

Acceleration Works!

Information for Administrators



Because of the natural diversity in readiness that exists in all classrooms, a one-size-fits all approach fails many learners. Without some level of intervention to differentiate the curriculum and instruction, our brightest students are apt to be the ones learning the least in a school year. Research findings suggest that this population of students begins the school year already knowing 50% or more of the curriculum before any instruction is launched.

All students deserve to learn something new every day. The reality is the general education's curriculum will not fulfill this goal for students who already perform at high levels. Too often, our brightest students are left bored, underchallenged, and disengaged daily. Over 70 years of research has found an answer – **academic acceleration**. Because research has repeatedly found the academic, social, and emotional benefits of acceleration, it is heralded as the most effective academic intervention available for bright students. In fact, 2020 Vanderbilt University longitudinal study (following individuals for 35 years) found positive effects on the long-term well-being of students who had been accelerated in school, including grade skipping. **Academic acceleration causes no harm.**

Acceleration works! According to the report *A Nation Empowered*, “Acceleration matches the level, complexity, and pace to the curriculum and readiness and motivation of the student.” Matching readiness to opportunity is common in sports and music. Why not the same standard with academic learning in school? In addition to its effectiveness, it is inexpensive for schools to implement.

The appropriateness of grade skipping is considered a high stakes decision. It needs to be made carefully by a team following a personalized process. To address the “whole child,” the team should include a variety of both subjective and objective measures and a wealth of data. These important considerations informed the development of the [Integrated Acceleration System](#). It serves as an excellent tool to guide the team’s decision. It carefully leads the team through an efficient and effective process to combat the potential for inadequate planning or insufficient preparation. As a comprehensive tool, it provides:

- A research-based foundation,
- A user-friendly, web-based platform with “pop-ups” for assistance,
- A series of guides to build expertise and support the child study team,
- An email compatibility feature, which fosters efficient communication,
- A comprehensive written student report with research-based recommendations,
- A wealth of resources for educators and families,
- Sample documents that can be used in communication, and
- A flexible approach centered around the student.

It is important that grade skipping decisions are approached through a lens that mirrors discussions about special education services. A child study team collects a variety of data spanning various times and settings. This data is reviewed and discussed in its entirety, and the focus throughout the process remains on the individual child’s needs.

Because of the benefits and usefulness of standardized test results, they are used to help assess current performance and readiness for above-level work. Whereas subjective and curriculum-based measures have much value in the process embedded in the *Integrated Acceleration System*, they do not replace standardized scores. In a case in which the required standardized test scores do not exist for a student, we **highly recommend** scheduling testing to generate the necessary scores, although the option exists to include teacher input as a substitute for achievement or aptitude testing.

A well-defined process that objectively considers the student’s learning and social-emotional needs offers a powerful approach to making the decision. Administrators can trust the *Integrated Acceleration System* to guide the child study team. It captures a plethora of relevant data, organizes, and synthesizes the data, and provides a report with recommendations upon which to base student-centered decisions.

Additional Information

<https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2020/08/03/academic-acceleration-has-no-negative-long-term-effects-on-the-psychological-well-being-of-gifted-youth/>

www.nationempowered.org

See the acceleration video on the Acceleration Institute website, Overview of acceleration:

http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Personal_Stories/Video_Stories.aspx