

## **WCS Grade Level Acceleration Information**

Please read through the following information to learn more about acceleration in Westerville City Schools. If you have additional questions about acceleration, contact the Office of Gifted Education at 614-797-5887.

### **What is grade level acceleration?**

Grade level acceleration is the practice of assigning a student to a higher grade level than is typical given the student's age full-time for the purpose of meeting the high achieving or gifted student's unique needs. This is commonly referred to as "skipping a grade". Whole grade acceleration is rare and many factors, including social and emotional factors are considered when evaluating whether or not a child is a good candidate.

Example:

- After completing the fourth grade, a student is placed in a sixth grade classroom (rather than a fifth grade classroom) on a full-time basis at the beginning of the next school year. The student no longer attends elementary school, and instead attends the middle school for all classes.

### **How do I know if my child is a good candidate for grade level acceleration?**

A student is considered a good candidate for grade level acceleration if each of the following is true:

- The student clearly demonstrates consistent high ability in all subject areas
- The student demonstrates accelerated performance in almost all subject areas when compared to his or her age-mates
- The student has a Full Scale IQ or cognitive score at least one standard deviation above the mean (115)
  - Students who tend to need acceleration commonly have IQ or cognitive scores of 140+, based on Dr. Jim Delisle's research
- Performance on pre-assessments across subject areas indicates high level of mastery of concepts not yet introduced
- State achievement test scores, if available, are consistently in the advanced category for almost all subjects
- Acceleration is clearly a "need" and not a "want" for the student
- Several people (i.e. classroom teacher, gifted intervention specialist, parents, principal, counselor) who know the student are supportive of the whole grade acceleration
- Socio-emotional adjustment concerns are minimal
- The student has good school attendance
- The student has a positive attitude, neither overestimating or underestimating his/her ability
- The student is motivated to complete assignments with care

- The student likes challenges
- Interpersonal skills with peers and adults are appropriate for student's age
- Parents are supportive, but not overly involved in their child's education
- Time management is not an issue (i.e. balance of activities outside of school)
- Student has a support system in place to fill possible learning gaps
- Siblings are either not in the proposed accelerated grade level or are at least two or more grades above or below the child; if not, the team needs to discuss and consider the implications
- Physical size of student is comparable with the proposed accelerated grade level; if size is dramatically different, team must discuss the impact and how the discrepancy will be managed

### **My child says he/she is “bored”. Does this mean I should consider acceleration?**

This statement alone is not a reason to refer a student for the acceleration process. It is important to understand that being “bored” can have a number of meanings. It does not always have to mean that the curriculum is not challenging enough. In some instances, it can actually mean that something may be a little too challenging for the student, so the student is using avoidance to engage in the task. Through dialogue with your child and his/her teacher, it is important to get some insight on what exactly being “bored” means. Is it too easy? Too hard? Not an area of interest? Something else?

### **Are there other options to consider before acceleration?**

There are a variety of instructional strategies that can be used by your child's teacher to differentiate the content in order to provide challenging and enriching learning experiences for higher achieving and gifted students. Talk with your child's teacher about the possibility of incorporating these strategies into your child's learning environment. Utilizing differentiation strategies is an important precursor to considering acceleration and can address a multitude of issues that higher achieving and gifted students may experience without accelerating them into another grade level.

### **After talking with my child's teacher, I believe that my child's needs may not be being met in his/her current setting. What should I do?**

Sometimes, despite the implementation of numerous activities and learning experiences, it is possible that a student needs the additional challenge of subject acceleration. This is an intervention that is necessary for a small percentage of the population. A grade level acceleration is designed to meet the needs of a student who has demonstrated they he/she is ready academically, socially, and emotionally in all areas to move to the next grade level.

A variety of qualitative and quantitative data, including the student's potential for long-term achievement, are used when determining whether acceleration is an appropriate intervention for

a student. Except under extenuating circumstances, an acceleration becomes the permanent placement for the student once the nine week transition period is complete. As such, a student who just meets the base qualifications for acceleration is probably not an ideal candidate for acceleration. Accelerated students are expected to achieve at a high level, relative to their new peers, that is comparable to their performance in their previous grade, which is typically in the top 10% of their class. This achievement level is expected to continue throughout their academic career.

Grade level accelerated students take the state tests in all of the content areas that require testing. For example, a 3rd grade student who is grade-level accelerated into 5th grade will take the 5th grade math, ELA, and science state tests in the spring.

Visit the [Acceleration Institute](#) to learn more about acceleration. If you plan to refer your child for acceleration, talk with your child's teacher to gather information about your child's progress in all of the subject areas and to learn about what strategies have been used thus far in the classroom to challenge and enrich your child.

### **What is the timeline for referring my child for acceleration?**

- Students referred for evaluation for possible acceleration **30 days or more prior to the end of the school year** shall be evaluated in advance of the start of the next school year to ensure placement in the accelerated setting on the first day of school.
- Students referred for possible acceleration **60 or more days prior to the start of second semester** shall be evaluated for possible accelerated placement at the start of the second semester.
- A parent/legal guardian of evaluated student shall be notified in writing of the outcome of the evaluation within 30 days of submission of the referral to the referred student's principal.

If you feel that acceleration may be an appropriate option for your child, please fill out and submit the [WCS Acceleration Referral Form](#).

For an overview of the grade level acceleration process in Westerville City Schools, [click here](#).