to facilitate continuous progress through the curriculum.

Citation: Model Student Acceleration Policy for Advanced Learners (pp. 1, 8, emphasis in original)

Regulations that specify desirable program options for high-ability learners

■Example 1: Washington

Policy Language:

WAC 392-170-037: Learning opportunities shown by research and practice to be especially effective with highly capable students include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Accelerated learning opportunities;
- (2) Grouping arrangements that provide intellectual and interest peer group interactions;
- (3) Cooperative agreements between K-12 schools and institutions of higher education providing for concurrent enrollment, dual credit, and other advance and/or postsecondary options;
- (4) Programs designed to coordinate, combine and/or share resources, people and facilities within a district or building in order to maximize access to and utilization of available resources for supporting students' learning;
- (5) Mentorships and career exploration opportunities.

WAC 392-170-078: Education program plans for each identified highly capable student or plans for a group of students with similar academic abilities shall be developed based on the results of the assessed academic need of that student or group of students. A variety of appropriate program services shall be made available. Once services are started, a continuum of services shall be provided and may include kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Citation: Washington Administrative Code (WAC) sections 392-170-037; 392-170-078

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.185>

and

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=392-170&full=true>

■Example 2: Alabama

Policy Language:

Placement and Service Delivery Options. LEAs must utilize a variety of service delivery options that may include but are not limited to resource room pull-out, consultation, mentorships, advanced classes, and independent study. Gifted students' need for complexity and accelerated pacing must be accommodated for in the general education program. Accommodations may include strategies such as flexible skills grouping, cluster grouping with differentiation, curriculum compacting, subject and grade acceleration, dual enrollment, and advanced classes. Each LEA must establish and implement a procedure for considering any requests for subject or grade acceleration. The procedures must be approved by the State Department of Education and will be included in the LEA Plan for Gifted.

(a) Modes of service delivery may vary by grade and/or grade level cluster but must be consistent from school to school. In addition, services must be comparable in quality and duration from school to school within an LEA.

(b) Modes of service delivery to each grade level or grade level cluster or the intent to utilize general education staff to teach advanced classes must be approved by the State Department of Education in the *LEA Plan for Gifted*. In the event that general education staff is utilized, they must be knowledgeable of gifted learners, trained in differentiation, and demonstrate a willingness to address the needs of diverse learners. Exceptions to the modes of service delivery for any grade or grade level cluster require prior state approval.

(c) The recommended modes for services are as follows:

1. Grades K-2—regular classroom accommodations with consultation from a gifted specialist as needed. The general education teacher should be knowledgeable of gifted learners, trained in differentiation, and demonstrate a willingness to address the needs of diverse learners.
2. Grades 3-5/6—resource room pull-out for 3-5 hours a week,
3. Grades 6/7-8—pull-out services including electives and enrichment clusters, and/or, advanced classes in the core content areas.
4. Grades 9-12—advanced classes (including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate), electives, dual enrollment (where available), career/college counseling, mentorships, seminars, and independent studies.

Citation: AAC 290-8-9-.12(6)

<ftp://ftp.alsde.edu/documents/65/Gifted%20AAC.pdf>

Regulations that reference special populations of gifted students

■Example 1: Maine (addresses highly gifted students)

Policy Language:

104.04 ~ General Principles for Gifted and Talented Educational Programs
Gifted and talented programs in the State are to be based on the following educational principles:...

5. Highly gifted and talented children may need further modifications to their educational programs; therefore, appropriate adjustments or alternatives to their gifted and talented programs must be made.

Citation: Chapter 104 Educational Programs for Gifted and Talented Children

http://www.link75.org/sad75new/pages/services/gifted_talented/images/New%20Website/Identification/Chapter104.pdf

■Example 2: Pennsylvania (addresses twice-exceptional students)

Policy Language:

(a) Nothing in this chapter [which outlines guidelines for gifted education] is intended to reduce the protections afforded to students who are eligible for special education as provided for under Chapters 14 and 342 (relating to special education services and programs) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C.A. §§ 1400—1485).

(b) If a student is determined to be both gifted and eligible for special education, the procedures in Chapter 14 and 342 shall take precedence. For these students identified with dual exceptionalities, the needs established under gifted status in this chapter shall be fully addressed in the procedures required in Chapters 14 and 342.

(c) For students who are gifted and eligible for special education, it is not necessary for school districts to conduct separate screening and evaluations, develop separate IEPs, or use separate procedural safeguards processes to provide for a student's needs as both a gifted and an eligible student.

Citation: Title 22, Chapter 16.7 Special education

<http://www.pabulletin.com/secure/data/vol30/30-50/2124.html>

Appendix 5: Checklist for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy

Appendix 5: Checklist for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy

Reproduced in full from Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration (IRPA). (2009, November). *Guidelines for developing an academic acceleration policy*. Co-authored by IRPA, the National Association for Gifted Children, and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. Iowa City, IA: Author. Retrieved from: http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/Policy_Guidelines/, p. 9

An ideal acceleration policy will have a “yes” answer to each question.

Is your acceleration policy characterized by accessibility, equity, and openness?

Is access to referral for consideration of acceleration open to all students regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, disability status, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, and school building attended?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Are all student populations served, including ELL, at-risk, low socioeconomic status, profoundly gifted, and twice exceptional?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Is the process of student evaluation fair, objective, and systematic?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Do parents or legal guardians have open communication with school officials about the policy document?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Does the community have access to the policy document in the languages served by the school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Does your acceleration policy provide guidelines for implementing acceleration?			
Are both categories of acceleration (grade-based and content-based) specified?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Are the forms of acceleration (e.g., early admission to school, telescoping, AP) and types (where appropriate) specified?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Is the process of obtaining acceleration services detailed (including referral & screening, assessment & decision making, and planning)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Does the policy specify that child study teams, not individuals, consider acceleration cases?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Does the policy specify the creation of a “Written Acceleration Plan”?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Does the policy specify a monitored transition period?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Does your acceleration policy provide guidelines on administrative matters?			
Does the policy address short-term needs, such as...	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
• specifying which grade-level achievement test the student should take?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
• clarifying transportation issues for students who need to travel between buildings?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
• determining the student’s class rank?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure

Does the policy address long-term needs, such as...	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
• maintaining accelerated standing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
• assigning appropriate credit for accelerated coursework?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
• indicating acceleration coursework on a transcript?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Does the policy specify the process of awarding course credit to students?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Does your acceleration policy provide guidelines for preventing non-academic barriers?			
Are procedures in place to ensure participation in extracurricular activities, including sports?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Have funding formulae been reviewed to prevent unintended disincentives?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Does your acceleration policy include features that prevent unintended consequences?			
Is an appeals process detailed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
Will the policy be regularly evaluated for its effectiveness?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure

Appendix 6:

The National Work Group on Acceleration

Appendix 6: The National Work Group on Acceleration complete summary of three broad implementation guidelines (appears originally as Appendix C: Implementing Acceleration; unedited from original)

Source: Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration (IRPA). (2009, November). *Guidelines for developing an academic acceleration policy*. Co-authored by IRPA, the National Association for Gifted Children, and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. Iowa City, IA: Author. Retrieved from: http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/Policy_Guidelines/, pp. 17-19.

The National Work Group on Acceleration recommends that an acceleration policy provides guidance on implementing acceleration and supports the use of objective and comprehensive decision-making instruments. In this appendix, we provide guidelines for *implementing* acceleration from the *Iowa Acceleration Scale* (3rd ed.) (*IAS-3*) (Assouline et al. 2009), a guide for making decisions about grade-based acceleration.¹¹⁵ Many users of the *IAS-3* have offered that it is the most comprehensive and well-researched guide for implementing acceleration. As more instruments and decision-making guides are developed and validated, we will include them on IRPA's website and update these *Guidelines for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy* document.

Decisions about accelerating an individual student should be based on a thorough, team-based review of the factors relevant to acceleration. Because the decision about acceleration is typically a local (and sometimes a controversial) decision, tools such as the *IAS-3* provide an objective procedure for determining whether acceleration is likely to be appropriate for the student. The *IAS-3* requires a collection of information about the student that facilitates a meaningful discussion about the academic and social aspects of the student to help determine whether the student is likely to benefit from acceleration. Specific information is compiled about the student including academics and interpersonal relationships the student has developed, which then serves as a means for discussing the learning needs of the student. Use of the *IAS-3*, or a similar tool, ensures decisions based on specific information about the child as a learner rather than subjective opinions.

The *IAS-3* allows an appraisal of the factors that enter into determining if a K-8 student is a good candidate for grade-based acceleration. In addition to academic factors, the *IAS-3* helps a child study team review non-academic factors that are relevant to success with acceleration. These nonacademic factors include social-emotional maturity, family involvement in the student's schooling, and the student's school attendance history.

The suggestions we offer for implementing acceleration come from or are largely influenced by the *IAS-3 Manual*. The recommended elements of an acceleration policy can be broken down into three broad areas: referral and screening, assessment and decision making, and planning. Implementation procedures shall not disproportionately limit access to accelerative curricular modification based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability status (including twice exceptionality), socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, or school building attended.

¹¹ Two authors of the *IAS* (3rd ed.), Nicholas Colangelo and Susan Assouline, are members of the National Work Group on Acceleration. No authors of the *Iowa Acceleration Scale* receive a royalty from the sale of the *IAS*; the royalties go to the Belin-Blank Center to support its services to schools.

Referral and screening

Referral for acceleration is a separate process from referral to a school's gifted program. Students who are referred for acceleration will not necessarily be part of a school's gifted and talented program because the school may not have a gifted and talented program, or the student may not qualify for the program if the school uses composite test scores for acceptance into a gifted program.

- Students who should be considered for evaluation for academic acceleration can be referred to a school administrator by any source, including but not limited to the student, teachers, administrators, school psychologists, school counselors, parents, and other students. Referral should be open to many sources so that one person does not serve as the gatekeeper for referral recommendations.
- Students scoring at or above predetermined levels (e.g., the 95th percentile) on regularly administered state norm-referenced tests should be automatically referred for consideration for acceleration. The student's score profile, rather than the composite score, should be considered, so as not to bias the procedure against students who have an uneven pattern of scores and who are likely candidates for subject-matter acceleration.
- The screening procedure should be applied equitably and systematically to all referred students.
- If, after a clear explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of acceleration, the student expresses that he/she is not interested in acceleration, then the process should not proceed further. The possibility of consideration for referral for acceleration should be possible at a later date.
- Candidates for early entrance to kindergarten are typically within one year of the cut-off age recommended by state policy (Colangelo, Assouline, & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2004). Bright young children who are ready for more academic challenge but are not necessarily ready for success in a school system might consider alternative or non-traditional school settings. A pre-school teacher well-informed about gifted education issues might be able to meet the needs of such a student. An assessment by a psychologist may provide useful strategies for the student and family (although not all schools accept results from assessments by independent psychologists).
- Ideally, a student will be assessed for acceleration in the spring, and, if recommended, participate in appropriate transition activities prior to placement in the advanced grade or content at the beginning of the next school year. The needs of the student should dictate when acceleration decisions are considered. Local practices should determine how many days prior to the start of the school year or second semester an acceleration referral and evaluation should be made.

Assessment and decision making

- School districts are expected to conduct a fair, objective, and systematic assessment of the student using the appropriate instruments for the type of acceleration being considered for the student. When assessing English language learners, appropriate instruments may include those in the student's heritage language. The district should take care to ensure that assessment instruments are valid and reliable, and that the instruments measure the factors related to success with acceleration.
- Inability to pay for any tests related to the evaluation, such as ability tests conducted by an independent psychologist, should not exclude families or students from consideration. Indeed, it is precisely because some students are at-risk of exclusion for consideration of acceleration that an objective policy should be implemented.
- A child study team should consider cases of whole-grade acceleration and use valid and reliable instruments to guide the discussion and decide on placement. In an ideal child study team, at least one person is familiar with the research and best practices of gifted education and acceleration. A representative with expertise in language acquisition should be a team member to guide placement decisions when the student is an ELL. A representative with expertise in twice exceptionality should be a team member to guide placement decisions when the student is twice exceptional. The issue of assembling a child study team should not become a burden, nor should acceleration decisions be delayed if a team is unable to have all recommended members present, although a process for obtaining input from team members who cannot be present should be in place.

The school administrator should convene the team comprised of the following people, if possible, to discuss whole grade acceleration for a student.

- Administrator
- Parents or guardians
- Current teacher
- Receiving teacher(s) (the teacher(s) from the next grade)
- Talented and gifted teacher
- School psychologist
- School counselor
- A representative with expertise in language acquisition when the student is an English language learner
- A representative with expertise in twice exceptionality when the student is twice exceptional
- Any other parties who may have knowledge beneficial to the decision making process.

As part of the information gathering stage, the student being considered for acceleration can be consulted, depending on the student's age and willingness to participate. (The student should not participate in the child study team's discussion of the student.)

- A child study team also should be assembled to consider cases of content-based acceleration. Because content based acceleration does not involve a student's full-time placement with older classmates, there may be fewer concerns about social and emotional development. Because of the less extreme nature of content acceleration, the child study team need not be made up of as many members as the team assembled for discussions of whole-grade acceleration. Members of a child study team for content acceleration should include the current content area teacher, the receiving teacher for the content area, the parent, the

students, and possibly other teachers and/or a school counselor to assist with initial adjustment issues.

Planning

A comprehensive written plan for the decision should be developed and provided to the parent or legal guardian of the student.

- The child study team should appoint a staff member of the school to oversee and aid in the implementation of the written acceleration plan and the transition process.
- The child study team should establish an appropriate transition period for the accelerated placement. We recommend that the student's transition be evaluated no later than 30 days after the placement, and sooner if necessary. During this time, the parent or legal guardian(s) may request, in writing, the discontinuation of the acceleration program without any repercussions.
- Within the time specified for the transition period, the parent or legal guardian may request an alternative placement in writing. The administrator should bring such proposals before the decision-making team who will be responsible for issuing a decision within a specified number of days (we recommend 10 days) of receiving the request. If the acceleration plan is modified, the written plan should be modified accordingly and a new transition period determined.
- The accelerated placement of the student should become permanent at the end of the transition period. Once the plan becomes permanent it should be entered into the student's permanent record.

References

- Assouline, S. G., Colangelo, N., Lupkowski-Shoplik, A. E., Lipscomb, J., Forstadt (2009). *The Iowa Acceleration Scale Manual* (3rd ed.). Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Colangelo, N., Assouline, S., & Lupkowski-Shoplik, A. E. (2004). Whole-grade acceleration. In N. Colangelo, S. Assouline, & M. U. M. Gross (Eds.), *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students* (Vol. 2, pp. 77-86). Iowa City: University of Iowa, The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development.

Appendix 7:

Ways to Influence Policy on Acceleration

Appendix 7: Ways to Influence Policy on Acceleration

Below is a summary of strategies Gallagher (2004, p.44) offers to influence acceleration policy.

- Decision makers get the information they use to make decisions predominantly from the mainstream media (p. 44). The mainstream media, therefore, would be the best to target for a media blitz that would have a chance to get their attention.
- Professional organizations such as the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) or the Association for the Gifted (TAG) need to lead the way in orchestrating such a campaign.
- Examples of materials to be created in a media campaign:
 - “Interviews with adults who have been accelerated at some time in their educational career, who can respond on the positive nature of the experience.
 - A four-page research synthesis should be produced summing up the major studies that have been carried out on this issue.
 - Establishing alliances with other professional associations such as SRCD and ASCD to promote articles or conference presentations on the topic of educational acceleration.
 - Publicizing in the media the policy statements of groups, such as the National Association for Gifted Children, that reveal professional support for the practice.
 - Stories about young professionals who have settled into the community early as a result of educational acceleration.
 - Develop and disseminate model legislation for such issues as Early Entrance to School.
 - Popular articles on the virtues of the Advanced Placement Program with illustrations of specific students and their work.”