

**Manheim Township School District**  
**Acceleration Guide**  
**Grades K-12**



*The Mission of the Manheim Township School District: Nurture and Challenge for Success*

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## Guidelines for Acceleration

### Introduction

The Manheim Township School District strives to meet the learning needs of all students by offering challenging instructional programs. These guidelines have been designed for school personnel considering any type of acceleration strategy that is not part of routine district procedures. Examples of routine district procedures include high school students taking Advanced Placement courses or participation in the International Baccalaureate program. The material is adapted from The National Association for Gifted Students (2018), *Developing Academic Acceleration Policies: Whole Grade, Early Entrance & Single Subject*.

### Definition

Acceleration is a modification of the regular education curriculum that allows any student to progress at a faster pace or rate and/or younger age based on readiness and motivation (NAGS, 2018). In the case of acceleration, a student's educational placement should correlate with his/her masterly level rather than the chronological age. "Acceleration is a broad term that encompasses many accelerative options" (NAGS, 2018) for gifted learners or learners who demonstrate a need for instruction at an advanced level. **Acceleration opportunities are evaluated by a team based on individual student needs.** The National Association for Gifted Students (2018), *Developing Academic Acceleration Policies: Whole Grade, Early Entrance & Single Subject* delineates a variety of acceleration options.

**Not all content-based acceleration opportunities are appropriate for all advanced learners.**

The following definitions are adapted from the [NAGC policy \(2018\)](#):

### Content-Based Acceleration

*Advanced Placement (AP):* The AP program offers college-level coursework for students. AP exams allow students to earn university credit and/or advanced university standing based on the examination score.

*Curriculum Compacting:* A student is pre-assessed to determine whether grade-level proficiency in a specific academic area has been achieved. The student then engages in advanced content and skills development in that area "compacted" while typically remaining in the regular classroom. For example, a fifth-grade student might complete the 5th and 6th-grade math during the same school year.

*Dual Enrollment:* The school system allows advanced students to enroll in higher-level coursework when proficiency at grade level has been demonstrated.

*International Baccalaureate (IB):* Advanced students may participate in the IB program, taking the corresponding university-level curricula. At the end of high school, the students complete an international examination, receiving advanced standing and course credits upon matriculation to university.

*Mentoring:* A student is paired with an academic mentor who provides advanced or more rapid-paced instruction.

*Single Subject Acceleration:* A student is assigned to a higher grade level than is typical given the student's age for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities in one or more subject areas.

**Not all content-based acceleration opportunities are appropriate for all advanced learners.** The following definitions are adapted from the [NAGC policy \(2018\)](#):

### **Grade-Based Acceleration**

*Continuous Progress:* This type of acceleration allows students to be given content progressively as prior content is completed and mastered. The practice is accelerative when a student's progress exceeds the performance of chronological peers in rate and level.

*Independent Study:* The student proceeds through learning and instructional activities at a self-selected pace. Self-paced instruction is a sub-type of continuous progress acceleration. Self-paced instruction is distinguishable from the more general continuous progress in that the student has control over all pacing decisions.

*Telescoping Curriculum:* A group of advanced students is accelerated through more than one year's curriculum in one year in all academic areas, such that 3 years' curriculum is completed in 2 years time, or if at high school, 4 years are completed in 3 years' time. Students fulfill credit requirements and graduate early.

*Whole Grade Acceleration:* A student is assigned to a higher-grade level than is typical given the student's age on a full-time basis to provide access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.

### **Eligibility for Acceleration**

Acceleration is not universally appropriate or helpful, and the decision to use it as an option should not be undertaken lightly.

For a student to be considered eligible for acceleration, the following are key considerations:

1. Documented evidence (ex: multiple assessment data) that the student is processing and achieving well above most others at the current grade level in one or more academic subjects.
2. The student demonstrates personal characteristics (as indicated by the Iowa Acceleration Scale or psychological evaluation) such as being motivated by challenge and learning, is independent in thought and action, persists in other-directed and self-directed tasks, is socially/emotionally mature, comfortable with older children, and has a positive relationship with at least one adult.
3. The student can demonstrate learning preferences that include willingness to work at his/her own pace, but not necessarily always alone through evidence of student self-assessment, observation, parent input, and psychological evaluation.

A student who meets these requirements may be a candidate for acceleration; however, discussion and decisions in relation to acceleration, either full (whole grade advancement) or partial (individual subject level, compacting, telescoping), will be carried out by individual GIEP teams with adherence to the following guidelines.

#### **Guidelines for Suitability for Acceleration**

1. There must be a comprehensive psychological evaluation of academic skill levels and social-emotional adjustment by a trained professional such as a school psychologist, etc.
2. Ideally, whole-grade acceleration should occur during natural transition points, such as the beginning of the school year. However, advancement at other times may sometimes be desirable where the student's prior and receiving teachers may more easily confer how best to help the student make a smooth transition.
3. Academically, the student should demonstrate skill levels at an above-average range of the class being considered for acceleration.
4. Care should be taken to avoid building up excessive expectations from grade advancement. A small minority of gifted students are so far advanced in their intellectual or academic functioning that one year of advancement will still leave them bored at school. For such students, further advancement may be advisable, either at that time or later in their educational experience. Also, flexible programming will be required to accommodate students with asynchronous (uneven) development. These children have varying rates of cognitive, emotional, and physical development and may need different levels of provision in these areas.

5. All acceleration cases should be arranged on a **6-week trial period**. The child should be aware that if the trial period is unsuccessful, he/she will return to their original year placement. It is important that in such circumstances, the child should not be made to feel that he/she has failed.
6. Decisions regarding acceleration are based on data and research rather than feelings, myths, **family convenience, or schedules**. The research literature on acceleration reveals that acceleration has benefits for appropriate students both academically and socially. Conversely, failure to advance a highly gifted student may result in poor study habits, apathy, lack of motivation, and maladjustment.
7. Socially/emotionally, the student must be free of any serious adjustment problems. Regular education and Gifted teachers should be aware, however, that in some students social/emotional difficulties may have been caused by inappropriately low-class placement. In such cases, the situation may be alleviated by accelerated progression.
8. The student should not feel unduly pressured by parents. At the secondary level, the student him/herself should be motivated to move ahead.
9. Judgments about the student's social and emotional maturity should include input from the student's parents and teachers. Gifted students are sometimes rejected by peers and it is important that teachers do not confuse the absence of close peer relationships with social immaturity.
10. The student should be physically, socially, emotionally, and functionally capable of sustaining the effort required to maintain good academic standing.
11. The receiving teacher has access to professional development, if needed, to maximize his/her capacity to provide appropriately for the student. They must also have a positive attitude towards the acceleration and must be willing to help the child adjust to the new situation.

### **Procedures for Gifted Students in District**

If the student has a GIEP, the GIEP team, will convene a meeting with the parents, adhering to Chapter 16 regulations, to determine the need for acceleration. The Gifted Support Teacher will facilitate this meeting. The GIEP team must include the parent/ guardian, student (if applicable), subject/ classroom teacher, building level administrator, school counselor, school psychologist, content specialist, Pupil Services, and Curriculum and Instruction (C&I), and other relevant members who can speak to the student's strengths.

1. A gifted student may be referred by any member of the GIEP team for possible acceleration. This referral should be made in writing to the gifted support teacher or building administrator.
  - a. Requests will not be considered during the months between June and August, except for students newly enrolled in the District. The GIEP team should be communicating with families regularly throughout the school year to address needs and concerns as they occur.
  - b. The District doesn't support asynchronous online programs and/or coursework for subject-level or grade-level acceleration that is not aligned with MTSD's scope and sequence, as well as the student's GIEP.
2. The student's gifted support teacher will be responsible for bringing the proposal before the GIEP team, who will review all the relevant data and make a decision within 10 calendar days of receiving the request.
3. The GIEP team will review each request for English Language Arts or Mathematics acceleration or grade level acceleration based upon meeting all (or nearly all) of the following criteria. The team's consideration will include whether grade level differentiation of instruction is able to address the student's needs.

**Please note the school team will determine the appropriateness of the criteria listed below for each student.**

English Language Arts	Mathematics
Demonstration of need, based upon documented differentiation implemented and measured in the regular classroom	Demonstration of need, based upon documented differentiation implemented and measured in the regular classroom
Results from IOWA Acceleration Scale, range 60-80, classified as Excellent Candidate	Results from IOWA Acceleration Scale, range 60-80, classified as Excellent Candidate
Star Data- 99th percentile (grades K-8, please see the diagnostic report)	Star Data-99th percentile (grades K-8 please see the diagnostic report)
PSSA scores in the advanced range.	PSSA scores in the advanced range.
PVAAS projections indicating 95% achievement or above, <i>(when available *no scores provided for the 19-20, 20-21 SY)</i>	PVAAS projections indicating 95% achievement or above, <i>(when available *no scores provided for the 19-20, 20-21 SY)</i>
Student work products of high quality or other evidence of outstanding performance as measured by relevant	Demonstration of mastery using district curriculum-based math materials at least one year ahead of current placement.

student performance data.	Mastery is considered achieving at least 95% or above on the end-of-year test or benchmark a student would be accelerated through
Demonstration of a genuine desire to subject-accelerate without parental pressure (team confirms that there is expressed student interest to accelerate).	Demonstration of a genuine desire to subject-accelerate without parental pressure (team confirms that there is expressed student interest to accelerate).
	Student work products of high quality or other evidence of outstanding performance as measured by relevant student performance data.

<b>Science</b>
The Manheim Township School District provides differentiated and enriched programming within the grade-level curriculum. The regular education and gifted teachers work collaboratively to support the gifted learners that have the area of science identified within the GIEP. MTSD provides additional advancement offerings within the secondary level.

The Gifted IEP Team will also consider the traits listed below. A student considered for acceleration should exhibit all or a majority of the following traits:

- Qualitative evidence of social and emotional maturity, academic motivation, and persistence to task completion.
- An intense interest in a specific academic area is considered for acceleration.

The final determination regarding acceleration will be made by the GIEP team, which includes the parent, teacher(s), building administrator, gifted teacher, and school counselor. The GIEP team must also include the school psychologist, content specialist, Pupil Services, and Curriculum and Instruction (C&I). If the student meets the established criteria and is in need of acceleration, plans will be written into the GIEP and noted on the NORA. If the parent and/or other team members are not in agreement with the team's decision, they are encouraged to contact the Assistant Superintendent, or may utilize their gifted procedural safeguards through the Office for dispute resolution.



## Procedures for Students Not Identified as Gifted

Acceleration should only be considered by the student’s school team, which includes the classroom teacher, building level administrator, school counselor, school psychologist, parent, student (where appropriate), content specialist, Pupil Services, and Curriculum and Instruction (C&I), and other relevant members who can speak to the student’s strengths and needs. Requests will not be considered during the months between June and August.

The school team will review each request for English Language Arts or Mathematics acceleration or grade level acceleration based upon the majority of the following criteria:

***Please note: The school team will determine the appropriateness of the criteria listed below for each student.***

English Language Arts	Mathematics
Demonstration of need, based upon documented differentiation implemented and measured in the regular classroom	Demonstration of need, based upon documented differentiation implemented and measured in the regular classroom
Results from IOWA Acceleration Scale, range 60-80, classified as Excellent Candidate	Results from IOWA Acceleration Scale, range 60-80, classified as Excellent Candidate
Star Data- 99th percentile (grades K-8, please see the diagnostic report)	Star Data-99th percentile (grades K-8 please see the diagnostic report)
PSSA scores in the advanced range.	PSSA scores in the advanced range.
PVAAS projections indicating 95% achievement or above, <i>(when available *no scores provided for the 19-20, 20-21 SY)</i>	PVAAS projections indicating 95% achievement or above, <i>(when available *no scores provided for the 19-20, 20-21 SY)</i>
Student work products of high quality or other evidence of outstanding performance as measured by relevant student performance data.	Demonstration of mastery using district curriculum-based math materials at least one year ahead of current placement. Mastery is considered achieving at least 95% or above on the end-of-year test or benchmark a student would be accelerated through.
Demonstration of a genuine desire to subject-accelerate without parental	Demonstration of a genuine desire to subject-accelerate without parental

pressure (team confirms that there is student interest to accelerate).	pressure (team confirms that there is student interest to accelerate).
	Student work products of high quality or other evidence of outstanding performance as measured by relevant student performance data.

The school team will also consider the traits listed below. A student considered for acceleration should exhibit all or a majority of the following traits:

- Qualitative evidence of positive social, and emotional, mental health and well-being, maturity, academic motivation, and persistence to task completion.
- An intense interest in a specific academic area is considered for acceleration as determined by the student, teacher, and parent/guardian input.

### **Steps for Identification**

1. **Referral** - A written referral is made, via the **Request for Acceleration** (Appendix A), or **in writing**, by a teacher, parent, or other personnel. The written referral should be submitted to the building administrator. Every attempt will be made to enact a decision to accelerate within 60 calendar days of receipt of the Request for Acceleration form or written request. The 60- calendar days do not include the summer months of June through August.

- a. Parents may submit a request for acceleration on behalf of their student once per academic school year. Requests will not be considered during the months between June and August.
- b. The District does not support asynchronous online programs and/or coursework for subject-level or grade-level acceleration that is not aligned with MTSD’s scope and sequence, and the student’s GIEP.

2. **Consultation** - A meeting is held with the school team members to determine whether or not the student should be considered a candidate for potential subject area/grade level acceleration. The meeting will be facilitated by the school psychologist.

- a. Meeting participants should include members, including the student (when appropriate), parent, school psychologist, building administrator, school counselor, teachers, specialists, content specialist, pupil services, and C&I.

- b. The consultation meeting will include a review of current records and data and dependent upon the subject area for consideration including, but not limited to those identified within the criteria section of this document. For example, a team

considering single subject acceleration will look at the IOWA, end-of-year/ benchmark assessments, student work samples, STAR, PSSA.

c. The team should also consider conducting a full gifted evaluation to determine if the student is eligible and in need of gifted support services.

d. At the conclusion of the consultation, a decision will be rendered if the student shall move forward in the consideration process or remain in the current academic setting with appropriate differentiation and instruction. All data sources, (quantitative and qualitative) will be reviewed by the school team.

e. The school will issue the consent for Acceleration Evaluation to the parent/ guardian to begin the evaluation process.

3. **Action Plan Meeting** – A second meeting to discuss the findings with the school team is scheduled. At this meeting, the team will determine whether or not acceleration is recommended. The school psychologist will facilitate this meeting.

a. If acceleration is recommended, an **Acceleration Plan** (Appendix C) will be developed during this action plan meeting and signed by the parent. The general education teacher of the accelerated area will be the case manager for Acceleration Plan. No Acceleration Plan issued by the team shall be implemented without the signed consent of a parent/guardian. Written notification will also be sent to the parents by the building principal.

b. If acceleration is not recommended, the student will remain in the current academic setting with appropriate differentiation and instruction.

c. If the school team can not reach a consensus, the appeal process should be enacted. This process is detailed on page 13.

4. **Placement Guidelines** – The primary goal of the acceleration action is to provide the appropriate level of challenge while allowing the student to perform/achieve at a high level with the new curriculum.

a. In cases where subject acceleration is approved, the student will be placed in an appropriately leveled curriculum as identified by the school team supported by a written **Acceleration Plan** (Appendix C).

b. Continued formative assessment to determine gaps in key learning areas of the grade missed should occur. During the initial 6-week transition period, student progress will be monitored on a biweekly basis by the classroom teacher.

c. The team will meet after 6 weeks from when the transition occurred to review the progress monitoring and address any questions or concerns.

d. The performance will be considered successful based on test/quiz/benchmark scores average of 80% or higher, and anecdotal notes from the parent, teacher, and student that describe engagement.

6. **Recommendation** – Student performance data and placement guidelines for acceleration are designed to be used as a guide in the decision-making process. The decision to accelerate through the curriculum is and will continue to be made on an individual basis. The building principal must approve the final recommendation.

### **Steps for Implementation**

*(If subject acceleration is recommended by the school team:)*

1. An Acceleration Plan for the student will be developed by the district and signed by the parent(s) and school team. The plan could include, but not be limited to attending class in a different grade, working with an above-grade-level curriculum with a cohort group, or independently in the student's own age-based classroom under the supervision of the current classroom and any properly certified support teachers. Additional acceleration options previously identified may also be considered.

2. An Acceleration Plan will also include 'Escorting Procedures' for moving between classrooms and district buildings as deemed necessary for the student's age and overall safety and security. If the student has driving privileges and the plan calls for a dual enrollment option, the student will transport themselves to the location of instruction with parent permission.

3. A hard copy of the Acceleration Plan will be housed in the student's Cumulative Folder for easy access and reference at any time during the student's educational career-Kindergarten through Graduation.

4. If subject placement into an advanced grade is warranted during the current school year, it should occur at a natural transition time, (i.e., end of the quarter, or semester breaks).

5. The subject acceleration will be formatively monitored to ensure appropriate placement and student achievement. All cases of acceleration will be on an initial trial basis for a period of six weeks and formatively assessed at two-week intervals. At the conclusion of the 6 week trial period, the school team will reconvene to review the progress monitoring data and determine the appropriateness of the acceleration.
6. If the team agrees that the student is performing satisfactorily on content assessments (75%+), the student will remain in the accelerated placement and monitored using formative classroom data sources as well as previously identified assessment results and empirical evidence.
7. If the team agrees that the student is not performing at the optimal level of learning (69% or below) and knowledge retention to support further study, the school team may recommend a modification or discontinuation of the acceleration plan.
8. Students who qualify for acceleration shall only be accelerated within the scope of the Manheim Township School District's curriculum.
9. Communication is imperative between home and school. Follow-up meetings will be scheduled as needed. The Acceleration Plan will be formally reviewed (**during the first 4-6 weeks of school**) on a yearly basis until the plan is completed.
10. Acceleration Plans must be evaluated yearly. Parents should be aware that future years will require the need for a review of student programming and placement.

#### **Acceleration Appeals Process**

*(If subject acceleration is not recommended by the GIEP or School Team)*

1. The classroom teachers will continue to monitor student progress to ensure the appropriate level of challenge and rigor, including recommendations for differentiation/enrichment at the current grade level.
2. The school team's determination for placement and services will be provided in writing. Students and/or their parents may appeal procedural issues in writing to the building principal within five (5) school days of the receipt of the principal's notification.
3. The building principal will collaborate with the Director of Pupil Services and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction to review the request. A written decision will be provided to the parent and building principal.

4. If parents continue to disagree with the decision of the appeal, parents may appeal the placement decision in writing to the assistant superintendent. The assistant superintendent will review all student documentation and evidence and render a final placement.

5. Parents may re-submit a request for acceleration on behalf of their student once per academic/calendar school year. Requests will not be considered during the months between June and August.

### **Grading and Assessment**

***Note: Individual parent and student requests are subject to content specialist and administrative review and approval.***

It is the policy of the Pennsylvania Department of Education that students take the grade-level (state-mandated) assessment for which they have enrolled, not the grade level of the course they have been accelerated into. For example, a 4th-grade student who is taking a 5th-grade math course will take the 4th-grade PSSA, and not the 5th-grade assessment. Similarly, a 2nd-grade student who would be taking the 3rd-grade math course would not be taking the 3rd-grade PSSA. However, if an accelerated student is enrolled in the Algebra I course, they will need to take their grade-level Math PSSA and the Keystone Algebra I assessment. Additionally, state assessment scores of an accelerated student will not adversely affect access to future classes in the middle or high schools. In the event a student is whole grade accelerated, they will be disenrolled in the current grade level and re-enrolled into the accelerated grade level and take that grade-level assessment.

### **Student Payments**

Students taking a Dual Enrollment course, (i.e., one which provides both credit for district high school purposes and college credit), must pay the cost required to attain the college credit.

Students taking an Advanced Placement course must pay all of the cost for taking the Advanced Placement examination. High School credit for the Advanced Placement course will still be awarded even if the student elects not to pay for and take the Advanced Placement examination and thus not receive any associated college credit and/or college course acceleration.

If a student participates in an online course, which is arranged or approved by the District as part of the student's education in order to provide acceleration for the student within the scope of the District's curriculum, the District will pay all of the costs of the online course.

\*This does not apply to courses outside the academic school year i.e. summer school.

## **Prevention of Non-Academic Barriers**

Extracurricular opportunities, especially interscholastic sports opportunities, will not be withheld or denied to students who are accelerated.

Necessary information regarding interscholastic sports participation will be shared during yearly Acceleration Plan review meetings by the student's case manager and include the Athletic Director for the district who will communicate with the coach of the sport/activity in question.

### **Resources:**

Developing Academic Acceleration Policies (2018 October, 23).

[https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/key%20reports/Developing%20Academic%20%20%20%20Acceleration\\_10-23-18.pdf](https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/key%20reports/Developing%20Academic%20%20%20Acceleration_10-23-18.pdf). Retrieved August 10, 2022.

Neilhart, M., Reis, S.M., Robinson, N.M., & Moon, S.M. (2002). The social and emotional development of gifted children: what do we know? Waco, TX: Prufrock Press



# MANHEIM TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

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### Manheim Township School District Parent/Guardian Request for Acceleration Student

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a written rationale for the acceleration request. This may contain additional information about the student to help the team to determine appropriate placement, such as:

- School and academic factors (school attendance, student’s motivation, attitude toward learning, etc.)
- Developmental factors (physical size, motor coordination)
- Interpersonal skills (relationships with peers and teachers, outside-of-school activities)
- Attitude and support (student’s attitude toward acceleration, parents’ attitude, school system attitude and support, planning for the future).

Please note: This form will start the process of collecting preliminary information about this student. This does not mean acceleration will necessarily occur. Parents/Guardians will return this form to the Building Principal, School Counselor, or Gifted Case Manager to submit their request.





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### Manheim Township School District Consent for Acceleration

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

As part of the process of determining your child's eligibility for acceleration, a comprehensive educational assessment will be conducted. The assessment will be conducted to gather information concerning your student's academic skills and social/emotional development.

The following assessments will be administered as a part of this evaluation:

- IOWA Acceleration Scale
- End of Year Benchmark Assessments
- Math
- English Language Arts

The results of the evaluation will be discussed with you and the Student Acceleration Committee in the process of determining appropriate placement recommendations. A copy of the evaluation results will become a part of your student's school record.

Please indicate your permission for the evaluation by checking the appropriate space and signing below:

I consent to these assessments being administered as part of the Acceleration Process.

I do not consent to these assessments being administered as part of the Acceleration Process and understand that the Acceleration process will not be able to be completed without this information.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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### Manheim Township School District Acceleration Plan

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Acceleration:

- Subject (specify)
  - Math
  - English Language Arts
- Grade (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Acceleration Placement \_\_\_\_\_

Grade/Subject Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

6 Week Review Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategies for transition:

Strategies for progress monitoring following transition:

Requirements and procedures for earning high school credit prior to entering high school:

Comments from 6 Week Review Meeting:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Building Principal Date Parent/Guardian Date

Participants:

Is the student performing satisfactorily in the accelerated curriculum? \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no

Should the acceleration plan continue for the remainder of the school year \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no