



POSITION PAPER – ACCELERATION

The *Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented* supports acceleration as a crucial element in our Colorado schools.

Academic acceleration is one of the cornerstones of exemplary education practices, with more research supporting this intervention than any other in the literature on gifted learners. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) states the purposes and benefits of acceleration are:

- 1) *to adjust the pace of instruction to the students' capability,*
- 2) *to provide an appropriate level of challenge,*
- 3) *to reduce the time period necessary for students to complete traditional schooling, and 4) to allow opportunities to work with intellectual peers.*

Acceleration benefits many gifted learners by better motivating them toward schooling, enhancing their involvement with extracurricular activities, promoting more challenging options, and preparing them to be contributing members of society at an earlier age.

Acceleration practices involve allowing a student to move through traditional educational organizations more rapidly, based on readiness and motivation. Research documents the potential academic benefits and positive outcomes of all forms of appropriately implemented acceleration strategies for gifted learners. This is translated into the best practices in gifted education including compacting, grade skipping, telescoping, early entrance into kindergarten or college, subject acceleration, and/or credit by examination. It is important that acceleration options are available throughout a student's educational experience from early entrance to kindergarten through early entrance to college. To that end, the state of Colorado has passed a law requiring all districts to develop procedures for reviewing and implementing an academic acceleration policy.

The decision to accelerate a student is a collaborative process made with thorough consideration based on the needs of the whole child. Schools and families should collect a body of evidence supporting acceleration for the individual child. In collecting a body of evidence, educators and parents need to consider not only academic data, but the affective development, as well. Acceleration may not always be the most appropriate option for an individual. When considering acceleration, schools should ensure that teachers, parents, and the student are supportive of the acceleration, a plan is in place to ensure a smooth transition, and the student's progress is being monitored and evaluated at all levels. Long range planning is essential because it allows schools and families to strategically design acceleration pathways, taking into account graduation requirements and concurrent enrollment options.

Students whose abilities, interests, and performance are best aligned with curriculum beyond their grade level need to consider acceleration as an educational intervention. The Belin-Blank Center has developed a free resource for districts that are interested in developing their own acceleration policies compatible with local rules and laws.