

Online acceleration resources:

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/acceleration.htm>

The “Hoagies” website as a whole provides a wealth of information on giftedness. This particular page contains links to many resources on acceleration, including several articles written by highly respected experts in gifted education.

<http://www.ditd.org/Cybersource/Results.aspx?scat=all&stype=all&sterm=Acceleration>

GT-CyberSource is a service of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development ([www.ditd.org](http://www.ditd.org)), which describes it as “the world's largest online searchable database of resources for gifted students, their parents and the professionals who serve them.” The link above is for a page of resources specific to acceleration.

## Evaluating and Implementing Academic Acceleration for Gifted Students

What's the difference between acceleration and enrichment?

- Enrichment (at grade level)
  - Adding breadth
  - Adding depth
- Acceleration (above grade level)
  - Increasing pace
  - Skipping material that is already known
- Acceleration and enrichment

What methods of acceleration are available?

- **Early entrance to kindergarten or first grade**
- **Grade skipping**
- **Self-paced instruction**
- **Subject-matter acceleration**
- **Combined classes**
- **Curriculum telescoping**
- Mentorships
- Extracurricular programs
- **Concurrent enrollment**
- Advanced placement
- Credit by examination
- **Correspondence courses**
- **Early entrance to junior high, high school, or college**  
(from Southern & Jones, 1991; items in bold may be particularly useful for rural schools)

Will accelerated students have gaps in their knowledge?

- Diagnostic testing → prescriptive instruction
- Test scores equal those of gifted new classmates
- Strong performance at advanced levels of study indicates solid base

Will accelerated students “burn out” on academics?

- Most accelerated students attend college
- Many accelerated students earn advanced degrees
- Students accelerated in math/science continue to express positive attitudes toward math and science

Will accelerated students later lose their academic advantage?

- Similar to the question of gaps in knowledge
- Success in college and beyond indicates strong performance
- Grades may not be top in the class (although often they are)

Will accelerated students be able to make friends?

- Extremely gifted students often are better accepted by older students
- Gifted children often choose older friends
- Accelerated and unaccelerated students have similar levels of extracurricular involvement

Will acceleration hurt students' self-concept?

- Global self-concept: Little change
- Academic self-concept: May decrease, but changes are minor and temporary
- Social self-concept: May increase, especially for highly gifted students

Will recognition of academic ability cause accelerated students to become conceited?

- Opposite of the previous question!
- No evidence of conceit
- Consistent with predictions of social comparison theory

Will accelerated students suffer due to missed social experiences?

- High levels of satisfaction with acceleration
- Missed experiences are regarded as "worth it"

In retrospect, are accelerated students happy with their decision?

- Positive effects on personal development are reported
- Accelerated students do not later regret their decision

What should be considered in deciding whether to accelerate a particular student?

- Critical issues for grade skipping
  - Attitude of student
  - Level of ability (IQ)
  - Grade level of sibling(s)
- Other considerations
  - School history (including grades)

- Ability and achievement test results
- Professional evaluation results
- Developmental factors
  - Age
  - Physical size
  - Motor coordination
- Interpersonal factors
  - Emotional development
  - Behavior
  - Relationships with peers
  - Relationships with teachers
  - Non-school extracurricular activities
- Attitude and support of:
  - Student
  - Parent
  - School system
- Advance planning

What resources can help with decisions about acceleration?

- Research studies
- The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS; Great Potential Press)

Conclusions

- Acceleration is appropriate for many academically talented students.
- Decisions can be affected by politics or personal bias and may not be in the best interest of the student.
- We recommend an objective, research-based, formal decision-making process.

### Selected References on Academic Acceleration

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\*Especially recommended for further reading

Long-term follow-up studies of students who have been accelerated show that:

### **Academically...**

- Accelerates do well in college (Janos & Robinson, 1985; Noble, Robinson, & Gunderson, 1993) and after college (Stanley & Benbow, 1983; Swiatek & Benbow, 1991a, 1991b), indicating that there are no gaps in their knowledge as a result of covering material quickly.
- Most accelerates attend college (Swiatek & Benbow, 1991a, 1991b) and many aspire to advanced degrees (Noble et al., 1993; Swiatek & Benbow, 1991a, 1991b), which suggests that they do not “burn out” on academics.
- Students who accelerate in math are just as likely as equal-ability nonaccelerates to pursue math-related degrees, so math acceleration does not “burn students out” on math (Swiatek & Benbow, 1991a).
- Math/science accelerates express attitudes toward math and science that are just as positive as those of equal-ability nonaccelerates (Swiatek & Benbow, 1991a).

### **Socially and emotionally...**

- Accelerates often are better accepted by older classmates than by age-mates, especially in cases of profound giftedness (Gross, 1994).
- Accelerated and unaccelerated students are about equally involved in extracurricular activities in high school (Pollins, 1983; Swiatek & Benbow, 1991b).
- Individuals who have accelerated do not perceive their own personality characteristics any differently than do individuals who have not accelerated (Swiatek, 1994).
- Long-term follow-up studies find no differences (Richardson & Benbow, 1990; Swiatek, 1994; Swiatek & Benbow, 1991b) or very small differences favoring nonaccelerates (Swiatek & Benbow, 1991a) in global self-concept between individuals who have accelerated their educations and those who have not.

### **Overall...**

- Long-term studies of self-reports by accelerated students indicate that they perceive acceleration to have had a positive effect on their personal development (social/emotional development: Pollins, 1983; Richardson & Benbow, 1990. Average across several aspects of development: Swiatek & Benbow, 1992).
- Most accelerates later believe that they made the right decision (Noble & Smyth, 1995).