



**Applications for acceleration will be accepted throughout the year, but must be received by the Exceptional Student Services office by May 1<sup>st</sup> for the following school year.**

## **Acceleration Information**

ECS recognizes that students acquire grade-level curriculum mastery at varying rates, and some at a rapid pace. A student may need acceleration in their area(s) of mastery. Acceleration can be provided in various ways:

**Grade-based acceleration** typically shortens the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system. In practice, a student is placed on a full-time basis in a higher grade level than is typical, given the student's age, for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities. This type of acceleration is commonly known as "grade skipping".

**Content-based acceleration** provides students with advanced content, skills, or understandings before the expected age or grade level. Content-based acceleration can also refer to allowing a student to work on higher-grade level instruction in lieu of grade level instruction. Forms of content-based acceleration include:

- **Single-subject acceleration** allows students to be placed in classes with older peers for a part of the day (or with materials from higher grade placements) in one or more content areas. Subject-matter acceleration may be accomplished by the student either physically moving to a higher-level class for instruction (e.g., a second-grade student going to a fourth-grade reading group), or by using higher-level instructional activities on a continuous progress basis without leaving the placement with chronological-age peers
- **Concurrent/dual enrollment (DE)\***: A student takes a course at one level and receives credit for a parallel course at a higher level (e.g., taking algebra at the middle school level and receiving credit at both the middle and the high school level or taking a high school chemistry course that is of college-level difficulty and receiving credit for a university course upon successful completion).
- **Advance Placement (AP)\***: A student takes a course (traditionally in high school) that will confer college credit upon successful completion of a standardized examination.
- **Credit by examination\*** or prior experience. The student is awarded advanced standing credit by successfully completing some form of mastery test or activity.

*\*Defer to the process in place at each school for this type of acceleration.*

## **Pathways to Acceleration**

ECS has three pathways available for initiating an acceleration application. A parent may nominate their child, a student may self-nominate, and an educator may nominate a student by completing the application found on the ECS Gifted Education web page and submitting it to the school's gifted specialist or principal. Initial data should illustrate the student's mastery of grade level curriculum.

Students in grades K-8 may be grade-level or single-subject accelerated. ECS uses the Iowa Acceleration Scale, a comprehensive structure that guides acceleration decisions. This scale serves as the foundation for discussion, and looks at many factors in the child's life and

education history, including physical and social emotional development. Completion of the Iowa Acceleration Form also involves collection of assessment data in the following areas:

### **Assessment of Achievement**

A student is assessed on a nationally normed grade-level test in one or more content areas, such as reading, math, and/or language. In ECS this may be NWEA or STAR tests.

- *Earning a score at or above 90<sup>th</sup> percentile indicates mastery (achievement) of the grade-level content*

### **Assessment of Ability**

Commonly known as intelligence tests, ability tests evaluate a student's general ability to succeed in a school setting. Ability tests can be administered individually or to a group of students. ECS administers ability tests to all students who have been considered for inclusion in the gifted program, including CogAT, KBIT3 and NNAT3. Many gifted students do not need an additional ability test.

- *Scaled scores above 115 are the best predictors of overall success in school*

### **Assessment of Aptitude**

Aptitude tests can be excellent indicators of a student's potential to learn new material, and the likelihood of being successful in the accelerated grade. All applicants for acceleration will be administered an above-level test using the Iowa Assessments in one or more content areas, including reading, math, language, science and/or social studies. Applicants for single-subject acceleration will only be administered the assessment in their requested content area.

- *Tests at two years above the current grade level placement are administered. For example, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student applying to accelerate to 6<sup>th</sup> grade for the following school year will be given the 6<sup>th</sup> grade test*
  - *Scores at or above 75<sup>th</sup> percentile indicate exceptional aptitude*

### **Critical Items for Grade-based Acceleration**

The Iowa Acceleration Scale considers that whole-grade acceleration is not recommended in the following cases:

- The student's ability (measured by IQ) is below 115
- The student would be accelerated into the same grade as (or higher than) a sibling
- The student currently has a sibling in the same grade
- The student indicates that he/she does not want to be whole-grade accelerated

### **Child Study Team**

The Child Study Team is a group of individuals participating in the acceleration decision and planning. This team will consider all the data collected and documented in the Iowa Acceleration Scale Summary and Planning Record. The Child Study Team includes the parent(s), the current school principal or administrator, the district gifted coordinator, the school gifted specialist, and the current teacher. The receiving teacher may be included, and if the acceleration requires a building change, the principal or an administrator in the receiving school will also be included.

## **Acceleration Procedures**

1. The teacher/parent/student recognize that the student's conceptual understanding of content and demonstrated ability is beyond the level of the current grade
2. An Acceleration Application is submitted to the gifted specialist or principal of the child's current school, or the ECS gifted coordinator
3. The application received by the school is forwarded to the Gifted Education Department at Exceptional Student Services
4. An email is sent to acknowledge receipt of the application
5. The building gifted specialist assembles the Child Study Team. An initial meeting may be conducted to discuss:
  - a. The needs of the student and currently available information and data,
  - b. The acceleration testing process and timeline
6. The school's gifted specialist collects general and school information about the student
7. The student is assessed using norm-referenced tests in the areas of ability, achievement and aptitude, as needed.
8. The Iowa Acceleration Scale Summary is completed by the gifted specialist
9. The Child Study Team is convened to review all the information and make a decision.
10. When a decision has been made, a detailed plan will be developed to outline how the student's needs will be met through whole-grade acceleration, single-subject acceleration, or enrichment and extension (if acceleration is not recommended)
11. If the student is accelerated, a transition plan is developed to address the student's placement, ongoing academic and social-emotional supports and progress monitoring.

### **Questions?**

Contact the gifted specialist at your child's school.

### **Acceleration Appeal Process**

If the parent(s)/guardian(s) are not satisfied with the school's decision not to grant acceleration to their child, they may appeal the decision in the following order:

1. Executive Director of Exceptional Student Services
2. Assistant Superintendent for Learning Services
3. Superintendent of Schools
4. Board of Education