

# Acceleration of Gifted Students

What Does the Research Say?

# Presenters

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# What is Acceleration?

**Acceleration has traditionally been defined as "*progress through an educational program at rates faster or ages younger than conventional.*" (Pressey, 1949)**

- **Acceleration is *not* "a replacement for gifted services; it's part of one." (Guidelines for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy, Journal of Advanced Academics, 2010)**
- **The goal for schools should be to develop a combination of acceleration options, enrichment options, & out-of-school opportunities. (Acceleration: Strategies for Teaching Gifted Learning, VanTassel-Baska, 2005)**

# Types of Acceleration

- **Early Admission to School**
- **Grade Advancement**
- **Continuous Progress**
- **Self-Paced Instruction**
- **One-subject acceleration in area of ability**
- **Two subjects in areas of need**
- **Combined Classes (Mixed-age)**
- **Curriculum Compacting**

# Types of Acceleration

- **Telescoping Curriculum**
- **Mentorships**
- **Extracurricular Programs**
- **Correspondence/Distance Classes**
- **Early Graduation**
- **Concurrent/Dual Enrollment**
- **Advanced Placement**
- **Credit by Examination**
- **Early entrance into mid/high school**

**Southern & Jones in Piirto, 2007, *Talented Children & Adults***

# Categories of Accelerative Options

Acceleration options are often categorized as either content-based or grade-based.

- Content-based options shorten the time spent on any given material. Examples are single-subject acceleration, dual enrollment, & Advanced Placement.
- Grade-based options shorten the number of years in K-12 school. Examples are early entrance & grade advancement.

# Research Rather Than Opinion

- Using Research Gives Credibility & Objectivity
- Learn From Others - Don't Reinvent the Wheel
- Use Professional and Reputable Sources of Information
- Parents Need Information to Make Decisions About their Child
- Every Child and Situation is Unique

# How Does Acceleration Fit?

## CURRICULAR DIFFERENTIATION

Content

Process

Product

Acceleration

Acceleration is a form of content modification. The process and product are then applied to the accelerated content.

# Traits of Gifted Learners

Three basic differences can be observed when comparing gifted learners to average learners:

- *They learn at faster rates (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004).*
- *They find, solve, and act on problems more readily (Sternberg, 1985).*
- *They have the capacity to manipulate abstract ideas and make connections more easily (Gallagher & Gallagher, 1994).*

VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2007, *Comprehensive Curriculum for Gifted Learners*, p. 19.

# How Do Students Prefer To Learn?

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| • Learning at my own pace  | 90.4% (416 interviewed) |
| • Choosing my own project partner or group                             | 89.1%                   |
| • Learning about topics I choose                                       | 87%                     |
| • Knowing how I will be graded before I begin                          | 77.5%                   |
| • Doing activities that have more than one answer or way of finding it | 76%                     |

Kanevsky, Lannie, "Deferential Differentiation: What Types of Differentiation Do Students Want?", *Gifted Child Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 4, Fall, 2011.

# What Do the Experts Say?

- **"While many strategies are successful with the gifted, none surpass acceleration in its efficiency and effectiveness to promote long-term learning in the gifted, and eliminate boredom and mental laziness."**  
**VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006, *Comprehensive Curriculum for Gifted Learners***
- **"The research on acceleration is so uniformly positive, the benefits of appropriate acceleration so unequivocal, that it is difficult to see how an educator could oppose it."**  
**James Borland in *A Nation Deceived***
- **"No other arrangement for gifted children works as well as acceleration."**  
**James Kulik in *A Nation Deceived***

# Enrichment & Acceleration

**"Enrichment provides elaborated instructional experiences" on current grade level tasks. (not necessarily advanced level.)**

***VanTassel-Baska, 2005, Acceleration Strategies for Teaching Gifted Learners***

***Acceleration keeps the child moving forward through the curriculum at his appropriately advanced level.***

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***"When enrichment...does not include a faster pace and higher level of work, it is simply not as effective as an intervention."***

***Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, A Nation Deceived***

# A Nation Deceived Report

- **Acceleration is educationally effective, inexpensive, and can help level the playing field between students from rich schools and poor schools.**
- **Acceleration is not pushing a child; it's letting the child soar.**
- **No other educational practice has this much research support while being widely ignored.**
- **It has a long history--common in one-room schools.**
- **Skipped kids continue to outperform classmates.**
- **Suggests using the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)**
- **AP and concurrent enrollment demand proves a need for challenge through acceleration.**

Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, *A Nation Deceived*

# Steps to Consider

- Review of academic status; cognitive ability
- Review of social and emotional maturity (asynchronous dev.)
- Meeting(s) to discuss options
- Gauge student motivation & interests
- Create a plan that participants follow
- Monitor and communicate

# Radical Acceleration

- In general, students with IQ of 160-179 (exceptional), or students with IQ of 180+, (profound)
- Students may experience social isolation in the inclusion classroom.
- It does NOT result in a of lack of social skills, but rather better placed with intellectual peers.
- Results in zest for learning and positive emotional gains
- Radical acceleration should be a multi-year *process* and may require several types of acceleration.

Gross, Miraca, U.M., and Vliet, Helen E., "Radical Acceleration and Early Entry to College: A Review of the Research", *Gifted Child Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2, Spring, 2005

# Parent-School Communication

## **THREE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

1. Have we done a comprehensive assessment of your child to know his/her readiness?
2. Given the readiness, what is the best type of acceleration we can implement?
3. We know that in a very few cases, acceleration is not effective. What can we do, as a school, to maximize the success of your child?

Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, *A Nation Deceived*

# Social and Emotional Impact On Students

- Accelerated students had better perceptions of their social relationships and emotional development .
- Accelerated students tended to have fewer serious school behavior problems than regular students.
- Students who had skipped grades did not report social isolation or profound emotional difficulties.

Saylor, Michael F., and Brookshire, William K. "Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Adjustment of Accelerated Students, Students in Gifted Classes". *Gifted Child Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Fall, 1993.

# Professional Development and Acceleration

- Professional development regarding acceleration options is needed for educational staff.
- Collaborative planning with specialists (reading, gifted, etc.) can provide the classroom teacher support and integration of the students' learning experiences

Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010, *Leading & Managing a Differentiated Classroom*

# Barriers to Acceleration

- Educators lack familiarity & confidence.
- There's a pervasive belief that age is more important than abilities & readiness.
- There will be gaps in the child's knowledge.
- Focus is on sameness rather than equal opportunity.
- It will upset other kids

Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, *A Nation Deceived*.

- He only got 85% on the proficiency test, so he needs nothing different.
- The pull-out program meets all of his needs.
- It's pushing the child.

# Questions & Concerns

- Will the child adapt socially with older students?

Students who have social problems prior to acceleration may need additional help, but if social problems develop after acceleration, it may not be caused by the acceleration, but by other factors. Problems that occur are usually due to poor planning.

# Effects of Acceleration

- Academic Achievement of High-Ability Learners Improves
- Slight Improvement in Social-Emotional Development
- Early Entry College Students Reported Positive Influence of Acceleration

Steenbergen-Hu, Saiying, and Moon, Sidney, M., "*The Effects of Acceleration on High-Ability Learners: A Meta-Analysis*", *Gifted Child Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No.1, Winter, 2011.

# Acceleration of Minority Students

- Minority students reported that acceleration enabled them to do better and be better prepared for college
- Students who repeated a class in which they were unsuccessful did not have lasting negative feelings
- Teachers and counselors reported peer pressure as a reason against acceleration
- Students reported that strong peer networks inoculated them from negative peer pressure

Lee, Seon-Young, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Peternel, George, "The Efficacy of Academic Acceleration for Gifted Minority Students", *Gifted Child Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 3, Summer, 2010.

# What Can Educators Do?

- Recognize that children learn at different rates.
- Provide appropriate challenges for all learners.
- Inform stakeholders about acceleration options.
- Minimize teaching what's already known.
- Make school a positive experience for all students...even the brightest.

Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, A Nation Deceived

# Follow Up

- **Try *something!* Begin with baby steps. Try a math chapter pre-assessment, different spelling lists, a reading learning contract, etc.**
- **Read something. VanTassel-Baska's *Acceleration*, articles, and especially *A Nation Deceived*. ([anationdeceived.org](http://anationdeceived.org))**