



## Special Considerations

The three “Special Considerations” represent issues impacting the student’s academic and social-emotional well-being and the potential success of an acceleration decision: (1) a cognitive ability score is at least one standard deviation above the national average, (2) the student is in favor of a grade skip, and (3) the student is not being moved into a sibling’s grade.

### Cognitive Ability Score

The *Integrated Acceleration System* includes a measure of the student's cognitive ability, which provides a reliable way of determining whether the student is ready for advanced content. Cognitive ability scores correlate with success in school and are typically comprised of verbal, nonverbal, and quantitative scores. We recommend that a student’s composite score is at least one standard deviation above the mean on a general ability test, which would usually be a scaled score of 115 or higher. Students scoring at this level typically master grade level content easily and are ready for consistent differentiation at school.

### Student Perspective Regarding Acceleration

Students are encouraged to reflect on and discuss their profile as a learner, their experience with the current curriculum, and how their experience at school could be improved, possibly through a grade skip. Even if students express some reservations in the initial

discussion, research has found that when students are challenged on a regular basis at school, they are positive about the placement.

If, after discussing it and answering the student’s questions, the student is still resistant to acceleration, it may be best to find an alternative placement other than a grade skip for the student. It would still be helpful to complete the *Integrated Acceleration System* in this case, to organize available data and to facilitate a discussion considering placements other than a grade skip.

### Sibling Placements

The third consideration relates to siblings. Because of the diversity in family structures today, “siblings” may be defined outside of relatives living in the same home. Sibling relationships may be formed through adoption and blended families, and the siblings might not live together full time.

In the case of a family with more than one child, if a grade skip occurs, we strongly recommend against moving a younger sibling into an older sibling’s grade. Placing siblings in this situation might create an unnecessarily stressful family dynamic. Similarly, separating siblings who were already in the same grade (such as twins) could also create difficulties. In these situations, because of concerns about a negative impact on family dynamics, other forms of acceleration need to be considered (e.g., subject acceleration, curriculum compacting, etc.) instead of whole grade acceleration.