

Guidelines for Whole Grade Advancement

Grade advancement decisions should be based on a comprehensive look at the whole child and should follow the general guidelines below.

- The student should be intellectually gifted
- Current achievement should be above the mean for the intended target grade
- Absence of any social or emotional adjustment problems
- Student should be in good physical health
- The student should desire advancement independently of parental preference
- The receiving teacher/school should have positive attitudes and actions toward the advanced student
- Teacher and student support should exist before and after the grade advancement
- Every attempt should be made to plan a grade advancement for natural transition points: beginning of the year, new semester; moving from one building to the next
- Grade advancement should be on a trial basis with stated outcomes
- Expectations should be in line with the transition of a major life event

Grade Advancement

Conversations about grade advancement should begin with the classroom teacher, TAG TOSA, principal and parents/guardians. Discuss options for acceleration with the TAG Office staff.

Radical Form of Acceleration

Grade advancement (also called Grade Skipping or Grade Acceleration) refers to allowing students to be placed in a grade ahead of their usual placement.

Process

Generally, the parent suggests the move to the teacher and principal. If after discussion between the family and school staff, the decisions to continue the evaluation process, the parent makes the request in writing. The principal then forwards this request to the TAG Office and requests that the student be evaluated for advancement. The TAG Office will then discuss options with the family and school staff, and may upon discussion decide on additional testing, assessment, and observation of the student in the regular classroom. Customarily the student is TAG-identified, and one for whom flexible grouping, curriculum extension, and single subject acceleration appears not to meet their very advanced level and rate of academic learning.

Evaluations take place during the school year, in the current classroom placement. There is no cost to the family of the school for this service. Parental permission for testing must be on file in the TAG Office before an individual evaluation may begin.

Alternatives to Advancement

A relatively small number of exceptionally talented students need this radical form of acceleration as usually flexible grouping or single subject acceleration will suffice as a challenging curriculum opportunity for the student. Occasionally, a tutor may be hired to work with the student, or a small group of students, on subject matter acceleration while keeping the student with their age peers. Another alternative to acceleration may be to provide a lateral move for the student to another classroom of the same grade at the same school, or in rare circumstances, to facilitate a transfer to another school while still keeping the student in the same grade. A mixed age, or blended classroom, with other students may also provide the necessary academic stimulation.

Psychological Issues

Intellectual, academic, and social factors also guide decisions about a student before advancing the student grades.

The student's academic skill level should be well above the mean for the target grade and a comprehensive psychological evaluation should also indicate mental development at the 97% or above for the child's age.

The best educational placement also depends on non-intellective factors: interactions with others, ability to easily cope with frustration, one's attitude toward self as a learner, and the attitude of the new grade or school about grade acceleration. Generally, physical characteristics are of lesser importance in the final decision.

Another consideration to weigh is the student in relation to siblings. If the grade advancement places the student in a class with an older sibling, or out-of-grade with an age-mate sibling (e.g. one twin advanced but not the other twin), grade acceleration is not recommended.

Since acceleration is an exception, it demands greater interpersonal skill for the child to normalize the exception and make the acceleration acceptable to the new population of students. Sensitivity to criticism or aggressive reactions may contraindicate successful acceleration.

Timing

The timing of whole grade advancement also needs to be considered. Certain years, or times within a year, may be preferable for a grade skip. Opportunities and obstacles need careful assessment when considering a radical move.

Grade Advancement Procedure

1. Student is referred to evaluation committee (may be a committee already in place such as RTI or SCT committees) to be evaluated for grade advancement after home-school communications indicate a need for further evaluation. Membership on committee should include at least the building administrator, TAG coordinator, counselor, current teacher and teacher at grade level considered for acceleration.
2. Committee consideration is to include:
 - a. Parent written request
 - b. Parent/family input
 - c. Current school behavior and classroom worksamples
 - d. Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)
 - e. Cum file review
 - f. Other interventions considered and available
 - g. Student's viewpoint on acceleration
 - h. Additional testing if needed
3. Committee makes recommendation and informs district TAG TOSA in writing of decision, including IAS forms. District TAG TOSA will inform parent in writing of decision and plan.
 - a. If grade advancement is recommended, an acceleration plan is made in cooperation with school and home. The acceleration plan will include:
 - i. The designation of a case manager to monitor the student's plan, adjust records and assist with transition to new grade level
 - ii. Date and timeline for grade advancement
 - iii. Date of completed transition and monitoring period
 - iv. Strategies to support the student's success
 - v. Home and school communications of plan
 - b. If grade advancement is denied, an alternative plan for appropriate instruction is developed in cooperation with school and home as outlined in the Iowa Acceleration Scale.
 - c. If parents disagree with the committee decision they may appeal in writing to the Chief Academic Officer and follow district appeals and grievance process.
4. Grade Level Advancement Timeline:
 - a. Grade advancement shall be evaluated 60 or more days prior to the beginning of the first day of school or second semester; consideration will be made for exceptional circumstances
 - b. Student will be placed at earliest appropriate opportunity as outlined in the grade advancement plan determined by the committee.

Content Area Acceleration

1. Consideration for content area acceleration should include:
 - a. Student assessment scores: standardized achievement scores and informal assessments such as current classroom tests, quizzes, etc.
 - b. Student performance on class-work assignments, class grades
 - c. Student classroom behavioral needs and activity
 - d. Student outside experiences with content areas or other anecdotal considerations
2. Recommendation for content area acceleration should be considered by a committee (may be a committee already in place such as RTI or CST committees) made up of administrator, current teacher, (counselor and TAG Coordinator as needed) and new content area teacher along with student and family input.
3. The recommendation or denial to accelerate will include:
 - a. Documentation of reasons and evidence for content area acceleration recommendation or denial
 - b. Written notification for content advancement or denial provided to family, and a copy placed in cum file
 - c. If recommended to accelerate, a written implementation plan will include monitoring and transition services as needed.
 - d. Parents may appeal decision of Chief Academic Officer.