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ACCELERATION

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A workshop by REACH Education www.giftedreach.org.nz

Deciding about acceleration

Some characteristics to consider: how would you rate the child on these factors?

- Accelerated pace of thought and learning?
- Advanced comprehension of material?
- Mature language development?
- High level of visual/spatial ability (especially if acceleration is in maths?)
- Keen to advance?
- Comfortable in company of older children?
- Can sustain commitment when interested, does not give up at first hurdle?
- Has or is developing ability to work independently?

Physical size: not usually an issue as children do naturally vary greatly, but a child who is very small for his or her age could find the going a little more difficult.

Making acceleration work.....

- Initially allow a brief trial period.
- Tutor the child in independent learning skills.
- Provide opportunities to conference individually in the classroom situation.
- Provide access to a mentor who can monitor the child's social and emotional adjustment and check for skill gaps.
- Ensure child has opportunities to meet with ability peers.
- Ensure child's classroom programme continues to provide differentiated material.
- Ensure the classroom teacher is receptive to the idea of having an accelerated child in his/her classroom and is supported in developing appropriate learning opportunities for the child.
- Encourage the teacher to develop a flexible learning environment and to build tasks involving choice into the programme for all his/her students.
- Maintain liaison with the parents.

Acceleration of the learning *programme*

This can be achieved through measures such as:

- use of a conceptual planning approach
- flexible learning environment and the provision of choice
- curriculum compacting
- differentiation of pace, content and process
- tiered lessons
- access to resources at advanced levels
- use of learning centres
- provision for self-pacing
- access to a mentor
- access to online programmes for gifted students

Physical acceleration of the *student*

This can be achieved through measures such as:

- Skipping one or more years
- Allowing early entry at primary, secondary or tertiary levels
- Subject acceleration
- Dual enrolment so some classes can be taken at a higher level institution or via correspondence
- Cross-grouping
- Withdrawal groups
- Fulltime gifted classes
- One-to-one work with a mentor
- Early examination entry

Is acceleration advantageous or disadvantageous for the gifted student? *What does the research say?*

Studies of acceleration from Terman in 1947 to the present day have been “almost universally positive”.

- Barbara Clark (2002), *Growing Up Gifted*, citing 13 studies and a meta-analysis of 26 further studies by Kulik and Kulik.

The research has shown that:

- Gifted students are able to handle the academic challenge of acceleration.
- Accelerated gifted students generally do better than non-accelerated gifted students.

- Accelerated gifted students express less boredom and dissatisfaction with their learning.
- Social and emotional adjustment is generally high and in most respects actually above average.
- For the highly and exceptionally gifted, acceleration is essential.

Important provisos:

- Decisions should be made on an individual basis.
- Acceleration is not a total programme on its own. Material must still be appropriately differentiated.