

### **AR 345.41 - Acceleration Procedures**

The District is committed to providing appropriate educational opportunities for all students. When a gifted and/or high-ability student has learning needs beyond his/her current grade level, the District shall make available advancement in one or more academic areas and/or allow student to progress more rapidly and/or complete a program in less time or at an earlier age than is traditional.

Access to application or referral for acceleration is open to all students. Disability and/or dual-identification (including English Language Learners, low Socio-Economic Status, Special Education, etc.) do not prevent acceleration; rather, related accommodations and/or adjusted procedures may be warranted. Student evaluation will be fair, objective and systematic.

#### **ACCELERATION DEFINITION**

Acceleration is the advancement to higher level material in an academic sequence or access to upper level courses at a younger age. There are two categories of acceleration: content-based acceleration and grade-based acceleration.

1. Content-based acceleration includes:

- Subject Acceleration
- Dual Enrollment (as outlined in Board Policy 343.42 – Postsecondary Enrollment Options (Youth Options Program) and/or Board Policy 343.41 – Correspondence Courses (Including Online Courses))

2. Grade-based acceleration includes:

- Grade Acceleration
- Early Entrance to School (as outlined in Board Policy 421– Entrance Age)
- Early Graduation (as outlined in Board Policy 345.6 – Graduation Requirements)

#### **PROCEDURES FOR SUBJECT OR GRADE ACCELERATION CONSIDERATION**

1. A written application shall be made by the student, parent(s)/guardian(s), teacher, Gifted and Talented (GT) Coordinator, or administrator and submitted to the GT Coordinator. The **Request for Acceleration** form will be used. If parent(s)/guardian(s) has/have not initiated the referral, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified and consent will be secured prior to proceeding.

2. The GT Coordinator will review the student's cumulative folder, gather all previous testing data, and solicit input from the student's current teacher(s), previous teacher(s), and parent(s)/guardian(s). The building principal will be notified of the request.

3. The GT Coordinator and building principal will determine if there is evidence to proceed with further testing. If not, the GT Coordinator and building principal will meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s), current classroom teacher as well as the student, as deemed appropriate, to

share gathered information and offer applicable non-acceleration strategies/options that could be utilized to meet the student's needs.

4. If there is enough evidence to proceed, the GT Coordinator and building principal will schedule ability, aptitude, and achievement testing. If a person other than the parent(s)/guardian(s) submitted the application, parent(s)/guardian(s) permission for testing will be secured. Additional factor information will be collected from all stakeholders.

5. The GT Coordinator will prepare a report that summarizes all of the testing information. This report will be provided to the parent(s)/guardian(s), building principal and classroom teacher prior to the group's meeting to make a decision regarding an acceleration.

6. Upon receipt of the report, the GT Coordinator, building principal and classroom teacher will discuss the report and determine the district's level of support for an acceleration. As necessary, the Director of Instruction and/or Director of Pupil Services may be included.

7. Within a reasonable time period after completion of testing and receipt of the information report, the GT Coordinator, building principal, parent(s)/guardian(s) and other stakeholders as deemed appropriate will meet to make a decision regarding acceleration.

8. If acceleration is deemed appropriate, the GT Coordinator will complete an **Acceleration Plan**. The GT Coordinator will be responsible to develop a plan to fill any holes in learning created by acceleration and communicate the plan to appropriate stakeholders.

9. If consensus cannot be reached regarding acceleration, the parent(s)/guardian(s) and building principal will meet with the Director of Instruction to further discuss the examination findings. Following this meeting, the administration will make a recommendation regarding acceleration. The District's recommendation will be shared with the parent(s)/guardian(s).

10. If the District's recommendation is not to accelerate, a plan will be developed collaboratively by the building principal, the classroom teacher and GT Coordinator describing classroom differentiation strategies that will be utilized to meet the student's learning needs. This plan will also be shared with parent(s)/guardian(s).

11. The GT Coordinator will be responsible to monitor student accelerations. During the first two years of an initial placement, the GT Coordinator will formally review acceleration placement with parent(s)/guardian(s). Additional reviews may be conducted at transition points, for the purpose of long-term planning, or as needed by the family and/or student.

### **APPEAL PROCESS**

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) have the right to appeal the District's recommendation. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) would do so via a letter to the District Administrator. The District Administrator will make a final decision regarding the approval or denial of the acceleration request.

### **GENERAL CRITERIA FOR Subject Acceleration and Grade Acceleration**

Research support for acceleration has been accumulated over many decades. Acceleration is an effective intervention for gifted and high-ability students; however, acceleration should not be entered into lightly and a number of factors should be considered prior to making a final decision to accelerate a student.

The four main factors to be considered are:

1. **Ability** - a student's general cognitive potential as compared to others of the same age
2. **Aptitude** – a student's problem solving and critical thinking abilities
3. **Achievement** – a student's learning within a specific content area(s)
4. **ADDITIONAL FACTORS** – other factors that can impact the success of an acceleration

### **ABILITY MEASUREMENT**

A District-approved IQ test will be individually-administered as part of the evaluation process for both subject and grade acceleration. Possible tests include, but are not limited to, Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test, Weschler Intelligence Scale, Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, and Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities.

Full scale IQ score ranges will be considered as follows:

- Within one standard deviation to the mean (85-114)

Acceleration not recommended

- Between one and two standard deviations above the mean (115-129)

Low support for grade acceleration

Low to moderate support for subject acceleration

- Between two and three standard deviations above the mean (130-144)

Strong support for subject and/or grade acceleration

- Three or more standard deviations above the mean (145 – above)

Superior support for subject and/or grade acceleration

### **APTITUDE MEASUREMENT**

At the early elementary level and for all students who have not participated in above-level testing, critical thinking and problem solving exercises should be administered. These should include deductive reasoning and logic-based problems. The acceleration team will evaluate the results and determine the level of support they represent for acceleration.

If a student has participated in above-level testing, the percentiles (compared to students in the above-level grade) are good indicators of aptitude. Examples of these tests include Explore for 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade students or ACT for 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. These percentiles will be considered as follows:

- At or below the 49<sup>th</sup> percentile



Acceleration not recommended

- Between 50<sup>th</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> percentile

Low support for grade acceleration (total composite score)

Low to moderate support for subject acceleration (subject-specific score)

- At or above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile

Strong support for subject and/or grade acceleration

### **ACHIEVEMENT MEASUREMENT**

Achievement testing data via a state or national test should be used with caution especially if the test is criterion-referenced. When considering a possible acceleration and using data from a criterion-referenced test, student results should be consistently at or exceeding the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Student achievement should also be assessed in single areas for subject acceleration and in multiple areas for grade acceleration using portfolios or content tests that represent the full spectrum of material covered in the grade being skipped and should not be minimum competency assessments. If grade acceleration is being considered, all core subjects (science, social studies, English/language arts and math) should be assessed. The mastery level, per subject being measured, should be considered as follows:

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| · Below 45% mastery      | Acceleration not recommended                |
| · Between 46-60% mastery | Low support for acceleration                |
| · Between 61-85% mastery | Low to moderate support for acceleration    |
| · Over 85% mastery       | Moderate to strong support for acceleration |

If more information in the area of achievement is desired, the Weschler Individual Achievement Test or the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement may be administered. If grade acceleration is being considered, all core subjects (science, social studies, English/language arts and math) should be assessed. For subject acceleration, only the requested subject needs to be assessed. For norm-referenced tests such as these, the percentiles will be considered as follows:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| · At or below the 89 <sup>th</sup> percentile                  | Acceleration not recommended                |
| · Between the 90 <sup>th</sup> and 94 <sup>th</sup> percentile | Low to moderate support for acceleration    |
| · At or above the 95 <sup>th</sup> percentile                  | Moderate to strong support for acceleration |

### **ADDITIONAL FACTORS MEASUREMENT**

Additional factors to be considered when evaluating an acceleration request, should include, but are not limited to:

- Student's relative age to grade-mates

- Ages of student's siblings if present
- Student's perseverance and motivation levels
- Student's attendance
- Student's behavioral patterns
- Student's social and emotional maturity level
- Student's commitment to extra-curricular activities

Student, parent(s)/guardian(s) and applicable teacher(s) feedback will be used to assess these additional factors. Potential tools may include inventories or interviews and be conducted by the GT Coordinator and/or his/her designee. At the conclusion of the information gathering, each stakeholder will be given opportunity to communicate his/her support or lack of support for the possible acceleration. This information will be taken into consideration as part of the decision-making process.

### **HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT GUIDELINES**

#### **Accelerated student prior to entering grade nine (middle school or elementary aged student):**

If a student takes a high school level course that is offered as part of the regular middle school course offerings at the middle school (i.e. Algebra, Spanish I, French I) and successfully completes the course, the course will be listed on the student's high school transcript with a "satisfactory" notation but no high school credit will be given for the course and the student's grade will not count towards cumulative high school GPA. Please note, this practice is the same whether a student is accelerated or not.

If, as part of an acceleration plan, a student prior to entering grade nine, requires a high school course not offered at the middle school, but offered at the high school, the student would physically attend the class at the high school. If an accredited online or off-site course is deemed as more appropriate by the GT Coordinator, this may also be considered. If an online or off-site course is recommended, High School Principal credit approval will be secured prior to registration.

If an accredited online or off-site course is utilized, the GT Coordinator will be responsible for monitoring the student's progress and communicating the student's final grade information to the high school pupil services office.

Upon successful completion of the high school course (whether physically at the high school or through other venues as listed previously), the student will be awarded high school credit for the course and the grade will be included in the student's cumulative high school GPA.

#### **Accelerated student in grades nine through twelve:**

If not specifically noted in the student's acceleration plan, a student in grades 9, 10 or 11 may take an upper level course at the high school with GT Coordinator approval. Upon approval, the student will register for these courses through the guidance department and all high school grade, credit, GPA, and transcript rules will apply.



If, as part of an acceleration plan, a student exhausts all high school course offerings in a specific area he/she may access an accredited online class, an off-site high school class or an off-site college level class. Upon course completion, the student will be awarded high school credit for the course and the grade will be included in the student's cumulative high school GPA.

If an online or off-site course is recommended by the GT Coordinator, High School Principal credit approval will be secured prior to registration. If a student fails the online or off-site course or does not complete the online or off-site course, the parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible for reimbursing the District for costs incurred. If an accredited online or off-site course is utilized, the GT Coordinator will collaborate with other school personnel to monitor the student's progress and communicate the student's final grade information to the high school pupil services office.

A student in grades 11 or 12 who has exhausted all high school courses in a specific area may utilize the Youth Options (YOP) program to access higher level coursework.