

Acceleration Placement Overview

Adapted from the Illinois Association for Gifted Children (IAGC) Model Acceleration Policy 2018

The district believes that all students across the achievement spectrum should be challenged and supported to develop their potential. For some students needing a higher level of instruction, this can best be achieved by affording them access to curricula and learning environments more commonly provided for older students. This policy describes the process that shall be used for evaluating students for possible accelerated placement and identifying students who should be granted early admission to kindergarten or first grade, accelerated in one or more individual subject areas, or promoted to a higher grade level than their same age peers. The policy shall be applied equitably and systematically to all students referred for acceleration regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gifted and talented status, twice / multiple exceptionality, English language proficiency, or socioeconomic background.

1. Accelerated placement is the placement of a student at the instructional level that best matches that student's needs by allowing access to a curriculum that is usually reserved for children who are older or in higher grades than the student. Accelerated placement options must include, but need not be limited to, early entrance to kindergarten, first grade, individual subject acceleration, and whole grade acceleration. Acceleration placement is not limited to those who have been identified as gifted and talented, but rather is open to all students who demonstrate high ability and who may benefit from accelerated placement. Eligibility for accelerated placement shall also be open to all students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, English language proficiency, or socioeconomic status.
 - a. Currently in Place: Early entrance to kindergarten is the admission of a student to kindergarten who will not yet be 5 years old by September 1 of that school year.
 - b. Currently in Place: Early entrance to first grade is the admission of a student to first grade who will not yet be six years old by September 1 of that school year and who has not completed state certified kindergarten.
 - c. New: Whole grade acceleration is the practice of assigning a student to a higher grade level than is typically given for the student's age on a full-time basis for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.
 - d. New: Individual subject acceleration is the practice of assigning a student to specific content at a higher instructional level than is typical given the student's grade for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities in one or more subject areas.

2. Copies of this policy and referral forms for evaluation for possible early entrance to kindergarten or first grade, whole grade acceleration, and individual subject acceleration, shall be made available to district staff and parents at each school building and shall be published on the school district website.
 - a. The principal (or his or her designee) of each school building shall solicit referrals of students for evaluation for possible accelerated placement annually, and ensure that all staff he or she supervises are aware of procedures for referring students for evaluation for possible accelerated placement.

Currently in Place: Early Entrance Process and Procedures for Kindergarten:

School District 161 School Attendance-Early Admission Policy 7:50 requires that parents who would like their son/daughter to be considered for early admission complete an application process. This process includes an assessment done by the School District and a school psychologist. The following are included in the application process:

1. Verification of residence
2. Proof the child will be 5 years of age by November 1 of the school year of admission
3. Completed and signed Early Admission Application Form
4. Signed release of information form
5. Upon completion of above, an evaluation shall be administered by a school psychologist certified or registered in the State of Illinois. This evaluation must verify that the child scores in the high average - superior range on the Woodcock Johnson Test of Early Cognitive and Academic Development. (ECAD).
6. Applications must be received in the Superintendent's Office by April 1st in order to be considered. A team including the Building Principal and the Director of Learning and Instruction will review the application. A representative of the team will then meet with the parents to discuss the results and recommendations pertaining to the Early Entrance of this child.

Early Entrance Process and Procedures for First Grade:

School District 161 School Attendance-Early Admission Policy 7:50 requires that parents who would like their son/daughter to be considered for early admission into FIRST GRADE complete an application process. The following must be included in this process:

1. Verification of residence
2. Proof the child will be 6 years of age by December 31 of the school year of admission
3. Completed and signed Early Admission Application must be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools by April 1 prior to the child's 6th birthday
4. Proof of attendance at a non-public preschool and continued education at that school through kindergarten
5. Proof that the teacher of kindergarten at the above school was an appropriately certified teacher
6. Signed release of information form

7. The above information will be reviewed by a team including the Building Principal and the Director of Learning and Instruction. A representative of the team will then meet with the parents to discuss the results and recommendations pertaining to the Early Entrance of this child.

or

1. Verification of residence
2. Proof the child will be 6 years of age by December 31 of the school year of admission
3. Completed and signed Early Admission Application must be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools by April 1 prior to the child's 6th birthday
4. Signed release of information form
5. Upon completion of above, an evaluation shall be administered by a school psychologist certified or registered in the State of Illinois. This evaluation must verify that the child scores in the high average - superior range on the Woodcock Johnson Test of Early Cognitive and Academic Development. (ECAD).
6. The above information will be reviewed by a team including the building Principal and the Director of Learning and Instruction. A representative of the team will then meet with the parents to discuss the results and recommendations pertaining to the Early Entrance of this child.

New: Whole Grade Acceleration and Individual Subject Acceleration Process and Procedures

1. Initiation of Evaluation Process
 - a. Referrers: Any student residing in the district may be referred by an administrator, teacher, school social worker, psychologist, specialist or parent / guardian of the student to the Principal for evaluation for possible accelerated placement. A student may refer himself or herself through a district staff member who has knowledge of the referred student's abilities. Referrals should be submitted to the principal by April 1st for consideration for the following school year.
 - b. Referral Forms: The referrer shall complete the appropriate section (parent, teacher, administrator, school social worker, psychologist, or specialist) of the referral form and submit it to the Principal.
 - c. Written Parental Consent: The Principal of the referred student's school shall obtain written permission from the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to evaluate the student for possible accelerated placement.
 - d. The Principal shall forward the referral form to the appropriate individuals so that the remaining sections may be completed within 14 school days.
 - e. Timeline: Students residing in the district who are referred for evaluation for possible accelerated placement during the school year shall receive a determination within (30) school days.
2. Evaluation Process: The procedures will utilize a fair and equitable decision-making process that involves multiple persons and includes a student's parents or guardians.

This multi-person team is responsible for gathering relevant, reliable, and comprehensive data in order to determine whether and what type of accelerated placement is appropriate for that student.

- a. Team members will include:
 - i. Gifted Coordinator or the appointed designee responsible for understanding the needs of an accelerated student.
 - ii. Principal / assistant principal from the student's current school.
 - iii. Most current teacher of the student
 - iv. School Psychologist and/or social worker
- b. A parent or legal guardian of the student shall be invited to participate in the evaluation process. The parent / legal guardian shall be allowed to invite an individual who is knowledgeable about the student's academic abilities. Accommodations will be made for parents with disabilities or who are not fluent English speakers to enable them to participate fully in the process.
- c. Multiple Evaluation Criteria
 - i. The evaluation process shall include multiple valid, reliable indicators. The criteria used to determine whether accelerated placement is appropriate should be reasonable. e.g., helpful in assessing whether a student is ready for the accelerated placement and not whether he or she has already mastered the content at that level. For students referred for possible whole grade level acceleration the Iowa Acceleration Scale will be used. For students referred for possible acceleration in an individual subject area, above-grade-level assessment in that subject area is recommended as part of the evaluation process.
 - ii. Assessments given will be as part of the evaluation process will be:
 1. Appropriate given the needs of the student (e.g., linguistically appropriate instruments should be used with English Language Learner students.)
 2. Data will be collected from the following sources:
 - a. CogAT Assessment
 - b. Iowa Acceleration Scale
 - c. Additional academic data as needed
 3. Parents or guardians will be notified in writing of any assessments that will be conducted as part of the evaluation portion of the identification process.
- d. Procedure for Notifying Parents or Guardians of the Decision
 - i. A parent or legal guardian of the evaluated student shall be notified in writing of the outcome of the evaluation process within thirty school days of the submission of the referral to the referred student's Principal. This notification shall include instructions for appealing the outcome of the evaluation process.
 - ii. A parent or legal guardian of the referred student may appeal in writing the decision of the evaluation team to the Superintendent or his/her

designee. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall review the appeal and notify the parent or guardian of his/her decision within thirty school days.

- iii. The decision that a student is eligible for accelerated placement shall be communicated to the student's current teacher(s) and to all teachers, specialists and relevant administrative staff at the level to which the student will be accelerated in order to ensure that all are informed and prepared to support the placement.

3. New Placement and Transition

- a. The evaluation team shall create a written placement and transition plan for students selected for whole grade acceleration or acceleration in an individual subject area. The written plan will be provided to the student's parents or guardians and will detail the type of acceleration the student will receive and strategies to be used to support the student to facilitate a successful transition.
- b. The new placement will be reviewed by the team and parent / guardians after 60 school days to determine the effectiveness of the plan and make any necessary adjustments.
- c. At the end of the specified transition period, the student's records will be updated to reflect the student's accelerated status. This is designed to facilitate continuous progress in future years in the same district or if the student transfers to a different district.