**Acceleration Procedures**

Acceleration is the appropriate movement of a student and/or curriculum to match learning opportunities with a student’s demonstrated readiness and need. This can be accomplished through early access, whole grade, or subject based acceleration. (Early access to kindergarten or first grade is considered by the state to be a different type of acceleration. Please see early access documents for more information on those procedures.)

Acceleration can be a successful intervention for gifted students. Gifted students are able to learn at a pace considerably faster in their area(s) of strength than their age-level peers; acceleration allows this to easily happen. Research shows that acceleration of gifted learners continues to show a positive impact in cognitive areas with no negative impacts on social/emotional areas. (*See Acceleration: Strategies for Teaching Gifted Learners* by Joyce VanTassel-Baska for a review of the research and a listing of studies.) However, acceleration must be thoughtfully considered before implementation and thoroughly planned and monitored to ensure success.

The decision to accelerate requires comprehensive assessment data in a body of evidence and collaborative dialogue among all stakeholders in the decision. The body of evidence must include, but is not limited to, data about student academic readiness skills, social-emotional development, achievement, ability, student interests, learning environment support, and family support..

Advantages of appropriate acceleration:

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

While acceleration may not be appropriate for all students, gifted learners may benefit significantly when the acceleration is thoughtfully planned and carried out. The following guidelines will help districts to thoughtfully carry out this decision making process.

**Whole Grade Acceleration**

Whole-grade acceleration (commonly referred to as grade skipping) can be a valuable intervention for gifted students performing significantly above grade level. While the process can be initiated at any time, formal, written requests must be made by the first day of the second or fourth quarter for a third quarter or beginning of the year acceleration. This allows the acceleration team enough time to collect data and make an informed decision. The following process will be followed for all whole grade acceleration requests:

Step 1: Any staff member, parent, or student may request whole grade acceleration. Upon request to the student’s current building principal, the parent/guardian of the referred student will receive an acceleration packet which contains information about acceleration, procedural timeline, and required forms.

Step 2: Parent/guardian submits “Request for Acceleration” and “Acceleration Questionnaire” forms to the building principal by the first day of the second quarter for a mid-year acceleration or the first day of the fourth quarter for a beginning of year acceleration.

Step 3: Initial data collection begins. The district gifted coordinator (if the student is identified as gifted) or the school principal or designee will collect the following initial information:

* Evidence from the current grade highlighting strong achievement in the student’s current grade level. (This could be work samples, tests, projects, etc.)
* Grade level achievement scores in both mathematics and reading at the 90 percentile or higher on a standardized assessment (ie. NWEA Maps or equivalent).
* Ability scores at the 95 percentile or higher on a cognitive ability test (COGAT or similar).
* Absence of critical issues. Starred items indicate that whole-grade acceleration IS NOT recommended per the Iowa Acceleration Scale and will be weighed heavily by the acceleration team. Other critical issues should be carefully considered before moving forward:
  + \*The student’s cognitive ability is less than one standard deviation above the mean.
  + \*The student has a sibling in the grade into which he/she would be accelerated.
  + \*The student has a sibling in the current grade.
  + \*The student indicates that he/she does not want whole-grade acceleration.
  + Current classroom products are not timely nor do they reflect work that is above grade level.
  + The grade level to be skipped is a transition year between buildings.
  + The student has already been accelerated a grade or has been accelerated through Early Access.

Step 4: The acceleration team, which may consist of the principal, gifted coordinator, classroom teacher(s), counselor, and other school personnel, will meet to determine whether to continue the process. If acceleration is not recommended, see step 7 .

Step 5: The Iowa Acceleration Scale is completed to determine whether the student is a good candidate for acceleration. The district’s gifted coordinator will be responsible for arranging any required assessments and collecting information from parents and classroom teachers. All sections in the Iowa Acceleration Scale must be completed.

Additional testing/questionnaires may be requested by the acceleration team to determine the student’s social/emotional maturity, motivation, and persistence.

Step 6: The acceleration team meets again to review the data. Students who score 45 points or lower on the Iowa Acceleration Scale are not recommended for whole grade acceleration. Students who score more than 45 points are recommended for whole grade acceleration as long as there are no critical issues or other information which indicate the student may not be successful due to social/emotional maturity, motivation, and/or persistence issues being present. These issues will require serious consideration (and possibly more data collection) by the acceleration team before rendering any decision.

Step 7: Next steps

* If a student is recommended for whole grade acceleration, a meeting will be arranged with the acceleration team, parent/guardian, and student present. This meeting will be to create a plan for successful whole grade acceleration which will include progress monitoring on a bi-weekly basis. The acceleration team will meet again after 6-8 weeks of placement to determine if the whole grade acceleration has been successful for the student or whether alternate plans are required.
* If a student is not recommended for whole grade acceleration, a meeting will be arranged with the acceleration team, parent/guardian, and student present. This meeting will be held to create recommendations for the student’s continued success in his/her current grade level.
* Parents may, within 10 days, appeal the acceleration team’s decision in writing to the principal who will consult with the UnBOCES gifted coordinator and district superintendent to review all information. The superintendent’s decision is final.

**Subject-Based Acceleration**

Subject-based acceleration is appropriate for those students who are advanced in one or more subject areas, but not in all areas. This intervention allows for students to receive advanced, above-level instruction in their strength area while still receiving grade-level instruction in all other subjects. The following procedure will be followed for any subject based acceleration decision:

Step 1: Any staff member, parent, or student may request subject acceleration. Upon request to the student’s current building level principal, the parent of the referred student will receive an acceleration packet which contains information about acceleration, procedural timeline, and required forms. The written request and parent questions must be received by the principal by the first day of the second or fourth quarter of the school year.

Step 2: Data will be collected to support meeting the following criteria:

* The student will demonstrate mastery of grade level objectives at 85th percentile or higher as determined by district curriculum-based measures in subject considered for acceleration.
* When accelerating in English or Math, best practices show that a score of 95th percentile or higher on a nationally normed subject test is a strong indicator of success in advanced content. A score of 90th percentile or higher could be considered if there are other indicators to suggest exceptional achievement.
* In courses other than English, it is recommended that a student have the ability to read well at the accelerated grade level. An NWEA Map (or equivalent test) score of 75th percentile or higher on the accelerated grade level reading test would ensure this ability.
* Other factors to consider include:
  + Social/emotional maturity
  + Academic motivation and persistence
  + Intense interest in the subject
  + Strong independent study skills

While test scores indicate advanced ability, a student who exhibits intrinsic motivation and the desire to learn but does not meet the data criteria may still be considered for subject acceleration.

Step 3: The acceleration team, which may consist of the principal, classroom teacher(s), gifted coordinator, counselor, and other required school personnel, will review the data and other pertinent information. One of two decisions will be reached:

* Acceleration is recommended and a meeting is set with teachers and parents to create a plan for a successful transition.
* Acceleration is not recommended. Parents are notified and teacher meets with gifted coordinator and/or principal to determine next steps to ensure continued learning in the student’s strength area.

Step 4: Progress monitoring is required whether the student is accelerated or not. Adjustments should be made to the current plan if adequate progress is not being demonstrated.

The acceleration team will meet 6 weeks after any decision to accelerate to review progress and determine whether acceleration is a proper fit for the individual student.

Step 5: Parent/guardian may dispute any decision made by the acceleration team by writing a letter to the building principal outlining concerns and presenting additional information within 10 days of decision notification. The principal will arrange to meet with the UnBOCES gifted coordinator and district superintendent to review all data and information. The superintendent’s decision will be final.

Appendix

In addition to the first five pages of this document, parent/guardian packet should also contain the following forms:

* Letter to Parent/Guardian
* Request for Acceleration
* Acceleration Questionnaire
* Acceleration Timeline

The remaining forms are for the Acceleration Team’s use:

* Data collection guide
* Acceleration team meeting record
* Notification letter - acceleration approved
* Notification letter - acceleration not approved

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

I have received your request to accelerate your child. Acceleration is not a decision we make lightly here. It is our responsibility to ensure our students are placed in the proper educational environment. Because of this, we have procedures in place to ensure any acceleration decisions and potential placement are based on thoughtful review of the student’s abilities.

Attached you will find an official application form and questionnaire. These need to be completed and returned to the office on or before the first day of the second quarter for mid-year acceleration or on or before the first day of the fourth quarter for beginning of the year acceleration. This allows our acceleration team time to gather and review the data before a decision is made.

You will also find information regarding the steps we follow for making our acceleration decisions. Please contact me if you have any questions about the process.

Sincerely,

Building principal

Request for Acceleration

Please consider \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for Acceleration (check one) □ Whole grade □ Subject

If subject, which subject: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Personal Information:

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Child’s name Child’s age Child’s birthdate xx/xx/xxxx

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Parent/Guardian name(s) Phone

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Mailing address

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Email

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Child’s current school Child’s current teacher

Please complete the attached questions and return to your building principal within the noted time frame. Be as complete as you can with your answers.

I hereby give permission for school personnel to administer testing to my child; these assessments will aid in the decision making process of whether to admit accelerate my child.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

**Acceleration Questionnaire**

1. Please explain in detail why you believe your child need either grade or subject acceleration.
2. Have you discussed acceleration with your student’s teacher? What was the outcome of the discussion?
3. What adjustments to the regular classroom material have already been tried in the regular classroom and at home?

**Acceleration timeline**

Parent, teacher, or student requests acceleration by the first day of the second quarter or fourth quarter.

Parent completes written request including personal information page and parent questions by the first day of the second or fourth quarter.

Data collection begins. Acceleration team meets to review data and make decision before the beginning of the next quarter. Whole grade acceleration will require additional data collection and another meeting by the acceleration team before a final decision is reached.

Acceleration is recommended. Plan is created including progress monitoring and 6 week review.

Acceleration is not recommended. Plan is created including progress monitoring and 6 week review.

Parent/Guardian must appeal decision within 10 days if desired.

**Data Collection Guide**

Student name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Current grade \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This student is being considered for (check all that apply) □ Whole grade □ Subject Acceleration

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Whole Grade** body of evidence needs:  (Attach test results.) | Date of test or sample | Score |
| NWEA (or equivalent test) scores  (90 percentile or higher in reading and math in current grade) |  |  |
| COGAT (or equivalent test) score  (95 percentile or higher) |  |  |
| Evidence from current grade of strong achievement in all areas.  (Classroom tests, work samples, projects, etc.) |  |  |
| Critical issues are attached if present.  (Attach narrative.) |  |  |
| Iowa Acceleration Scale completed  (46 or more points needed for recommendation) |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject only** body of evidence needs:  (Attach test results.)  Subject(s) being considered: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Date of test or sample | Score |
| NWEA (or equivalent test) scores for Reading or Math acceleration  (95 percentile or higher preferred. 90 percentile or higher possible) |  |  |
| NWEA (or equivalent test) score in Reading for all other subject acceleration  (75th percentile or higher ) |  |  |
| Evidence of mastery of current grade level subject objectives. (85 percentile or higher on final/cumulative exam) |  |  |
| Other evidence of maturity, motivation, interest, or independence. |  |  |

**Acceleration team meeting record**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Short narrative of meeting:

Acceleration is □ Recommended □ Not recommended □ Still in review

Next steps:

Team members present:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Notification Letter**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The acceleration team has determined that (check one) □ Whole grade □ Subject acceleration **is** the best decision for your child. In order to ensure a smooth transition, we would like to meet with you to arrange a plan for the next quarter. This plan will include provisions to monitor his/her progress. A review meeting will be held after six weeks to determine whether acceleration is the proper intervention for your child and to determine if there are additional needs.

A meeting has been set for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Please notify me if the time needs to be rescheduled.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

School principal or gifted coordinator

**Notification Letter**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The acceleration team has determined that acceleration **is not** the best decision for your child. Although he/she will not be accelerated, we would like to meet with you to arrange a plan for the next quarter. This plan will include provisions to monitor his/her progress and to determine what adjustments may need to be made within the current classroom. A review meeting will be held after six weeks to determine whether adequate progress is being made and what additional needs might be required.

A meeting has been set for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Please notify me if the time needs to be rescheduled.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

School principal or gifted coordinator