



# **ACADEMIC ACCELERATION Guidance Manual**

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# Acceleration Model

## Summary

The Las Cruces Public Schools Acceleration Task Force was commissioned by the Deputy Superintendent for Learning, Teaching, and Research. The charge to the Task Force was to revise the plans that guide decision - making in order to appropriately identify and place students who are in need of academic acceleration. Appropriate academic acceleration ensures that students do not fall prey to the boredom plaguing many highly capable learners who are forced to follow the curriculum of their age-peers. The ultimate goal is to ensure that students feel academically challenged, socially accepted, and find the learning experience meaningful. Members of the Acceleration Task Force included:

- Dr. Wendi Miller-Tomlinson, Director of Secondary Instruction, LCPS
- Yolanda Koontz, Coordinator of Gifted Services, LCPS
- Ralph Ramos, Principal of Camino Real Middle School, LCPS
- Gena Breck, Teacher of Gifted Students, LCPS
- Kim Ann Gomez, Teacher of Gifted Students, LCPS

## Overview

The Las Cruces Public Schools has undertaken a broad review of its policies and practices regarding the education of high potential and gifted and talented students. *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students* (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004) provides the backdrop for this guidance document.

Acceleration is a broad term that encompasses many options. To help organize these options and encourage a common vocabulary for discussing them, acceleration options are organized by categories, forms, and types. Categories are the broadest and most encompassing level of classification. The two broad categories of acceleration are content-based, and grade-based. The following chart identifies forms and types of acceleration under the two broad categories.

	Content-Based	Grade Based
Forms	Vary the level, pace, and complexity of the curriculum	Whole grade acceleration
Types	Single subject acceleration, curriculum compacting, dual enrollment, and Advanced Placement	Early entrance into school, whole grade acceleration ("grade skipping"), grade telescoping, and early entrance into college

All students have access to acceleration, including English Language Learners (ELL), at-risk, low socioeconomic status, profoundly gifted, and twice exceptional students who are gifted. Additionally, not all students identified as gifted may be in need of acceleration. Referral for acceleration is a separate process from referral to gifted services. Students who are referred for acceleration will not necessarily be part of a school's gifted and talented program because the student may not be identified as being in need of these services, or may be in the referral process for gifted services.

## Decision-Making

Acceleration is an intervention that moves students through an educational program at faster rates, or at younger ages, than typical. It means matching the level, complexity, and pace of the curriculum to readiness and motivation of the student. Individuals generally involved in making the complex decision are:

- Students
- Parent(s) or guardian(s)
- Current Teacher(s)
- Administrator
- School Counselor
- School Psychologist
- Teacher of Gifted Students
- A representative with expertise in twice exceptionalities when a student is twice exceptional
- A representative with expertise in language acquisition for ELL students
- Any other parties who may have knowledge beneficial to the decision-making process

The screening process must be applied equitably and equally to all referred students.

- If, after a clear explanation of the advantages and responsibilities of acceleration, the student expresses a lack of interest in participating, then the process should not proceed. The possibility for reconsideration for referral can be addressed at a later date.
- Students scoring at or above predetermined levels, such as the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile, on regularly administered state criterion-referenced tests should be automatically referred for consideration for acceleration.

The student's profile score, rather than the composite score, should be considered, so as to not bias the procedure against students who have an uneven pattern of scores and who are likely candidates for subject-matter acceleration.

- Ideally, a student will be assessed for acceleration in the spring, and if recommended, participate in appropriate transition activities prior to placement in the advanced grade or content at the beginning of the next school year. The needs of the student should dictate when acceleration decisions are considered.
- As part of the information gathering process, the student under consideration for acceleration must be consulted, depending on the student's age and willingness to participate. Under no circumstances should the student participate in the discussion when the placement team is discussing the student.

## What Type of Acceleration is Warranted?

### Single Subject Acceleration

Las Cruces Public Schools offers subject-matter acceleration in mathematics for eligible students. In-class differentiation provides the learning opportunities needed to be challenged for most students; however, acceleration may be provided for the small percentage of students for whom a more aggressive form of intervention is necessary. See attached [\*Rubric for Single Subject Acceleration:\*](#)

[IKE-E2: Acceleration K-2 Rubric Aug2015](#)

[IKE-E3: Acceleration 3-4-5 Rubric Aug2015](#)

[IKE-E4: Acceleration 6-7-8 Rubric Aug2015](#)

Responsible Parties: Professional Learning Community (PLC) for Subject-Area, or Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT):

All schools are required to conduct a fair, objective, and systematic assessment of the student using appropriate instruments for single subject acceleration being considered for a student. When assessing English Language Learners, appropriate instruments may include those in the student's heritage language.

At this point, it is strongly recommended that the student be screened for Advanced Education Services (gifted education), which support and provide needed safeguards of the Individual Education Plan. This would also ensure that if a student transfers to another school or another district, the acceleration will continue.

A SAT or MDT should be assembled to consider cases of content-based acceleration. Because content-based acceleration does not necessarily involve a student's full-time placement with older classmates, there may be fewer concerns about social and emotional development. Because of the less extreme nature of content acceleration, the SAT need not be made up of as many members as the team assembled for discussions of whole-grade acceleration. Members of a SAT for content acceleration shall include the current teacher of the content area, the receiving teacher for the content area, the parent, the student, and other teachers and/or a school counselor who can assist with initial adjustment issues. This process is a general education function, but Advanced Education Services experts can and should be consulted.

### **Whole Grade Acceleration**

Responsible Parties: Classroom Teacher with the Student Assistance Team (SAT) or the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT).

A student should be screened and evaluated for Advanced Education Services (gifted education), which support and provide needed safeguards of the Individual Education Plan. This will ensure that if a student transfers to another school or another district, the acceleration will continue. All schools are required to conduct a fair, objective, and systematic assessment of the student using the appropriate instruments for whole-grade acceleration. The same data-gathering process used for single-subject acceleration will be followed for whole grade acceleration with the addition of the **Iowa Acceleration Scale – 3**. When assessing English Language Learners, appropriate instruments may include those in the student's heritage language. A SAT or MDT shall consider cases of whole-grade acceleration. The results from the above-mentioned instruments shall be used to guide the discussion, and any possible decision to accelerate. Ideally, the MDT, at this point, must include at least one person who is familiar with the research and best practices of gifted education and acceleration. The MDT might also include additional members with expertise in the following areas:

- English Language Learners
- Twice Exceptional Learners
- Other fields according to the student's need

The school administrator, or designee, shall convene a team of the suggested individuals to discuss the whole grade acceleration for a student. The issue of assembling a SAT or MDT should not be delayed if a team is unable to have all recommended members present. If this should occur, a process for obtaining input from team members who cannot be present shall be put in place by the building administrator.

## Data Gathering and/or Assessment

In the data gathering process, consideration for acceleration should not be based on any single data source, but should include information gathered from multiple data sources. Examples of assessments can be found in the [Rubric for Single Subject Acceleration](#). This list includes subjective, objective, and anecdotal assessment options. These options are organized by academic level. The [Rubric for Single Subject Acceleration](#) should be used to ensure that multiple data sources have been used in addressing the student's needs.

## Planning and Monitoring

Once the need for acceleration has been determined, a comprehensive written plan should be developed. This plan is provided to the parents or legal guardian of the student. The plan must include the student's present levels of performance, type(s) of services provided, and how those services are measured. (NOTE: Acceleration is open to all students, including students who are gifted.)

- The SAT or MDT shall appoint a staff member or a teacher of the gifted to oversee and aid in the implementation of the written [Individualized Acceleration Learning Plan](#) and the transition process.
- The SAT or MDT shall establish an appropriate transition period for the accelerated placement. It is recommended that the student's transition be evaluated no more than 30 days after the placement, and sooner if necessary. During this time, the parent or legal guardian may request, in writing, the discontinuation of the acceleration services with no repercussion.
- Within the time specified for the transition period, the parent or legal guardian may request an alternative placement in writing. The school principal shall bring such a proposal before the decision-making team who will be responsible for issuing a decision within 10 days of receiving the request. If the [Individualized Acceleration Learning Plan](#) is modified, the written plan will be modified accordingly and a new transition period determined.
- The accelerated placement of a student shall become permanent at the end of the transition period. Once the plan becomes permanent, the acceleration will be entered into the student's permanent record.
- If the determination is made that acceleration is not an appropriate intervention for the student, the decision to accelerate may be revisited in the future, according to the needs of the student.