

Adopted: 6/13/2011

Revised: _____

650 STUDENT ACCELERATION POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to professional staff, parents and students regarding curriculum acceleration to meet the academic and social needs of high ability or high achieving students. This policy is in compliance with Minn. Stat. §120B.15 requiring school districts to adopt policies and procedures for the academic acceleration of gifted and talented students. The Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee will oversee and maintain the Gifted and Talented Education (GTE) policies and procedures of ISD 181.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Every Minnesota child is entitled to an appropriate and challenging education. Students, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, disability, or giftedness, shall have access to a challenging, standards-based curriculum. Minn. Stat. §120B.15 GIFTED and TALENTED STUDENTS PROGRAM sections (a) and (b) permit school districts to identify students who are gifted and talented, develop and evaluate programs to serve them locally, and provide staff development to ensure that they have access to challenging educational programs. Section (c) of the statute directs school districts to adopt procedures for the academic acceleration of gifted and talented students that include an assessment of student readiness and motivation for acceleration and a match between the curriculum and student academic needs. Brainerd School District 181 supports the judicious use of acceleration when there is compelling evidence that the student is likely to benefit academically.

III. BACKGROUND

Several forms of acceleration may be considered for students in ISD 181, including Early Entrance to Kindergarten, School-within-a-School Placement, Subject-Matter Acceleration, Grade Skipping, Cluster Grouping with Curriculum Compacting, College in Schools, Advanced Placement, and Early High School Graduation. Any acceleration decision should be approached on a case-by-case basis with careful consideration. Those involved in the decision should follow the process outlined in Section V.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Acceleration is an intervention that allows students to move through traditional educational organizations more rapidly, based on readiness and motivation. The goal of

acceleration is to tailor the level and complexity of the curriculum to the ability and academic readiness of individual children.

- A. **Early Entrance to Kindergarten:** Early entrance is the practice of admitting a student to kindergarten who has not yet reached 5 years old by September 1. The purpose is to provide access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.
- B. **Area Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE) Academy:** AGATE Academy is a first through fourth grade School-within-a-School. It serves a unique group of learners who have demonstrated high levels in performance and ability. Classroom environments focus on the academic and social/emotional needs of gifted and talented learners. AGATE Academy is an important piece of the District's mission to ensure all students achieve their highest potential.
- C. **Subject-Matter Acceleration:** Subject-Matter Acceleration is the practice of assigning a student to one or more subject area(s) at a higher grade level than is typical given the student's age. The purpose is to provide access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.
- D. **Grade Skipping:** Grade Skipping is the practice of assigning (on a fulltime basis) a student to a higher grade level than is typical given the student's age. The purpose is to provide access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.
- E. **Cluster Grouping / Curriculum Compacting:** The practice of assigning four to six gifted and talented and/or high achieving students to an otherwise heterogeneous classroom within their grade to be instructed by a teacher that has had specialized training for the purpose of differentiation. Within a cluster, several instructional options are typically used, including enrichment and extensions, higher-order thinking skills, pretesting with accelerated pacing, and compacting curriculum. This technique is a form of content acceleration that enables high-ability students to skip work they already know and substitute more challenging content. The goals of compacting are to streamline work that may be mastered at a pace commensurate with the student's ability, create a challenging learning environment, guarantee proficiency in basic curriculum, and buy time for enrichment and acceleration.
- F. **College in the Schools (CIS):** CIS courses are taught during the regular school day and are offered through a partnership between the high school and a college or university. Qualified high school instructors or college faculty teach the courses. The same assessment methods and content are used as the equivalent sections taught on the college campus. Students can earn high school and college credit upon successful completion of the course or courses.
- G. **Advanced Placement (AP):** The AP program offers college-level coursework for students as early as their sophomore year. AP exams allow students to earn university credit and/or advanced university standing based on the examination score.

V. ACCELERATION OPTIONS (PROCEDURES)

- A. **K-4 Acceleration:** The process for considering a student for acceleration may be initiated by the student, parent(s)/guardian(s), or a staff member by completing the

attached form and submitting it to the student's current principal. Following is the decision making process for K-4 acceleration:

- 1. Early Entrance to Kindergarten:** Early entrance to kindergarten should be based upon the premise that each student shall be challenged and supported in the most appropriate placement for learning. Children who will not be 5 years of age for entrance into kindergarten by September 1st of the school year for which admission is requested shall be evaluated by a school psychologist. The child's parent or guardian requesting early entrance should contact the GTE Coordinator, or designee, sixty (60) or more days prior to the start of the school year so that the evaluation is completed and the child may be granted the accelerated placement on the first day of school. Upon receipt of the request, the GTE Coordinator (or designee) will mail an early entrance packet to the parents that include an application and checklist, which is completed and sent back. Upon receipt of the application and checklist, a school psychologist will schedule the evaluation. The Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee, including an administrator, school psychologist, kindergarten teacher, and GTE Resource Teacher, will review information from screening and assessments, share outcomes with parents, and make a recommendation about the appropriateness of Early Entrance.
- 2. Identification for Gifted and Talented Education:** The District's identification process allows students with gifts or talents to be placed in appropriate services, including AGATE Academy and other programs and/or services. The process includes ability, performance, achievement and behavior characteristics. Ability is measured with the online version of the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, Second Edition (NNAT2). The NNAT2 is administered in each kindergarten classroom. Performance is measured through four performance tasks that are delivered in each kindergarten classroom. District achievement indicators including literacy and math concepts, independent reading level, and analysis of growth from fall to winter, as reported on the Trimester II report cards. Teacher checklists and a parent questionnaire are gathered for high scoring students who qualify for a portfolio review. Portfolios are reviewed and scored by a committee, and parents are notified of student qualification for AGATE Academy or building level program options.
- 3. Subject-Matter Acceleration, Grade Skipping, and Cluster Grouping / Curriculum Compacting:** These procedures may be options for acceleration upon review of student performance on group or individually administered standardized achievement tests. Results from Northwest Evaluation Association /Midwest Assessment Program (NWEA/MAP), AimsWeb, Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA), and District curriculum assessments may be considered. Parents may choose to submit scores from an outside licensed psychologist at their own expense.

4. Should the Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee make a decision for one of the above options, acceleration shall be done on a trial basis beginning the first trimester after the decision to accelerate is made. The GTE Resource Teacher shall serve as a case manager for the accelerated student and provide a mentor for him/her. Within one month after acceleration begins, vested staff will meet at least once with the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) to monitor the student's emotional, social, and intellectual progress in the new environment. This group will recommend continuance or abandonment of the acceleration.
- B. **5-8 Acceleration:** Multiple criteria will be used for placement in GTE programs at the middle school level. These may include standardized test scores, MCA scores, and analysis of classroom performance. GTE classes include Accelerated Math and Intensive Language Arts.
 - C. **9-12 Acceleration:** For more information see the Brainerd High School Registration Guide. Credits are awarded upon the completion of courses based on academic performance.
 - D. **Honors Courses (Grade 9):** Honors courses in English, science and social studies have open admission. Honors math (Geometry) requires successful completion of Algebra I.
 - E. **CIS Courses:** Admission qualifications for CIS courses include grade level and grade point average (GPA) requirements as per the MnSCU System.
 - F. **AP Courses:** AP Math and Science admission require successful completion of prerequisite, sequenced courses. All other AP courses have open admission.

VI. DECISIONS FINAL

A parent or legal guardian of the referred child may appeal in writing the decision of the Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee to the Superintendent within thirty (30) days after being notified of the committee's decision. The Superintendent shall review the appeal and notify the parent or legal guardian who filed the appeal of the final decision within thirty (30) days of receiving the appeal. The Superintendent's decision shall be final.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. 120B.15, (Gifted and Talented Students Program)

Resources: Colangelo, N., Assouline, S.G., and Gross, M.U.M.ed.s. *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students*. Iowa City, IA: The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, 2004.
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