

A Nation Deceived:

**How Schools Hold Back
America's Brightest Students**

VOLUME I

The Templeton National Report on Acceleration

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The Templeton National Report on Acceleration

Endorsed by the National Association for Gifted Children

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Acknowledgments

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Together, we deliberated about what schools need to know in order to make the best decisions about educating highly capable students. These vibrant discussions led to the two volumes of *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students*.

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Guest Foreword

This first volume of the Templeton Report on acceleration trumpets an alarm to the nation's schools on the need for providing accelerative experiences for its brightest students. Founded on a solid research base established over the last 50 years, acceleration clearly deserves greater use in practice than has been the case.

Research continuously demonstrates the positive impacts of the various forms of acceleration. Yet the educational establishment, especially at elementary and middle school levels, remains skeptical based on the implications of ruined scope and sequence charts and ungrounded fears of hampering healthy social-emotional adjustment. As noted in this volume, voices in the field of gifted education and psychology, spurred by current and relevant studies, have consistently sustained support for acceleration, yet to little avail.

The Templeton Report addresses this current situation by tackling the misconceptions about acceleration and dispelling their impact through research, examples of effective practice, and real-life stories of students. This multi-pronged approach may help the general public and educators develop more favorable attitudes toward acceleration. Ultimately, much will depend on educators using the report as a prod to action in states and schools districts.

Building on the slogan of “just say no,” the report exhorts readers to say “yes” to acceleration. A comprehensive assessment of a student's readiness provides the basis for matching the student to the accelerative strategy.

The report describes several types of acceleration and corresponding social concerns. It also attests to the cost effectiveness of acceleration for colleges, schools, and parents. Specific ideas are cited for what teachers and the general reader can do to help promote these accelerative practices.

We hope the popular appeal of this report will break through a strong societal belief in a “one size fits all” mentality about education and release the bonds that hold gifted learners back in schools. The time to do something substantial is upon us.

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Message to Schools

We, the three authors of this report, have collectively spent more than 100 years in education. It is our life's work. We have tremendous respect for teachers and their involvement in the lives of their students.

Our careers in education began as classroom teachers. In our own teaching, research, and writing, we have been moved again and again by the equality inherent in excellence. We know that giftedness cuts across gender, ethnicity, social and economic background, and geographic location. There are students ready to accelerate in all of America's classrooms—in rural areas, in the inner city, and in the suburbs. These students are found in every type of school, from public to private to alternative.

While some have criticized academic acceleration as an intervention for children of wealth, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it is parents of economic means who can afford to provide for acceleration if a school doesn't. They can move their child to a private school, pay for mentoring, or pay for accelerative summer classes and extra-curricular resources. Poor children, though, often have no hope of experiencing a challenging curriculum if a school says no.

We are passionate about bringing the truth regarding acceleration to the wider public because we recognize the potential benefits for children. Acceleration is critical to the vast majority of academically gifted children who will not have the means to find alternatives.

Acceleration is an intervention that moves students through an educational program at rates faster, or at younger ages, than typical. It means matching the level, complexity, and pace of the curriculum to the readiness and motivation of the student. Examples of acceleration include early entrance to school, grade-skipping, moving ahead in one subject area, or Advanced Placement (AP). Acceleration is educationally effective, inexpensive, and can help level the playing field between students from rich schools and poor schools.

This report seeks to change the conversation about acceleration in America's schools. Our experience is that many teachers and administrators want to provide high-ability students the flexibility to move at the pace of their talents. But these educators want support and validation. We hope this report will help provide that support so that they will understand that acceleration is a highly effective intervention for bright students. Acceleration comes down to one child, one family, one situation.

Acceleration is a powerful educational ally, but it's a strategy that requires participation of parents as well as sensitivity to individual needs and circumstances. For that reason, this report is designed not only to persuade readers of the value of acceleration, but also to help schools administer acceleration programs effectively. It is our hope that future conversations between educators and parents about accelerating gifted students will begin with these essential questions:

1. Have we done a comprehensive assessment of your child to know his/her readiness?
2. Given the readiness, what is the best type of acceleration we can implement?
3. We know that in a very few cases acceleration is not effective. What can we do, as a school, to maximize the success of your child?

We have devoted our careers to helping schools give children the opportunity to achieve. We hope you will join with us in letting all of our nation's students soar to wherever their minds and hearts can take them.

Nicholas Colangelo, Ph.D.

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America Ignores Excellence

Is America ignoring excellence? Newspaper headlines proclaim that our nation's schools are producing weak students who lag behind age-peers in other countries. Meanwhile, there is a quieter story that's been kept in the dark—but is just as important to our country's future.

In every state, in every school, in huge cities, and in tiny farm communities, students are ready for much more challenge than the system provides.

These children perform better than any politician dares to expect. They are the top scorers, the ones who break the curve. They are the kids who read shampoo bottles at age three, and read newspaper editorials at age five. They can add up the cost of groceries faster than a cash register. They shock their parents and wow their grandparents.

But when they enter school, things change. They're often the most frustrated students in the classroom. They're bored in kindergarten, and they're bored again in first grade. Year after year, they learn little that they haven't learned already. They hope things will get better, but things rarely do. For many of them, nothing changes.

America's school system keeps bright students in line by forcing them to learn in a lock-step manner with their classmates. Teachers and principals disregard students' desires to learn more—much more—than they are being taught.

Instead of praise and encouragement, these students hear one word—no. When they ask for a challenge, they are held back. When they want to fly, they are told to stay in their seats.

Stay in your grade. Know your place.

It's a national scandal. And the price may be the slow but steady erosion of American excellence.



About the Title

The title of this report, *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students*, reflects what happens every day in our country's classrooms. When we tell ourselves that our brightest students would not benefit from acceleration, we deceive ourselves, our students, and the nation.

We know *deceived* is a very strong word. We consulted with a large number of people before deciding on this title, and we stand behind it.

This title is provocative—and accurate. This title is our honest message to America and that message is this: deceiving ourselves and deceiving our brightest students is no longer defensible.

The 20 Most Important Points from Volume II of This Report

1. Acceleration is the most effective curriculum intervention for gifted children.
2. For bright students, acceleration has long-term beneficial effects, both academically and socially.
3. Acceleration is a virtually cost-free intervention.
4. Gifted children tend to be socially and emotionally more mature than their age-mates. For many bright students, acceleration provides a better personal maturity match with classmates.
5. When bright students are presented with curriculum developed for age-peers, they can become bored and unhappy and get turned off from learning.
6. Testing, especially above-level testing (using tests developed for older students), is highly effective in identifying students who would benefit from acceleration.
7. The evidence and mechanisms are available to help schools make good decisions about acceleration so that it is a low-risk/high-success intervention for qualified students. *The Iowa Acceleration Scale* is a proven, effective instrument for helping schools make decisions about whole-grade acceleration.
8. The 18 types of acceleration available to bright students fall into two broad categories: grade-based acceleration, which shortens the number of years a student spends in the K–12 system and subject-based acceleration, which allows for advanced content earlier than customary.
9. Entering school early is an excellent option for some gifted students both academically and socially. High ability young children who enroll early generally settle in smoothly with their older classmates.
10. Gifted students entering college early experience both short-term and long-term academic success, leading to long-term occupational success and personal satisfaction.
11. Many alternatives to full-time early college entrance are available for bright high school students who prefer to stay with age-peers. These include dual enrollment in high school and college, distance education, and summer programs. Advanced Placement (AP) is the best large-scale option for bright students who want to take college-level courses in high school.
12. Very few early college entrants experience social or emotional difficulties. When these do occur they are usually short-term and part of the adjustment process.
13. Radical acceleration (acceleration by two or more years) is effective academically and socially for highly gifted students.
14. Many educators have been largely negative about the practice of acceleration, despite abundant research evidence for its success and viability.
15. To encourage a major change in America's perceptions of educational acceleration, we will need to use all the engines of change: legislation, the courts, administrative rules, and professional initiatives.
16. Effective implementation of accelerative options for gifted students with disabilities is time- and resource-intensive.
17. It is important for parents to be fully involved in the decision-making process about their child's acceleration.
18. The few problems that have been experienced with acceleration have stemmed primarily from incomplete or poor planning.
19. Educational equity does not mean educational sameness. Equity respects individual differences in readiness to learn and recognizes the value of each student.
20. The key question for educators is not *whether* to accelerate a gifted learner but rather *how*.

For more information on the research that informs these points, see Volume II of *A Nation Deceived*

America Says No

What do America's brightest students hear? Every year, across the nation, students who should be moved ahead at their natural pace of learning are told to stay put. Thousands of students are told to lower their expectations, and put their dreams on hold. Whatever they want to do, their teachers say, it can wait.

Staying put is the wise move, many school districts say. That's what is best for the child.

The problem is that it's not. Study after study tells us what so many bright but bored students already know—challenge is lacking in the regular classroom. We are deceiving ourselves when it comes to encouraging excellence. The way to promote excellence is to help it advance.

Excellence begins with one word—yes.

Yes to giving bright kids complex math problems. Yes to letting them learn another language. Yes to letting them accelerate to take classes that are ahead of their age group. Yes to letting them fly.

Instead, we say no. And by saying no, we undermine the motivation of bright students and hurt ourselves. We cling to the idea that all children are better off with children who match them in age. We don't even question it. And the cost to our country, to our communities, and to our children is enormous.

Excellence can lose its vibrancy. It can become complacency. It can become apathy. What it always becomes, if it's ignored, is less than it could be. When we say no to acceleration, we are quietly and, ironically with good intentions, lowering our national standards from excellence to baseline competence. Excellence is simply disregarded.

The Cost of Yes

What will it cost to reinvigorate excellence?

Very little. The price of moving bright students ahead is minimal. In fact, acceleration often saves money.

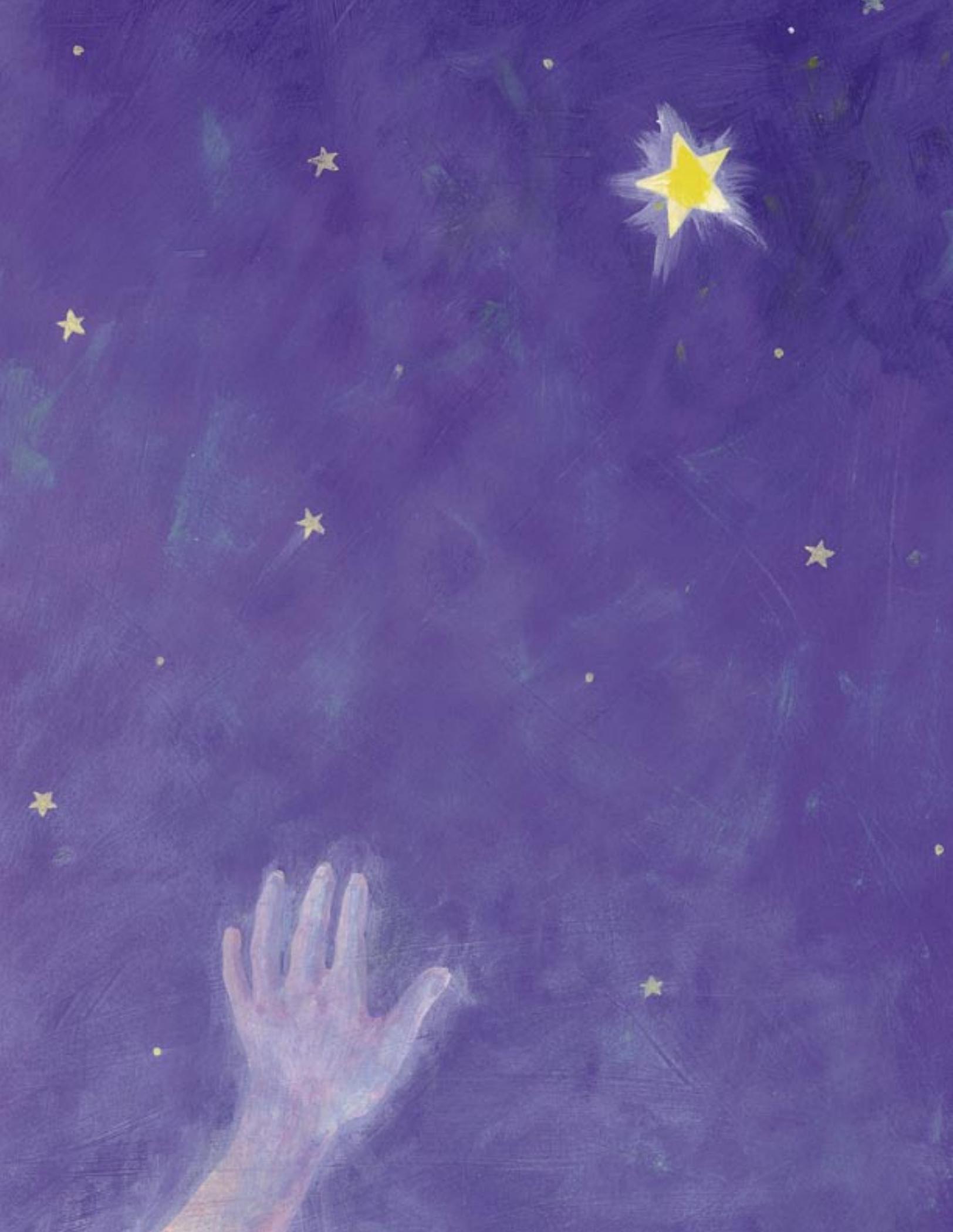
When a high school student takes college-level courses such as Advanced Placement (AP) classes, her parents save thousands of dollars, because that's what those courses would have cost at most universities.

Nationally, the parents of over 1 million students who, in 2004, took 1.9 million AP exams are saving millions of dollars in college costs each year. And, of course, getting young professionals into the community more quickly strengthens our neighborhoods and increases the tax base.

For more on what the word yes can mean to American students, read on. What yes means is a little different at the preschool, elementary school, high school, and college levels. But in almost every case, it is a great word. It's the first syllable in the long story of American achievement.

The word yes saves money, but it also saves bright young minds. And in many cases, it saves years of loneliness and social isolation for students who don't fit in with age-peers and who are hungry for friends who share similar interests.

Yes opens the door to achievement for students who long for challenge.



Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students

Parents and teachers who meet to talk about what to do with an academically advanced student will hear all kinds of advice from their school. Some of that advice makes acceleration sound scary. But that advice might be a recycling of old myths.

It's hard to know what's really true and what's just nonsense. Scholarly research demonstrates that much of what you hear about acceleration is false, some is partially true, and some really is true.

Myth and Truth

America has been deceived, as our title says, because we have known the truth about the effectiveness of acceleration for gifted students for decades. However, that truth has been kept from the decision-makers who set the educational policy for our country's children. Therefore, decisions about acceleration have traditionally been based upon personal biases, or incomplete and incorrect information. Amid the political wars of education, the interests of bright children have been lost.

Schools have held back America's brightest students for all kinds of reasons. The important questions now are why and how this keeps happening. From our extensive reading in current research and our interviews with leading educators who shared their experiences and expertise, we've identified twelve main reasons.

We have also provided a response to each reason, based on solid research evidence from our nation's leading universities and education experts.



What is Acceleration?

Acceleration is an educational intervention that moves students through an educational program at a faster than usual rate or younger than typical age.

Acceleration includes single-subject acceleration, whole-grade-skipping, early-entrance to school, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Acceleration means matching the level, complexity, and pace of the curriculum with the readiness and motivation of the student.

It is important to define what acceleration is not. Acceleration does not mean pushing a child. It does not mean forcing a child to learn advanced material or socialize with older children before he or she is ready.

Acceleration is really about letting students soar. Acceleration is a strategy that respects individual differences and acknowledges the fact that some of these differences merit educational flexibility. It provides cumulative educational advantage.



The myth

Acceleration is not an important issue because most students don't need it.

The reality

The importance of acceleration is not driven by numbers, but by the legitimate educational needs of high ability students. Many essential educational programs respond to need not numbers. These include the Head Start Program and bilingual education. Just because most children do not need acceleration does not diminish its importance.

No system exists that allows us precisely to figure out the number of students who need acceleration, but we have two historical indicators to frame our predictions.

(1) For many years, standardized testing has provided accurate and useful information about students' readiness for accelerated curriculum and placement. Additional indicators of readiness include: motivation, daily performance, and parent and teacher observation. This is all readily available to schools.

(2) Advanced Placement (AP) courses were originally limited to a few elite schools but have expanded to serve over a million students in 60% of America's high schools. Why not every high school?

12 Reasons Why Acceleration Isn't Accepted in America

Reason #1: Teachers lack familiarity with acceleration. Educators in most schools are unfamiliar with the research evidence on acceleration's benefits.

Response: A primary goal of this report is to eliminate this barrier. This comprehensive two-volume report brings together extensive research on acceleration, and the report is available to all schools at no cost.

Reason #2: Confidence about acceleration isn't running high. K-12 educators may know about acceleration as an intervention, but they don't feel confident in using this option.

Response: We respect that all educators make decisions that they believe are in the best interest of their students. The overwhelming evidence about the many academic and social advantages of acceleration should make educators confident enough to consider acceleration.

Reason #3: Acceleration runs counter to personal beliefs. When personal beliefs conflict with research evidence, personal beliefs win out almost every time.

Response: This report invites introspection and dialogue between educators and parents, asking them to reevaluate their beliefs concerning acceleration.

Reason #4: Age trumps everything else. For many educators, age—not readiness—has become the primary determinant for grade placement.

Response: The notion that age equates to grade is out of tune with what we know about individual differences. Research reveals that gifted students are more academically and emotionally advanced than their typical age-mates. Therefore, it makes more sense to think about readiness, rather than age, as the main determinant for grade placement.

Reason #5: Safe is better than sorry. Most teachers see non-acceleration as the safer option—they feel that doing nothing is not harmful.

Response: Doing nothing is not the same as “do no harm.” Choosing not to accelerate is itself an intervention. The evidence indicates that when children’s academic and social needs are not met, the result is boredom and disengagement from school.

Reason #6: Acceleration is not taught in Colleges of Education. These organizations, which train teachers, do not prepare teachers and administrators to make decisions about acceleration.

Response: Abundant research material is available, yet professors in Colleges of Education do not present it to future teachers. This report will help inform them. We know that faculty respect research and we hope that they will infuse this information into their course content.

Reason #7: It’s bad to push kids. Teachers and parents see acceleration as hurrying children through childhood.

Response: Acceleration is allowing a student to move at an appropriate pace. By worrying about hurrying, a chance is missed to match the enthusiastic, passionate, bright child who has the ability to move ahead with the right curriculum. They ignore the bright student’s rage to learn.

Reason #8: New friends are hard to make. Educators fear that children who are accelerated will not adjust well socially to the new class.

Response: Social adjustment in a school setting is a complicated issue. Some accelerated children do not adjust easily or immediately. Children who have felt out of place with students of their own age may need time to develop social confidence.

Although the evidence on social success in accelerated settings is not as clear-cut as the evidence on academic success, it is still much more positive than negative. Acceleration broadens the friendship group. Many gifted children gravitate to older children, so making friends becomes easier.



The myth

Acceleration is for the wealthy.

The reality

Talent cuts across all demographics: ethnicity, gender, geography, and economic background. Acceleration is most beneficial to students who come from modest homes because parents who are wealthy are able to provide for their children extra opportunities that are challenging and accelerated. Acceleration levels the playing field of opportunity because any cost to the family or school is minimal.



“As an African-American

who has had considerable experience working with minority children and students from poverty backgrounds, I have always been a proponent of focusing on strengths rather than deficits in children. I support acceleration as an effective intervention for minority students as well as students from poverty backgrounds who are ready for such challenge.”

Professor Donna Y. Ford, Vanderbilt University

Who should be accelerated?

In this report, we have used synonymously terms such as bright, gifted, high ability, and highly able. All of these terms indicate that the students who would benefit from acceleration are exceptional in terms of academic ability and readiness.

All acceleration requires high academic ability. Standardized test scores and teacher observations provide evidence that a student has mastered the current curriculum and is ready for faster-paced and more complex coursework. But curriculum mastery is the first of many characteristics which should be taken into consideration in deciding if a child is ready for acceleration. Parents and educators will want to think about a child's motivation, social-emotional maturity, and interests when considering if acceleration is appropriate.

There are at least 18 different types of acceleration and parents and educators may find that while one type is a good match for their child, another is not. For example, students who skip grades need emotional maturity as well as academic ability in order to be successful. With single-subject acceleration, however, the more important criterion is academic ability, and social-emotional maturity is less of a concern.

How many students should be accelerated?

Today, no one has the answer to this question. We know that large numbers of students participate in Advanced Placement (AP) programs across the United States. But we have no way of knowing how many participate in other types of acceleration. And because acceleration has not been largely accepted in America's schools in the past several decades, we don't know how many could and should participate. In time, with a new acceptance of acceleration and more information available, there should be statistics to guide us in determining the prevalence.

Reason #9: Individual kids are less important than equal opportunity for all. Individual differences have been sacrificed in the political battles and culture wars about schooling.

Response: When educators confuse equity with sameness, they want all students to have the same curriculum at the same time. This is a violation of equal opportunity.

When it comes to acceleration, the majority of children do not need it. In fact, it would be a disadvantage for them both academically and socially. But for the children who need it, acceleration is their best chance for an appropriate, challenging education.

We know a lot about assessing ability and creating programming tailored to accommodate individual differences. The cornerstone of education is the flexibility to recognize the needs of the individual child. This flexibility is sometimes lost, however, when political and cultural pressures homogenize the learning needs of individuals and we pretend that there are no meaningful learning differences.

Closing our eyes to children's educational differences is neither democratic nor helpful. Every classroom teacher knows that children have distinct academic and social needs. Acceleration is a respectful recognition of individual differences as well as a means for addressing them.

Reason #10: It will upset other kids. Teachers sometimes fear that accelerating a child will diminish the self-esteem of other students.

Response: This is an important issue. Whatever we do in schools should be based on a respect and concern for all students. In fact, this level of sensitivity is one of the things that makes America special.

However, kids are used to seeing age-peers progress at different rates in many settings such as sports and music. In school, the idea of accelerating one or two children is not likely to negatively affect the class.

Reason #11: There will be gaps in the child's knowledge. Teachers are concerned that accelerated students will have gaps in their understanding of concepts.

Response: We accelerate students because they are well ahead of their age-peers in their academic development and knowledge. Gifted students are swift learners and any gaps quickly disappear.

Reason #12: Disasters are memorable. Unsuccessful cases of acceleration exist, but the numbers have been exaggerated as have the reasons for lack of success.

Response: Good news doesn't make the news. Bad news, on the other hand, sells papers and travels fast in communities. People will repeat stories or greatly exaggerate the situation about an unsuccessful acceleration, even without first-hand knowledge. Researchers acknowledge that acceleration is not perfect and some situations may be less than ideal, but such cases frequently stem from incomplete planning or negative attitudes.

We need to respect that even an intervention that is very positive is not fail-safe. A few poor decisions do not negate the importance of considering acceleration as an option. Excellent planning can minimize failures.

The bottom line: Acceleration works. It must be included in the conversation about how to educate a highly capable child. It is time we stopped deceiving ourselves and our children.



History of Acceleration in America

America was founded on the belief that every individual is born with the right to chase his or her dreams—what the Declaration of Independence called the universal rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Early in our country’s history, gifted younger students were often found in colleges and universities, pursuing the dream of higher education. They were prepared for higher education at home by tutors or were graduates of one-room schoolhouses. Before major corporations and large school systems became the norm in our nation, individualized education was standard practice.

The one-room schoolhouse let students learn at their own pace. Teachers knew their students well, and nothing held back a student’s progress. In time, as the population grew, and as America’s culture became more collective and standardized, one-room schoolhouses were replaced by schools that grouped students according to age instead of by ability and motivation.

This was not an educational decision. It was an organizational decision based upon a narrow understanding of child and adolescent development that supported the goal of keeping kids with their age-mates. This represented important progress in acknowledging and responding to group similarities. It also paralleled the American belief in the efficiency of the industrial model of organization.

What was lost was an appreciation for individual differences. Individual differences in educational needs are most pronounced at the extremes. Students lost the right to direct their own education based on how fast they were able to learn new and complex material.

Sometimes, advanced students still reached college early, but as enrichment programs for the gifted



Why This Issue Is Different

Historically, education has always been a complex, multi-faceted enterprise; therefore, the isolation of variables that work is a challenge. We have many educational practices in place in America today that do not have clear research evidence to support their implementation. They are implemented because of personal beliefs or political mandates.

But acceleration, as an intervention, is different. It is strongly supported by decades of research, yet the policy implications of that research are ignored by the wider educational community.

That’s why we feel compelled to make clear the following: (1) the research on acceleration is expansive and consistent; and (2) we are not aware of any other educational practice that is so well researched, yet so rarely implemented.



Types of Acceleration

1. Early Admission to Kindergarten
2. Early Admission to First Grade
3. Grade-Skipping
4. Continuous Progress
5. Self-Paced Instruction
6. Subject-Matter Acceleration/
Partial Acceleration
7. Combined Classes
8. Curriculum Compacting
9. Telescoping Curriculum
10. Mentoring
11. Extracurricular Programs
12. Correspondence Courses
13. Early Graduation
14. Concurrent/Dual Enrollment
15. Advanced Placement
16. Credit by Examination
17. Acceleration in College
18. Early Entrance into Middle School,
High School, or College

From “Types of Acceleration: Dimensions and Issues,” by W.T. Southern and E. D. Jones, *A Nation Deceived*, V. II, Chapter 1, pp. 5–12.

were established, advanced students were kept with their age mates. After-school enrichment replaced the possibility of moving one or two or three years ahead. The option of learning at the pace you were ready to learn—truly pursuing happiness—waned.

The War Years

In times of war, America traditionally has encouraged students to get through college faster. During these times of crisis, our leaders tend to recognize that ability and skill matter more than traditions and rules.

Just before World War II, The Ohio State University, the University of Illinois, and the University of Chicago all started programs to enroll young college students. During the Korean War, universities responded in a similar way. The Ford Foundation provided scholarship support for students under age 16 to enroll full-time at the university level before joining the military. After this effort ended, the 12 colleges participating in this program continued to accept young students, but they stopped actively recruiting them—or providing special financial aid.

The Ford Foundation, however, did something very special in the mid-1950s, which now assists more than one million American students every year. It established the College Board Advanced Placement Program (AP), which allows colleges and universities to offer credit and advanced standing to high-school students.

In 2004, an amazing 1.9 million AP exams were taken. Those students are the descendants of the fast-moving scholars of the one-room schoolhouses of previous generations.

Given the chance to advance, bright students still say yes.

America's Leaders Often Skipped Grades

Acceleration is part of the historical fabric of American education. Students who accelerate follow in the footsteps of America's leaders.

Martin Luther King, Jr., the leader of the Civil Rights Movement and the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, graduated from high school at 15.

Representing the arts, the great Southern writer Eudora Welty was accelerated, as was the poet T. S. Eliot. In medicine and physiology, Joshua Lederberg was the youngest recipient of the Nobel Laureate. In science, James Watson and Charles Townes skipped grades, and on the Supreme Court, we have Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who graduated at 16. All are prominent examples of acceleration that worked.

Acceleration has been working for a long time. W. E. B. DuBois grade-skipped and graduated from high school at 16. T.S. Eliot finished his undergraduate degree at Harvard in three years, his masters degree in one year, and received the Nobel Prize in Literature.

While the myth says that students who skip will rarely fit into society, the reality shows that those very students tend to lead American society to greater heights. Young people who achieve their individual dreams are often the ones who inspire us to understand what our national dreams really are.

When great leaders reach society early, everyone benefits. Early in our nation's history, we understood this concept, and it is still true now. Acceleration is not just an issue for one isolated gifted child, underchallenged in the classroom. It's about many thousands of children. And it's about the future of America.



"The root of excellence

—from the Greek—is not, properly, to surpass others—or to be greater than they, but, rather, to rise up naturally, to raise—as a crop is raised. The oldest root in the word—from the Greek—is that for HILL.

"Imagine that hill. It was not placed on the landscape to make the prairie feel flat. It was not raised to make the sky tremble. Its job is to be a hill. We do not know why, but we know a hill-less world would be unbearable."

Jorie Graham, from "A Call to Appreciate Intellectual Excellence," in *Vision*, v. 5 (1), p. 7.

Jorie Graham received the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for *The Dream of the Unified Field: New and Selected Poems*. Graham also is the recipient of many other awards and honors, including a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.



An Easy Yes: Starting School Early

Mom and Dad are the ones who usually notice first. “He’s reading the shampoo bottle,” one mother said of her three-year-old.

But then parents discover a more surprising truth.

In most school districts, a four-year-old who reads fluently, who is already counting, and who is socially mature and ready to leave his parents for the day, is typically prohibited from starting school.

That’s unfortunate. Research shows that parents are good judges of whether or not their children have advanced skills. They also know when their children are socially ready for school.

Parents also have a vested interest in figuring out what their children are capable of, so they can have the programs they need.

An efficient and effective way to let children with advanced skills reach their potential is to let them start school early. According to the most recent *State of the States Gifted and Talented Education Report (2001–2002)*, many states do not have explicit policies about early entrance to school. The lack of clear guidelines for schools is the first problem facing a four-year-old who reads, loves to learn, and wants to learn more. But even when there is no administrative barrier, many school districts frown on accepting children who are younger than five into school.

This reluctance causes problems. A child can start school bored and stay bored. She can remain for years in classes that are too easy. Usually, several years of school pass before a student is considered for acceleration, and by then, plenty of precious time has been lost.

The experts agree—a simple yes can save a child.



General Characteristics of Gifted Preschoolers

- Early verbal ability
- Strong mathematical skills
- Long attention span
- Early ability to reason abstractly
- Early interest in time



“Acceleration is one of the most

curious phenomena in the field of education. I can think of no other issue in which there is such a gulf between what research has revealed and what most practitioners believe. The research on acceleration is so uniformly positive, the benefits of appropriate acceleration so unequivocal, that it is difficult to see how an educator could oppose it.”

James H. Borland, Professor, Teachers College,
Columbia University
Planning and Implementing Programs for the Gifted,
1989 (p. 185).

The Boredom Factor

Parents are usually the first to suspect that their child is not challenged in school. A dad may notice that when he provides books or puzzles which challenge his child, the child seems happier.

The scientific evidence supporting these parental observations is overwhelming. Students who are carefully selected for early entrance to school generally perform very well, both academically and socially.

The reasons for this are clear. By starting school early, an underchallenged child doesn't learn what it's like to be bored. Instead of finding that school is easy and that he can succeed without having to work, a child who is placed in the right classroom, right from the start will learn that striving to improve is a wonderful part of learning.

We all know very bright children who grew up to become unmotivated adults. School was too easy, and the lazy way became the accustomed way. By setting challenges early, we can ensure that children who can't wait to read become adolescents who can't wait to learn.

Avoiding Awkward Gaps

With an early acceleration during the primary grades, potential knowledge and skill gaps are minimized—after only a few weeks. Grade-skipping does not lead to long-term gaps in knowledge.

Leaving Friends and Making Friends

We sometimes worry that children who skip grades have to leave friends behind. By starting school early, and moving through school with the same class, bright students don't need to leave familiar classmates. They are appropriately placed from their first day of school.

And there's the other side to the story. Many gifted students don't find friends among age-peers. They tend to be more emotionally and socially mature than their age-mates. Their ideas of friendship are different. Bright students may be looking for a true

friend to share thoughts and feelings, at an age when most kids see a friend as someone to play with.

Parents of bright students often notice that their children seem to gravitate naturally to neighborhood children of various ages with similar academic or intellectual interests. The games they enjoy and the books they read are more like those of older children. And the older children happily accept them.

So for gifted students, moving up a grade may not be a matter of leaving friends behind but of moving to a place where friends are waiting for them.

The Social Side of School

Researchers have looked into the question many parents ask themselves, with sweaty palms: What will happen to my child's social life if the other students in class are older?

The answer is that almost all bright students who are screened carefully and allowed to enter school early are as socially well-adjusted as their older classmates. In short, younger students do make friends. In fact, they are happier with older students who share their interests than they are with age-peers. The other side of that statistic may explain some of the scare stories. Children who are not *specifically* chosen to start school early, but somehow end up being younger—such as kids with a summer birthday—do tend to show more signs of immaturity than older classmates.

That's because age is only one indicator of readiness. But age plus advanced skills and maturity is a different equation.

For the child who is placed ahead because he is *already* ahead, there are rarely negative social consequences.

Holding Scissors

Young children may have advanced academic skills but often still have the physical coordination of a child their age. This means writing, cutting, and drawing can provide special challenges.

Fatigue is another concern. A four-year-old tires faster than a six-year-old.

Interestingly, though, despite concerns about motor skills and stamina, research shows that because of their more advanced cognitive development, early entrants to kindergarten and first grade perform as well as or better than their older classmates in all areas.

One critical aspect of the decision to accelerate is the attitude of the adults involved. When these adults make a well-informed decision and are committed to students' successes, bright students who start early succeed.

If we can say yes in the beginning, we will make the road to achievement much smoother. The message to our children will be that they are entering a world that will respond to readiness.

Is Early Entrance Always a Good Thing?

The toughest part of deciding to start school early is the timing of the decision. It's so early in the game that it's hard to know how a child's personality will mesh with school or classmate relationships.

The other problem is that early entrance is a decision that is difficult to reverse. Having a child repeat kindergarten or first grade, after deciding that he was advanced, is not something most educators, students, or parents desire.

Fear of a wrong decision sometimes prevents a right decision. Most experts agree that with careful assessment and guidance tools like the *Iowa Acceleration Scale*, parents and educators can make a good decision about the best time to start school so that children are in a challenging environment and get the most out of their education.

*See the Iowa Acceleration Scale sidebar, page 23.



Skipping Grades in Elementary School

Sometimes a child will be so bored that he'll march himself into the principal's office and beg to be skipped. In other cases, a teacher will notice that a child is far ahead of his peers, or parents will be troubled by the gnawing sense that school is just too easy for their child.

"I'm bored" can begin to sound like a mantra, constantly buzzing in a parent's ears.

While many schools offer fine enrichment programs, enrichment is not sufficient for some advanced students. An hour or two of challenge is not much relief for a severely underchallenged child. These students really do need a more suitable solution—usually a form of acceleration.

"No other arrangement for gifted children works as well as acceleration," says Professor James Kulik, an expert on the subject at the University of Michigan.

For more than twenty-five years, Kulik has studied how gifted children fare in schools. He knows teachers are wary of acceleration. Nevertheless, Kulik's research has made him confident that the evidence in favor of acceleration is overwhelming.

Other leaders in educational research loudly agree. To experts who look at hard numbers all day long, the case for grade-skipping seems obvious.

What Kulik notices most is that acceleration tends to have long-term positive effects. Students who are skipped are more likely to earn advanced degrees, and Kulik believes that skipping a grade is what helps students achieve.

"The overall message from these studies is unequivocal," Kulik says. "Acceleration makes a huge difference in the academic achievement of bright students."



Jenny's Letter to her teacher

In third grade, Jenny wrote this letter to her teacher, thereby initiating discussion of acceleration. The spelling is Jenny's.

Dear Mrs. S.

I find that the work I'm being given is very discouraging because its much to easy. Most of it I know so I do the work catch on and I have to wait for the others to catch on. the grade I'd like to go to best would be college but since I can't could I have something more challenging. Say for Instance I could go to any Grade I want as long as long as its in Lincoln Elementary or Lincoln Middle School. I like to trie 5th Grade I dout it but it would be nice to go ther and see what its like. I don't care if I leave Lincoln Elementary Cause I really don't have any thing really Inporntant or true friends that I'd miss

Sincerely, Jenny

Reprinted from: *The Iowa Acceleration Scale*, 2nd ed., p. 16



“I’d certainly say that we’re not

growing up too fast because I think we’re less afraid to show the children inside of us. When you go to high school that’s forcing you to grow fast because everyone tries to act older than they are. Here [at the University of Washington Early Entrance Program] you don’t need to. Here you’re not afraid to act a little bit younger sometimes, which is really nice.”

University of Washington Early Entrance Program
Student

From: “Different Strokes” by K.D. Noble, T. Arndt, T. Nicholson, T. Sletten, and A. Zamora. In *The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, Winter 1998/1999.

Does the Child Want a Challenge?

While acceleration may be a good move academically, it still may not be an easy move. Leaving a familiar place for uncharted territory is never an easy decision.

Motivation is an important factor. If a child is academically far ahead but does not want to skip, he probably shouldn’t skip. It’s the students who are craving a challenge and are thirsting to run ahead who need acceleration.

If a child begs a parent, a teacher, or a principal for challenging work, that’s a strong signal that acceleration may be the right path.

Ambition Starts Early

When an eight-year-old skips a grade, there may be a surprise beneficiary—that same child, at age twenty-two. Studies have shown that students who are accelerated tend to aspire to careers requiring an education beyond a bachelor’s degree at higher rates than students who haven’t been accelerated.

What kind of difference have researchers found?

In 1974, 58% of accelerated students wanted a master’s degree, compared to 24% of everyone else. By 1983, the gap had narrowed, as the necessity of a college education became an economic fact of life. Still, 88% of accelerated students wanted a master’s degree or higher, compared to 73% of other students.

This finding has been known for a long time. Children who are accelerated become ambitious adults.

Academic Performance Progresses

Students who are accelerated do extremely well academically after they skip. On achievement tests, bright accelerated students perform just as well as bright, older non-accelerated students.

So tests show that kids who skip match their new classmates, question for question. But the real payoff comes when comparing bright students who skip grades and bright students who don’t.

When a grade-skip is done correctly, the accelerated student will still be among the very best students in the new, advanced grade. That's an impressive finding because younger students are at a natural disadvantage.

Math and English performance is usually related to age. Even with the natural limits of being younger, accelerated students still score almost one full grade ahead.

Acceleration is a gift of time. For the child, skipping one year means one-twelfth of his or her time in school has not been wasted. If a child skips two years, that's a full one-sixth of his or her educational career that is spent learning rather than marking time. See Interview with Alexis Hanson, accelerated student, page 45.

Alternatives to Acceleration Are Weaker

Many schools address the learning and social-emotional needs of gifted students in a variety of ways. Some of the better known approaches include ability grouping, enrichment activities, pull-out resource rooms, classroom differentiation, independent projects, and cooperative learning. Schools also look to special-topic projects, field trips, chess, and competitions to enhance the learning opportunities for students. All of these approaches have their place and their advocates.

Some of the needs of high-ability kids can be met by these enrichment-type supplementary provisions. We respect that these are important and beneficial activities that contribute to the education of a wide range of students. Anything that helps students is a plus, and in our experience, facilitators of these activities do an excellent job of maximizing the effectiveness of enrichment approaches. We support these approaches as options.

However, for high ability students none of these approaches has produced the compelling research evidence earned by accelerative options. Even ability grouping, which has considerable research support, is shown to be effective for high ability kids only when the curriculum is accelerated.



“Adult surveys of gifted

individuals reveal that they do not regret their acceleration. Rather, they regret not having accelerated more.”

From Lubinski, D., Webb, R.M., Morelock, M. J., Benbow, C. P. (2001), “Top 1 in 10,000: A 10-year follow-up of the profoundly gifted,” in *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 718–729.



By the numbers

Every year, 200,000 seventh-grade and eighth-grade students take the SAT or ACT college entrance exams. The majority score as well as high school seniors, who are usually four or five years older.

But the academically stronger members of that pool of 200,000 young test-takers (middle-school students)—those who score at or above the average score for high school seniors—are especially gifted. Those students can absorb a whole year's worth of high school in three weeks, researchers say.

In fact, a few of the very highest scorers on the SAT, as middle-school students, can actually absorb a year's worth of high school in just a week and a half.

Is enrichment enough? Because enrichment keeps students with their age-peers, teachers don't worry about it harming children socially or emotionally. However, when enrichment for gifted students does not include a faster pace and higher level of work, it is simply not effective as an intervention.

Just putting gifted kids together—but not accelerating the curriculum—has minimal academic benefit. The key component is the accelerated curriculum.

Sometimes talented students are taught in a separate class, but they're not accelerated. Researchers investigating the effects of this found something stunning. If the talented students were given the same curriculum as the regular class, the effect on their academic performance was zero.

There was absolutely no academic benefit to that specially-grouped math class that was not doing advanced math. So a room full of bright students, without more challenging material, does absolutely nothing academically.

If the special group had a differentiated curriculum, there was some academic benefit, but not as much as acceleration.

Clearly, the best way to maximize the academic performance of bright students is to maximize the pace and level of the curriculum.

Social Concerns

Most parents worry less about academic effects than about friends for their children. But the image of the brilliant loner who has no one to talk to is not what researchers have found.

Studies show that accelerated students participate in school activities and view themselves positively.

Understanding the interaction between self-esteem and acceleration is complex. The research is not clear on whether or not enhanced self-esteem leads to higher achievement, or higher achievement leads to enhanced self-esteem.

When bright children learn in a class of students who are not as bright as they are, their academic self-esteem can get a bit inflated. When they are accelerated to be with students who know as much as they do, they develop a more realistic self-perception and their self-esteem may dip a little for a short time. This is sometimes called the Little-Fish-Big-Pond effect.

Usually, that change in academic self-esteem doesn't last very long and confidence returns quickly. An added bonus is that accelerated students' self-esteem receives quite a boost as they find friends and social acceptance in the new class.



Deciding to Skip: *The Iowa Acceleration Scale*

Deciding whether or not to skip a grade is always a complex decision. However, there are proven systems to help educators make that choice. One method, *The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)*, is used by schools in all 50 states as well as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

The *IAS* has ten sections, and it takes all kinds of factors into account—like the age of the child, the offerings of the school, and whether a sibling will be in the same grade. The ten-part scale starts with general school and family information, moves to IQ, sibling information, and the student's personal feelings about acceleration. Then school history and various ability, aptitude, and achievement tests are included. Finally, a cumulative score from all of these factors is calculated.

The *IAS* can be a tremendously helpful guide to parents, teachers, and principals who are trying to weigh all the factors in a decision to accelerate. The *IAS* comes with a detailed manual that explains all ten sections, and it includes case studies and samples of completed forms. The *IAS* also comes with a summary of the relevant research for educators and parents who would like to read more about how to decide whether to accelerate.

The clear format of the *Iowa Acceleration Scale* lets schools collect all the relevant data in a structured way. The *IAS* is easily affordable for all districts.

The Iowa Acceleration Scale and the *IAS Manual, 2nd edition*, are available from Great Potential Press, or www.giftedbooks.com



The Talent Search Revolution

Before one man dreamed up the talent search, bright children were confined to their geographic location. If there was a local teacher around who could help them, great. If not, they were stuck.

Professor Julian Stanley, of Johns Hopkins University, has studied testing and mathematically precocious students for over 60 years. One day, he met a 12-year-old who changed his life.

“I found a junior high student, a 12-year-old helping graduate students with Fortran,” Stanley remembers. “By January 1969, he was 13 and in the 8th grade. I had him take the SATs cold, and he did extremely well.”

“I tried so hard to find a way to help him. I went to several high-level high schools and asked them to let him take Advanced Placement (AP) courses. They refused.”

That boy was stuck with whatever local schools would agree to do. And that left one option—college.

“So at age 13, he started at Johns Hopkins University. Initially he took physics, computer science, and calculus, and did very well. By age 17, he had a BA and MA from Hopkins,” Stanley says.

“I was cautious. I thought maybe he was the only such kid,” he says. “But then I had another mother who called me, and that got me started.”

In 1971, The Spencer Foundation gave Stanley a grant for \$266,100 to help mathematically talented kids. That was the first step to the big dream that now helps thousands.



What's a Talent Search?

A talent search is the best-kept secret in gifted education. So if you have no idea what it is, you're not alone.

Every year, students from grades two through nine take exams created to identify advanced academic ability. Sometimes it's the SAT, sometimes it's the ACT, and sometimes it's a special test developed to assess and recognize ability in a specific subject.

For many kids, those are the only hours of the year in which they are truly challenged.

As a result of these talent searches, many academically advanced students enter summer enrichment programs on university campuses or other special programs designed to offer them challenge and companionship.

So, why haven't you heard of a talent search before?

Because, until now, no one told you. Information is power. If you know a child who can benefit from a talent search, contact one of the centers listed in Appendix F.



Inside the Talent Search Experience

Katie McQuaid grew up in Guthrie Center, Iowa, and participated in a talent search in elementary school. The search let her find out about summer programs that this recent college graduate still remembers vividly.

“It was fun to go to classes and meet other kids who liked to learn,” she says. “In the summer program, it was okay to love to learn. I remember reading *Beowulf* as a 6th grader . . . they had excerpts for us. In the summer, I could learn for learning’s sake and not just for a grade.”

The First Talent Search

Like many big dreams, this one started small.

“I worked with several bright boys and girls in 1971,” Stanley says, “but I knew there were many more talented kids out there. We tried a variety of ways to discover talented students—through the newspaper and by word of mouth. We were successful but we knew what we were seeing was only the tip of the iceberg.”

That convinced Stanley that he needed to search. Really search.

“We started the talent search in 1972 for 450 bright boys and girls in the Baltimore area. They needed help and they weren’t finding it in school.”

Now, Stanley turned to his life’s work—helping these bright kids.

“That summer, we started a fast-paced math class because *we decided we didn’t find these kids just to admire them, but instead to help them.*”

From a Dozen to 200,000

It may have started with one student and then a dozen, but soon, the talent search involved thousands.

“By 1979, we had 2000 students,” Stanley remembers. “To administer the program, we created The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY).”

“Today, CTY and its spin-offs at Duke University, Northwestern University, and the University of Denver serve between 20,000 to 25,000 students in summer programs, and 200,000 7th and 8th graders take the SAT every year in the talent search.”

Imagine every five years, a total of one million highly capable junior-high school students actually take a college-entrance exam, at least four years before the usual age; a large percentage perform astonishingly well. And they don’t take the test just to test. Most importantly, testing with a talent search opens the door to real opportunities for these students. Finally, many of them earn a chance to take courses that offer real challenges, and they also have the occasion to meet peers who are as hungry as they are to learn.



How do kids benefit from a talent search?

Finally—a real test of ability

The first thing is to learn how able they really “are—how precocious they might be. Normally at school, they’re at the top, and they may be better than that,” says Professor Julian C. Stanley. “Some are much more able than they realize, and some are less able. All of the entrants in these talent searches are already at least in the top 5% academically; that is, the top 1 in 20 of their age-mates.”

Opportunities for participants

Talent searches are closely aligned with acceleration. Students who participate in talent searches are eligible to attend special accelerative programs offered by talent search centers during summers and throughout the academic year.

Meet new friends who love learning

A summer program is a great chance to meet other bright kids who are fascinated by learning. These are their true intellectual peers. Many participants find their closest friends in summer courses. Courses in these programs combine the best of both worlds: accelerated content and bright age-peers.

Get a taste of college

Living on a college campus and taking college courses can give a kid a sense of what’s ahead. It’s not only a challenge, but also promotes vision and preparation for the future.

How to participate in a talent search

A number of university-based centers administer academic talent searches for students in grades 2–9. Talent searches have specific guidelines for qualifying for their testing. For specific information, see Appendix F.



Tough Choices: High School Challenges

American high schools are becoming hiding places for a lot of untapped academic talent.

Despite all those popular movies that show one lonely scholar in a huge gray suburban high school, researchers are finding surprisingly large numbers of students who can steamroll through high school in record time.

Talent searches give us insight into the numbers of students who are ready for high school classes while they are still in middle school or junior high.

Clearly, these students require our attention. Their performance, year after year, proves that we need to find challenges for them.

As these junior high school students enter high school, we need to be ready for them.

Cool and Uncool

Some gifted students have a difficult choice to make. Should they excel academically even if this might mean social rejection? Or should they minimize their abilities to gain peer acceptance? Amazingly, researchers have found that the pressure to dumb down can start in the early years of elementary school. By middle school, some gifted students have gone underground.

But high school is where attitude really begins to matter. People and activities are labeled “cool” or “uncool.” What’s cool to most students is often irrelevant or boring to the academically advanced student.

It’s a lonely discovery, and it comes at a particularly volatile time—as identity and self-esteem change with the hour.

Typical teenagers are thinking about parties, friends, and love relationships. But studies show that academi-

cally gifted students are thinking about these issues and something else, too. They’re thinking about thinking.

They want to be challenged—academically. They love learning and they love many subjects. And they require a very different curriculum, a curriculum planned for the motivated and highly able student.

These gifted students come in with a different attitude, and that attitude must be honored with a challenging curriculum. If that different curriculum is not provided, teenage ambition can easily turn into boredom and a lifetime of missed opportunities.

War, Peace, and Unemployment

In national crises, accelerating gifted high school students suddenly matters to the public. In the Depression, the practice was frowned upon because no one wanted more people on the street looking for work. A student in high school, at least, was probably not searching for full-time work.

In times of war, like in the 1940s, high school students were accelerated in official programs. The nation desperately needed more skilled workers and teachers. High schools—and their most gifted students—responded to that call.

As a nation, we need to understand education is about our children. We can’t wait for national emergencies to realize that matching people with appropriate opportunities is the best way to create a path to excellence. We must find options for students who are able to blaze through a standard high school curriculum, and we must publicize these options.

Excellence is education’s core—not its response to crisis.



All About Advanced Placement

Did you know that an astounding 1.9 million Advanced Placement (AP) exams were taken by over a million students in 2004? That means more than one million students enrolled in college-level classes while still in high school. And that makes AP, originally dreamed up by the Ford Foundation in the mid-1950s, the largest-scale acceleration program in the country.

The AP revolution gives students in small towns and large cities in every area of the country a taste of college-level learning. The courses are challenging, and the reward for mastering the material and doing well on the exam is tangible—real college credit.

AP exams are available in 34 subject areas, including all sciences, several foreign languages, literature, math, art, and music. Sixty percent of high schools currently offer at least one AP course.

In fact, more than one out of three college-bound seniors has taken an AP course. The reasons for the stampede into AP classrooms are clear.

Earning college credit hours while in high school lets students avoid tedious prerequisites or large introductory courses, and can help students reach more interesting and more advanced classes earlier.

That's just the beginning of AP benefits. By taking several AP courses and AP exams, a student can finish college early—and save a significant amount of time and money.



What is Advanced Placement (AP)?

Advanced Placement courses are first-year college courses that are offered in high schools. The national AP exams offer students the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school.



Did you know that:

- College students who have not taken an AP class have a 33% chance of completing a Bachelor's Degree;
- College students who have completed one AP course have a 59% chance of completing a Bachelor's Degree; and
- College students who have completed two or more AP courses increase to 76% their chances of attaining a Bachelor's degree.

See Answers in the Tool Box: *Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment* at <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Toolbox/toolbox.html>

AP Courses Change Attitudes

Over one million students is a social movement. And movements of that size can easily change a nation.

Because the number of students taking AP courses and exams has risen so dramatically, researchers have been interested to see what happens to these AP alumni. The answer practically popped out of the data.

AP kids get ambitious.

Out of all high school graduates, 43% had earned master's degrees by age 33. But in the pool of students who are also AP alumni, the number skyrocketed to 76%.

Imagine—more than three out of four students who walk into an AP classroom walk across the stage with a master's degree within 15 years.

It also introduces another question. If other acceleration programs were more widely available, from first grade through high school, would our country's educational achievements have a different look?

AP Redefines Acceleration

The phenomenal success of the AP program destroys the old myth that acceleration is for the lone, socially inept, and brilliant student. The sheer size of the AP program shows that annually over one million students can benefit from this opportunity.

AP is an equalizer. It certifies that a student knows a defined amount of meaningful material designed to be at a college level. Even if that student is in the poorest or smallest high school in the state, AP exams and courses signify quality. This is the same quality education found in the wealthiest or largest high school in the state.

Programs like AP level the playing field, giving everyone an equal chance to pursue the opportunities of American education.

The College Board, the organization behind AP, is trying to get the course work into more schools with high minority populations or large numbers of low-income students. It's also making an effort to get more rural schools on board. One of the major advantages of the AP program is that its expansion into more high schools increases its accessibility to students of all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

The goal is to have 100% of American high schools participating.

Social Benefits of AP Programs

The large and growing size of the AP program highlights a major benefit—its location. Students who want to stay in high school get to stay there. They get to stay with their friends, their peer group, and their parents for another year or two.

Many students are academically advanced but still want to enjoy football games, cheerleading practice, home-cooked meals, and the prom.

AP lets minds travel, while hearts stay close to home.

AP Courses—Not Always Enough

Though AP courses are often the highlight of high school for many academically advanced students, AP offerings alone may not be enough. Taking other college courses early, and even entering college a year or two ahead of schedule may be what a student truly needs.

While AP is a great solution, it's only one solution.



The Effects of the AP Program

La'Chaira Jackson
Des Moines, Iowa

La'Chaira took 6 AP classes in high school.

“After taking AP courses, I felt like I was a whole lot more prepared for the college workload. I just learned how to work in those classes. The work was always challenging in AP. It also put me ahead—I started The University of Iowa with 15 credits.”



Getting to College Early

Sometimes the best place for an advanced high school student is a university. Although it might sound like a radical solution, it's been going on in this country since the early days of our nation.

In fact, throughout American history, highly capable students have started college ahead of time. The products of the one-room schoolhouse often ended up at Harvard and Yale before the age of eighteen.

Despite the long history of the practice, early entrance to college is still controversial. At the same time, researchers say it is becoming more common.

The reason for early entrance to college is the same as it always was—mastery of the high school curriculum—and, sometimes, boredom with the local high school environment. A highly capable student may be thirsting for academic challenges not available.

Such a student may have been waiting years for a challenging curriculum, and by high school it simply may be time to move forward.

It's Not Just for Geniuses

Early entrants who are profiled by the media tend to be the rare students who start college at remarkably young ages. However, there is a tremendous variety in the age, ability, emotional maturity, and family background of early entrants. Many early entrants are only a year or two younger than other freshmen.

“There's been too much attention to the few kids who are in college at 10,” says Professor Julian Stanley of Johns Hopkins University, who has worked with thousands of students who enter college early, mostly in the age range of 15–17.

It doesn't always seem like such an extreme move to the early entrants themselves. Some students, especially those who have been accelerated by whole grade or by subject, have already spent their final year in high school in the same classroom with college-bound seniors. These students come to college with the same knowledge as regular-aged college-bound freshmen.

Other early entrants to college have been to college before. They have lived away from home as part of summer college programs and already have experience taking college courses with older students. They may have spent significant time on local community college campuses, and they're often more familiar with a college environment than other first-year students.

These early forays into college life—summer courses or community college classes—may be enough for some academically advanced high school students. For others, it is a taste of something they cannot resist. Those students decide that instead of a course here or there, they would like to enroll in college full-time.

But not every early entrant has had the opportunity to get a taste of college. Some enter college out of frustration with their options, or more accurately, the lack of options. They have very different needs from the early entrants who have had years of summer school and community college experiences.

Choices for Early Entrants

Early entrants' experiences can vary. They can live in a dorm or live at home and commute to college. They can choose a highly selective college, or a local community college with an open-door admissions policy.

Students can even enroll in a college with special programs for early entrants. These programs offer ad-

ditional support and a group of peers going through a similar experience. Sometimes, special dorm arrangements and scholarships are available.

The Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science (TAMS) at the University of North Texas enrolls 200 tenth-graders each year. TAMS grants high-school diplomas to students while they simultaneously complete their last two years of high school and the first two years of college.

The University of Washington has a long and successful history of early-entrance programs with a special Transition School to smooth the passage from school to college. The Bard High School Early College program is another successful program and is free to New York City residents.

Mary Baldwin College sponsors the early entrance Program for the Exceptionally Gifted (PEG), and the State University of West Georgia sponsors the Advanced Academy of Georgia.

Early entrants should take a careful look around at their choices. They may even be able to stay in high school with their friends and attend a local college at the same time. In fact, it's possible to finish high school and college simultaneously, earning two diplomas at once.

As options like summer school and whole-grade acceleration become more common, it's likely that more students will enter college earlier. These students will simply exhaust what high schools have to offer a little faster than their peers.

It's possible, too, that American high schools will offer more challenges in the near future. As the Advanced Placement (AP) program expands, and as other accelerated options become more available (e.g., highly selective state-supported high schools), more students may find appropriate challenges in high school.

A listing of selected early-entrance programs is found in Appendix F.

Social Concerns

It would be unrealistic to expect that every early entrant would experience a problem-free transition from high school to college. Even regular-age students often have academic and social difficulties that cause problems in college adjustment.

The spotlight shines a little harsher on younger students. Despite some difficulties with being younger, such as not being of legal driving age until a year or two later than classmates, the vast majority of early entrants to college are happy with their experiences.

Most of the research on early enrollment shows positive outcomes, but not every early entrant adjusts well.

So far, the research has not yet painted the clear, compelling picture of success that some parents feel they need in order to be comfortable with an early-entrance decision. Dr. Julian Stanley sees it as an individual portrait versus a group picture.

"There is evidence that some individual students who entered college at younger-than-typical ages have had difficulty adjusting," Stanley says. "There's no way to know for sure what would have happened to these kids if they had started college later."

"Clearly, the research on groups of early entrants, whether they were regularly admitted college students or participants in an early college program, strongly suggests that many of them were highly successful academically without experiencing social or emotional difficulties," says Stanley.

Getting a Head Start

Everyone can agree that entering college earlier can result in fewer total years spent in school. This has its advantages.

"I am excited that I do have an extra year to figure out what's actually going on when I graduate," says Alexis Hanson of Hudson, Iowa, who entered college early. "Maybe I'll take a year off between college and graduate school, and I feel like I don't have to get into it right away."

Some professions, like medicine, require a time investment of eight years or more after the undergraduate degree. By accelerating, early entrants to college can enter professional life earlier. For some people, that extra time can make balancing family and job obligations a little easier.

Getting a head start can also mean an opportunity to explore personal interests. Many accelerated students who finish college at twenty can work abroad, take a temporary job outside their usual field, have

time to play, and still be on track with their careers. Some accelerated students, interviewed years later, say their favorite part of the experience was that extra time away from the traditional path.

While the public perception is that early entrants lose out on the special time of high school, the reality is that they may gain a slice of time just for their personal and professional exploration. That, former early entrants say, may be the best education.



An Early College Entrant Speaks

James Edel grew up in Chicago, Illinois, and is the first student from his high school to graduate a year ahead of time and enter college. He is enrolled in the National Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering (NAASE), the early-entrance program at The University of Iowa, where he's an English and philosophy major.

Why did you decide to leave high school early?

I had senioritis when I was a sophomore. If I had stayed for senior year, I wouldn't have done anything. I would have stagnated. School was so easy, and we never got to choose our classes. I was just looking to get out of high school in all kinds of ways.

How did you find out about NAASE?

So oddly. I got one of the pamphlets in the mail, and I was the only person in my high school who got it.

How did people at your high school react?

When I first approached my counselor about this, the first thing she said was, "Well, you know you're not going to graduate." No one had ever left our school early to go to college because no one had heard of it.

My leaving early definitely opened doors and a lot of kids said they would have wanted to do it, too. Now, I know of kids who did skip.

When I told people I was leaving, I got a lot of strange looks. It wasn't that I was in a rush to grow up, but I ended up growing up a lot sooner.

Was your age a problem in college?

For the most part, it's a novelty. People find it interesting. And it's hard to explain, so I don't even try. It confused a lot of people that I was at The University of Iowa for a year and then went back to graduate high school.

After I was no longer 17, age didn't matter at all. And I like college a whole lot.



Public Policy: The Legislation of Aspirations

America is obsessed with basic skills. Johnny can't read, we're told. Johnny can't write, either.

Politicians hold up low test scores and shout that equality demands action. In recent years, a slew of political initiatives have forced teachers to focus on testing.

While testing is controversial, the idea that all children deserve an appropriate education leading to skills necessary to function effectively in society is not controversial; it simply makes sense.

Equality depends on academic access for all. And America's teachers believe passionately in the idea of equity and the dream of social justice. Many teachers, in fact, come to the classroom with the hope of giving disadvantaged children a chance through education.

What's the problem with that?

"All kids deserve to learn something new every day—including the gifted," says Dr. Camilla Benbow, Dean of Vanderbilt University's College of Education. "We can't forget excellence in our effort to achieve equity."

With all the politicians arguing about basic skills, any message about raising the ceiling of human potential is drowned out.



The *Genius Denied* Website

(<http://www.geniusdenied.com>) reports that the number of American K–12 students is 47,846,000, and the percent of gifted is approximately 5% or 2,393,000 students.



“In the case of educational acceleration, fortunately it may be that what has to be changed is not written policy, but merely the attitudes of policy makers.”

James Gallagher,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill;
Expert on Policy Issues in Gifted Education

Law and Attitude

While disabled students’ rights to an appropriate education are protected by laws, there is little legal protection for the gifted. In most states, there are no laws mandating appropriate educational interventions for children who sit, underchallenged, in classrooms year after year.

Law and public policy have played an inconsequential role in acceleration. The future of acceleration is dependent on a change in attitude prior to any changes in policies or law.

Perry Zirkel of Lehigh University, a lawyer who has written widely about legal issues for the gifted, points out that 50 years after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, our country still has not achieved equality in the classroom. Brown began the journey to legally end grouping by skin color. Today, altering attitudes about acceleration is a journey to end grouping by birth date.

America’s schools do change, but change does not always come quickly.

Like all efforts to realize America’s ideals of equality, the first struggle is changing attitudes. The fight to include acceleration in the conversation about America’s brightest children will begin with a change in attitude and end with a change in policy.

The Popular Media

While journals of educational research are filled with studies showing the positive benefits of acceleration, the popular news media have not yet brought that message to the public.

Educational researchers know the facts, but parents trying to decide whether to let their child skip a grade usually don’t know about the research.

Many of America’s social movements were put on the fast track by committed journalists. Part of the hope for America’s brightest students lies with the media. If journalists take the time to understand this critical story, our entire nation can benefit.

Public policy is influenced by the media. When it comes to gifted children, accurate media coverage of this issue can help change public perception, and then change the attitudes of America’s lawmakers.

Ways to Change Public Opinion

The major pieces missing in the public story of acceleration are information and attitude. James Gallagher, a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has these ideas on ways to change public policy:

- Publicize interviews with adults who have been accelerated;
- Develop model legislation on early entrance to school;
- Form alliances with lawmakers to protect interests of gifted children.

Parents, educators, and concerned citizens can contact their local media and their political representatives to make sure gifted children finally get public attention.

Hope for the Future

The real hope lies with the public. As parents, teachers, and principals become acquainted with the truth about acceleration, they can influence elected officials to advocate for gifted students.

While our nation's survival certainly depends on basic skills for all Americans, our nation's progress depends on how we respond to excellence.

Concerned citizens must act. Our country cannot afford to lose its students to boredom or years of inappropriate curriculum. We must educate ourselves, educate our leaders, and change educational policy.

**NAASE is the National Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering, an early-entrance-to-university program at The University of Iowa.*

Entering College Early

In fourth grade, Catherine Hirsch participated in a talent search. This put her on several mailing lists, she says. One of those mailings was a brochure from The University of Iowa's NAASE program. And so, because of a test in 4th grade, Hirsch ended up an early entrant to college. She was the first such student in her high school.

Were there other students who left a year early in your high school?

As far as I know, no one had skipped an entire year until I did.

Are you happy with your choice?

Yes, definitely. Overall, it's been a very positive experience. I wouldn't have gotten as much out of my last year of high school as I did from my first year of college.

I decided to leave because NAASE* seemed like an opportunity I couldn't turn down. I had always been excited about college. I remember in middle school thinking, I'm not excited about high school, but I really want to go to college. I was always really excited about it.

Do you think you missed out on anything?

No, not at all. I was able to come back for big events like homecoming and graduation, and I didn't miss the daily stuff.

What did you worry about, coming in a year early?

I thought everyone would notice, but after the first few months, age was not an issue. Unless I chose to tell people, no one knew.

The only time it really mattered was when I was still 17. I was limited in some respects as to where I could go because of my age. Once, in a political science class during an election year, everyone discussed who they were going to vote for, and I was 17 and couldn't vote. But that was the only classroom situation where it came up.



Money Talks: The Financial Side of Acceleration

The headlines get uglier every year. The cost of college tuition regularly outpaces the annual rate of inflation; it often gallops ahead at two, three, or four times the rate of wages.

In 2003–04, according to The College Board, a year of college at a private institution averaged \$19,710, representing a 6% increase. At public institutions, the average annual tab was \$4,694 representing a 14.1% increase. That’s a lot more than the standard 3–4% growth in wages.

As tuition rises, educators note with dismay that fewer and fewer students from lower-income families make it to college. Students from the middle class are increasingly burdened with hefty loans, and parents are often forced to take out second mortgages to meet the cost of tuition.

What if there was a way to shave from 12% to 25% off the cost?

Students who graduate a semester early save one-eighth of their costs; a year early brings that to one-fourth. Similarly, students who use Advanced Placement credit to reduce the number of credit hours they pay for in college can save their families or themselves money and simultaneously experience rigorous and meaningful courses.

Advancing through college at a faster pace is not for everyone. But for the student who learns faster, and at a higher level, an accelerated program can have financial as well as academic benefits.

Cost to School Districts

Grade-skipping is economical. It means a new desk, at most, or having a desk from second grade moved to the third grade. There is no need to hire new teachers or find new tutors.

There is a cost issue for the taxpayer. Having some kids move through school faster saves taxpayers money.

“When it comes to acceleration, the major cost is attitude,” explains Dr. Nicholas Colangelo of The University of Iowa.

Teachers may have to spend time adjusting their attitudes about accelerating students, and principals may have to educate themselves about current research. But for those signing the checks, there will be pleasant surprises.

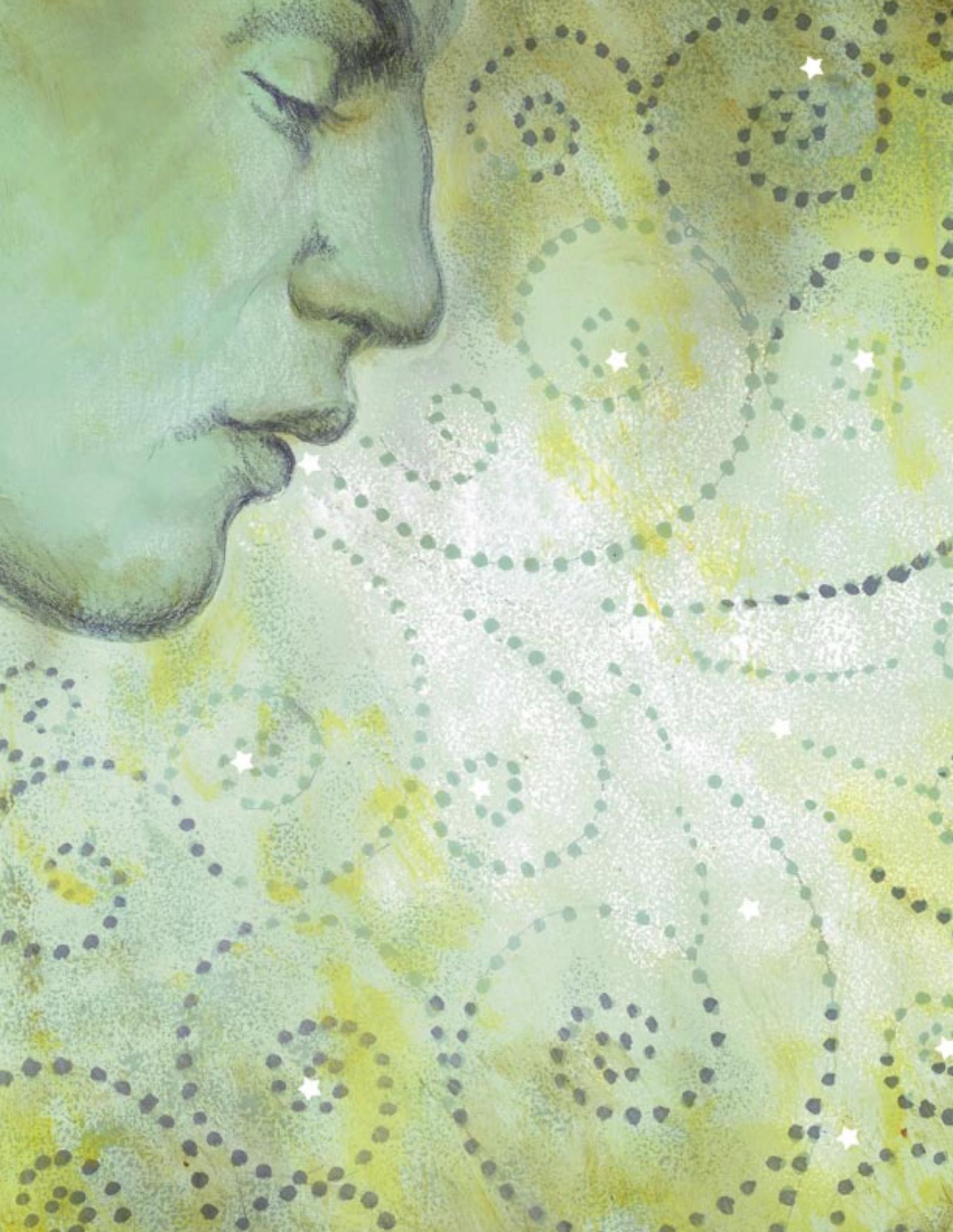
Cost to Parents

For parents, acceleration is economical. Instead of having to find and sometimes pay for tutors, special camps, and other enrichment programs, merely moving the child to a more appropriate classroom can not only be the best solution, but also the cost-effective solution.

Parents also may avoid the cost of a bored or disengaged child. Instead of spending years—and dollars—undoing the effects of chronic boredom, a simple move to a new classroom may prevent future problems.

Remember the Priority

While it may be tempting to calculate savings of years of college tuition, an educational decision is never about money first. A child’s well-being is always the primary consideration. With acceleration, the child comes out ahead academically and socially, while the district and the parents come out ahead financially.



Voices on Acceleration

A Student's View

What is acceleration really like, from the inside? Alexis Hanson, who grew up in the small town of Hudson, Iowa, tells her story. Today, she is a pre-med student at The University of Iowa.

Describe your experience with acceleration.

I was grade-skipped in 6th grade, and I was subject-matter-accelerated in math from 3rd through 8th grade. I took AP Calculus, and it was a small school district so it was the only AP they had, and I entered college one year early. I feel I've been really lucky to have been able to participate in all these experiences.

Was acceleration hard for you?

My acceleration into 7th grade—in terms of the subject matter, I really had no problem with it. College presented more of a problem for me. My study skills were . . . kind of rusty, from not having to use them.

That is probably quite a bit magnified for students who haven't had the opportunity to accelerate and who were bored for more years. Emotionally and psychologically—well, I have not had too many issues there.

**NAASE is the National Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering, an early-entrance-to-university program at The University of Iowa.*

Did anything make your experience easier?

In 7th grade, I was accelerated with one of my really good friends from 5th grade, and that was really helpful. We were able to hang out and make friends together and face things together. I didn't have to do it alone.

Here in the NAASE* program, there's a class of twelve of us. We are housed together in the honors dorm, and that provided a community for us to share experiences.

One of the graduate students at the Belin-Blank Center was around to have biweekly meetings with us, and that was really helpful.

The other students would joke about the young ones over on our floor, but they liked us once they got to know us. Most of my friends are older than I am.

So what were the toughest parts?

I did have a couple of difficulties. All of my friends got their drivers' licenses way before I did, so they had to drive me around most of the time. Now, I tend not to mention my age when I first meet people, because they tend to look down on you, and I think that's because people are not educated about the fact that kids are able to do things and are mature.

I am excited that I do have an extra year to figure out what's actually going on when I graduate. Maybe I'll take a year off between college and graduate school, and I feel like I don't have to get into it right away.

What do you think of acceleration, overall?

It's been a wonderful experience for me, and I think it's very important to get this [information] into the community and get the word out nationwide and worldwide to let other students have this experience as well.



Does a peer group matter?

“Early entrance to college is generally highly successful whether it’s with a peer group or on your own. However, entering early with a group has tremendous advantages. It’s comforting to be with other bright young people who are going through the same experiences at the same time.”

Dr. Nicholas Colangelo, The University of Iowa

A Superintendent’s View

Dr. Lane Plugge is the superintendent of the Iowa City Community School District, a district that is highly rated for academics, arts, and athletics.

“As a K-12 superintendent, the title of this report makes me kind of nervous,” Plugge says. “I believe most K-12 districts practice forms of acceleration, but I would agree that we probably don’t look at it as much as we should.”

He explained why schools have been hesitant to accelerate. “We’re cautious because we don’t want to pressure the child,” he says. “This [acceleration] is something we need to address.”

Plugge says acceleration is pretty rare in his district.

“Out of the 10,500 students in our district, we only have about 5 parents that come forward during the year to talk about acceleration,” he says.

If the parents don’t mention it, no one does. “School personnel are reluctant to bring it up. Out of the five who come forward, two or three kids actually grade-skip.”

Plugge welcomes the report because he thinks it can increase educators’ knowledge and change attitudes about acceleration. “I think we know more than ever before about what kids know.”

Superintendent Plugge has some advice for education researchers who wonder why teachers aren’t always aware of the advantages of acceleration.

“Don’t assume that the K-12 community knows about acceleration. They don’t. Don’t assume that issuing a report will solve all the problems. It’s just the beginning.”

The School Board President's View

Lauren Reece, president of the Iowa City Community School District School Board, was accelerated as a child, and her positive experience has shaped her opinion on moving students ahead.

“A school board can play a substantial role in establishing educational policy, in that the primary job of the School Board is to set direction for the district,” Reece said.

Many districts have to handle bilingual students, immigrant students, poor students, and students with a wide variety of disabilities. That’s where most of the conversation tends to focus today.

“More and more students have higher and higher need levels,” Reece says. “These students are at greater risk, and this is certainly being confirmed by *No Child Left Behind* [federal legislation passed in 2002]. Any other issues are being drowned out.”

Reece is hopeful about what *A Nation Deceived* can do. “This report can be a very strong element in changing educational direction,” Reece says. “One thing that needs to happen in public school education, and it might be politically incorrect, is that we have moved so far from the idea of tracking that we’re grouping kids with a huge spectrum of ability. This is not a climate where you can identify bright kids who should be moving more quickly.”

Highly capable students, even if they are identified, don’t get much attention. “When you’re in that wide-spectrum classroom, the teacher is not able to focus on the bright kids,” Reece explains. “There are other kids whose needs are just overwhelming.”

Education professionals have expressed concern that the public—especially parents and teachers—are not familiar with the research on acceleration, and School Board President Reece has some strong ideas on that.

“You need to put the research out there and develop the voice of the parents in the community,” Reece advises. “Parents are a little hesitant about standing up and saying, ‘My kid is so bright and the school district hasn’t done enough.’”

Don’t forget the school board, Reece suggests. “Develop school board members—or a school board member—who will be a voice for talented children and acceleration. Without that voice, it will be very hard to steer the conversation in this direction.”

Is Acceleration Tracking?

No. Tracking, as implemented in the 1960s, referred to a rigid sorting of students by ability. It was a highly contentious educational practice. Today’s ability-grouping procedures are much more flexible. In contrast to tracking or even ability grouping, acceleration is a much more individualized and fluid approach to addressing the learning needs of students based upon ability, not age.

Tracking focused on group differences; acceleration focuses on individual differences.



How Teachers Can Help

An effective teacher can help a gifted child in several key ways. First, recognize the child as academically advanced. Next, point that child to new challenges and make sure school remains a positive experience. Finally, make sure a child is accurately evaluated for readiness to be accelerated.

While popular wisdom may say gifted children can teach themselves and learn by do-it-yourself trips to the library, experts say the truth is that academically talented students need qualified, informed teachers.

“Classroom teachers are important for gifted kids, too,” says Dr. Camilla Benbow, Dean of Vanderbilt University’s College of Education and an authority on the gifted.

“Excellent teachers open doors to other opportunities,” Dr. Benbow explains.

What Teachers Need to Know

The teacher is critical in the life of every gifted child, even when the child has informed, supportive parents.

“Parents are the primary advocates for their children, but they must work with their child’s teachers and administrators to implement change,” explains Dr. Susan Assouline, Associate Director of the Belin-Blank Center at The University of Iowa.

The reality for gifted children is that their needs have not been a priority for teachers. These needs have faded into the background as teachers are confronted with increasingly greater demands on their time.

Currently, the national focus is on the legislation known as *No Child Left Behind*. The emphasis is on all children meeting minimum skills. Maximizing the talents of those who are well above proficiency is not the priority. But recognizing the needs of gifted students



What Teachers Can Do

- Recognize gifted children
- Provide new challenges
- Inform child’s parents about acceleration
- Minimize teaching students what they already know
- Make school a positive experience for all students . . . including your brightest

does not mean short-changing any other students.

Teachers need to be aware of the research on acceleration and of the 18 types of acceleration. They need to know that there are strategies like the *Iowa Acceleration Scale* to determine whether a child is ready to be accelerated.

Interestingly, something simple but stubborn—attitude—may be the biggest problem for experienced teachers. After years of absorbing negative perceptions about acceleration, many teachers may need to reconsider their ideas. It’s all about continued professional development.

All classroom teachers need to know that the overwhelming majority of accelerated students are happy with their educational experience and are well-adjusted socially. Classroom teachers can make use of the materials provided by Volumes I and II of *A Nation Deceived* to help the next highly capable student they teach.

A child’s education is too important to squander because of a lack of familiarity with the truth about acceleration.



Colleges of Education: The Silent Problem

A topic few educators like to discuss is where current attitudes toward acceleration originated.

No one knows for sure, but one thing we do know is that America's teachers and administrators have one thing in common—an education degree. Colleges of Education are partners with schools in the education process. The problem is—where bright children are involved—they are silent partners.

“It's a cultural problem,” explains Dr. Camilla Benbow, Dean, College of Education, Vanderbilt University. “Colleges of Education have worried a lot about social justice and equity.”

“Faculty members are deeply concerned about equity in education. This theme is important, of course, but we have lost something crucial—the thrust toward excellence. For me, social justice without excellence is empty.”

A cursory look at course catalogues in Colleges of Education indicates very few courses (required or elective) offered in gifted education. It appears that most course offerings are in-service, and these options are available only after a teacher or administrator has received a degree. Courses that help teachers to identify and assist the gifted students in their classrooms are very rarely a part of the degree requirement.

Gifted students are simply not part of the required curriculum, so many teachers graduate from college unprepared to make appropriate decisions about highly capable students.

While teachers and administrators are often required to take a course focusing on students with special learning needs, inclusion of gifted students in these special-needs courses is either absent or an afterthought.

The lack of focus on gifted education and excellence issues is one reason why Colleges of Education are so silent on the topic of acceleration. Given that the extensive research on acceleration has been available for many years, it is curious that such a fundamental curricular intervention is not taught as part of the preparation of educators.

“A hallmark of Colleges of Education must be that they critically evaluate and then disseminate research on various aspects of education,” says The University of Iowa College of Education Dean, Sandra Damico. “Education faculties have a professional obligation to provide our future educators with the information and skills to interpret and implement best practices on behalf of all students.”

“The fact that the research on acceleration is not readily part of the training of teachers and administrators,” asserts Dean Damico, “is a strike against the mission of Colleges of Education.”

Teachers Don't Deserve Blame

Some educational leaders are concerned that classroom teachers will be blamed for all of the problems in gifted education, just as they have been blamed for other problems.

It's not fair to blame teachers for not knowing the specifics about the characteristics and needs of gifted students or the particulars about acceleration. Universities and colleges are accountable for the preparation of teachers and principals. Society counts on these institutions to provide the most relevant information and practices. Why, then, is there such a disconnect between information and practice?

The research basis for educational practices emanates from Colleges of Education. This research should influence attitudes and practices. It is our experience that College of Education professors preach the importance of research as the basis for educational practice. When it comes to research on acceleration, however, they do not practice what they preach. They do not promote the research on acceleration as the basis for the practice of acceleration.

"What we need is not just information but appropriate professional development," says Dr. Camilla Benbow, Dean of Vanderbilt University's College of Education. "To change behaviors is very, very hard. We need to support the teachers as they change their attitudes and practices."

It will be hard to educate the nation's teachers about the extensive, positive record of acceleration, but Benbow believes it must be done.

"It's not easy. People would like to think you can change these teachers' ideas in a weekend or a week-long professional development seminar," she says. "I don't think it's that easy. Yet, just because it isn't easy does not mean we should not do it."

"Education is full of one-day workshops," Benbow says. "This is not a one-day solution."

Where Teachers Can Get Help

"That's why centers that aim to educate and train educators about academically advanced students are so critical to the nation's future," says Dr. Sandra Damico, Dean of The University of Iowa's College of Education.

"Centers like the National Research Center on Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut and The Belin-Blank Center at The University of Iowa are models for professional development as well as a clearinghouse for the latest research on academically advanced children, and they support teachers who want to learn how to provide appropriate challenges for these students."

"As more teachers become informed about the special challenges of teaching highly capable students, and of the various kinds of acceleration that may help these students, such centers on gifted and talented students will be there to help teachers make the right decisions," Dean Damico says.

Deans Damico and Benbow are clear on one other point. Even with the best-equipped centers for the gifted in the world, very few children will be helped without the commitment of individual teachers. Identifying a gifted child and suggesting appropriate educational choices are almost always the challenges of a single classroom teacher.

In the life of any child, a teacher is crucial. But for a gifted child, one teacher can open the door to an entirely new educational pathway by making sure that child is set on an appropriately challenging course.

Thank you for reading this report.

We have attempted to present the issues associated with the practice of acceleration in its many forms.

We want to re-emphasize our respect for educators who are trying to make the best decisions for their students. Volumes I and II of this report provide educators and parents with considerable information about acceleration.

We hope this information will be a useful guide in their conversations as well as their decisions about educational programming for bright students.

We believe this issue is essential for the progress of our nation. Together, we can create the best opportunities for all our children.

We hope America's educators will choose not to hold back our brightest students.

Executive Summary

A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students

America's schools routinely avoid academic acceleration, the easiest and most effective way to help highly capable students. While the popular perception is that a child who skips a grade will be socially stunted, fifty years of research shows that moving bright students ahead often makes them happy.

Acceleration means moving through the traditional curriculum at rates faster than typical. The 18 forms of acceleration include grade-skipping, early-entrance to school, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. It is appropriate educational planning. It means matching the level and complexity of the curriculum with the readiness and motivation of the student.

Students who are moved ahead tend to be more ambitious, and they earn graduate degrees at higher rates than other students. Interviewed years later, an overwhelming majority of accelerated students say that acceleration was an excellent experience for them.

Accelerated students feel academically challenged and socially accepted, and they do not fall prey to the boredom that plagues many highly capable students who are forced to follow the curriculum for their age-peers.

For the first time, this compelling research is available to the public in a bold new initiative to get these findings into the hands of parents, teachers, and principals. The report is available at no cost to schools, the media, and parents requesting copies.

You'll find information about entering school early, skipping grades in elementary school, the Advanced Placement program, and starting college ahead of time. You'll read the comments of accelerated students, Deans of Colleges of Education, a school superintendent, and a school board member. Every sentence in this volume is culled from the research of America's leading education experts. If you'd like more research information, see Volume II of this report.

With all this research evidence, why haven't schools, parents, and teachers accepted the idea of acceleration? *A Nation Deceived* presents these reasons for why schools hold back America's brightest kids:

- Limited familiarity with the research on acceleration
- Philosophy that children must be kept with their age group
- Belief that acceleration hurries children out of childhood
- Fear that acceleration hurts children socially
- Political concerns about equity
- Worry that other students will be offended if one child is accelerated.

This report shows that these reasons are simply not supported by research. By distributing thousands of copies and launching a public-awareness campaign, the *Nation Deceived* report provides teachers and parents the knowledge, support, and confidence to consider acceleration.

The cost of the report, both online and print, has been covered by the John Templeton Foundation. *A Nation Deceived* hopes to change the conversation about educating bright children in America. A website www.nationdeceived.org has been established to encourage dialogue across the nation.

We invite you to learn more about why acceleration is so important for America's children. For further information and to download the report go to www.nationdeceived.org. This interactive website also allows you to give your opinion on the report.

*The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development
College of Education, The University of Iowa
600 Blank Honors Center
Iowa City, Iowa 52242-0454
800.336.6463
<http://www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank>*

About the Authors of *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students*



Nicholas Colangelo is the Myron & Jacqueline Blank Professor of Gifted Education at The University of Iowa. He is also Director of The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development. He received his M.Ed. in Counseling from the University

of Vermont and his Ph.D. in Counselor Education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is author of numerous articles on counseling gifted students and the affective development of gifted. He has edited two texts: *New Voices in Counseling the Gifted* (with Ronald Zaffrann) and *Handbook of Gifted Education, Editions I, II, and III* (with Gary Davis). He has served on the editorial boards of major journals including *Counseling and Development*, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Journal of Creative Behavior*, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, and *Roeper Review*. He has presented a number of research papers at national and international conferences and has been a keynote speaker on numerous occasions. In 1991, he was presented with the Distinguished Scholar Award by the National Association for Gifted Children; in 1995, he received the Alumni Achievement Award presented by the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 2000, he was elected to the Iowa Academy of Education and received the State of Iowa Regents Award for Faculty Excellence. In 2002, he received the President's Award from the National Association for Gifted Children. Dr. Colangelo was elected President of the Iowa Academy of Education for 2004–2005.



Susan G. Assouline is the Belin-Blank Center's Associate Director. She received her B.S. in general science with a teaching endorsement, her Ed.S. in School Psychology, and her Ph.D. in Psychological and Quantitative Foundations, all from The University of Iowa.

Upon completion of her doctorate, she was awarded a two-year post-doctoral fellowship at the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) at The Johns Hopkins University, and upon completion joined the Belin-Blank Center in 1990. She is especially interested in identification of academic talent in elementary students and is co-author (with Ann Lupkowski-Shoplik) of *Developing Mathematical Talent: A Guide for Challenging and Educating Gifted Students*. As well, she is co-editor with Nicholas Colangelo of the series *Talent Development: Proceedings from the Wallace Research Symposia on Giftedness and Talent Development*, and co-developer of *The Iowa Acceleration Scale—2nd Edition*, a tool designed to guide educators and parents through decisions about grade-skipping students. She is a leading expert on the decision-making process for acceleration and has consulted on over 100 acceleration cases. She has conducted numerous workshops for parents and teachers on acceleration, development of mathematical talent, and gifted/disabled students. Dr. Assouline has presented at national and international conferences. Currently, she is lead investigator on the Belin-Blank Center's national study on twice-exceptional children.



Miraca U. M. Gross is Professor of Gifted Education, and Director of the Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC), at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. She is a leading international authority on the education of gifted and talented children. She is

particularly well known in the United States where she has made a sustained contribution to the education of gifted and talented students over twenty years advising Education Departments and school districts on issues related to acceleration, programming and curriculum development. Dr. Gross is one of the leading experts on the use of acceleration with academically gifted students. She undertook her M.S.E. and Ph.D. degrees, both specializing in gifted education, at Purdue University. In subsequent years she has won several international research awards. In 1987 she became the first non-American to win the Hollingworth Award for Excellence in Research in Gifted Education. In 1988 and 1990 she was awarded Mensa International Education and Research Foundation Awards for Excellence. In 1995 the (American) National Association for Gifted Children honored her with their prestigious Early Scholar Award. She is a regular keynote and invited presenter at American educational conferences. In 2003, Dr. Gross was awarded the Sir Harold Wyndham Medal for service to Australian Education.

About the Writing Consultant for A Nation Deceived

Aviya Kushner is a freelance journalist who is currently completing a Master of Fine Arts degree in nonfiction writing at The University of Iowa. She holds an M.A. in poetry writing from Boston University, and a B.A. in art history and creative writing from The Johns Hopkins University. She regularly contributes to *The Jerusalem Post*, and her writing has appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Partisan Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Her articles have been written about in *Utne Reader* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and they have been discussed on National Public Radio. Her financial stories for Bankrate.com have been reprinted widely, and they have ranked as the most-requested stories on MoneyCentral.MSN.com. For several years, she was the Contributing Editor in Poetry for BarnesandNoble.com, and she writes about business and the arts for a variety of publications, both in the U.S. and abroad.

The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development

*Our vision is to inspire and serve
the worldwide gifted community
of students, educators, and
families through exemplary
leadership in advocacy,
programming, and research.*

The Belin-Blank Center focuses on:

- Identifying gifted and talented learners
- Providing specialized opportunities for students
- Conducting comprehensive research on giftedness
- Supporting professional development for educators
- Disseminating information through conferences and publications
- Assessing and counseling gifted students and their families
- Enhancing educational opportunities through technology
- Leading in local, national, and international policy formation
- Promoting equity and access in developing talent
- Consulting with schools and professionals
- Advocating for children and families
- Evaluating gifted programs

<http://www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank>

The Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre

Our objectives are as follows:

- to foster and conduct research on effective education of gifted and talented children.
- to develop and conduct a range of teacher inservice programs to assist educators in catering for the educational, social and emotional needs of gifted students,
- to establish and administer workshops and specialist seminars for teachers, counsellors and parents of gifted students.
- to be responsible for the administration of University of New South Wales programs for gifted and talented school students, and to establish and administer additional and complementary programs for gifted students.
- to publish a range of professional development materials designed to assist educators to identify and respond to the needs of gifted and talented students.

<http://gerric.arts.unsw.edu.au/>

*Meeting the educational, social
and emotional needs of gifted
children and adolescents by
conducting and fostering research
and by providing services to these
children, their families and schools.*

The John Templeton Foundation

The mission of the John Templeton Foundation is to pursue new insights at the boundary between theology and science through a rigorous, open-minded and empirically focused methodology, drawing together talented representatives from a wide spectrum of fields of expertise.

Using “the humble approach,” the Foundation typically seeks to focus the methods and resources of scientific inquiry on topical areas which have spiritual and theological significance ranging across the disciplines from cosmology to healthcare. In the human sciences, the foundation supports programs, competitions, publications, and studies that promote character education and the exploration of positive values and purpose across the lifespan. It supports free enterprise education and development internationally through the Templeton Freedom Awards, new curriculum offerings, and other programs that encourage free-market principles.

<http://www.templeton.org>

Resources for Parents and Educators

With the arrival of the Internet, the availability of resources for parents and educators has flourished. There are now hundreds of listservs and Websites that give access to information, programs, and services for gifted students and their teachers and parents.

The first section of this appendix lists centers for Gifted and Talented Education, including those centers which sponsor Talent Searches. Many centers sponsor student programs and/or professional development opportunities.

The listings below are not exhaustive. Our goal is to provide a representative sample for your benefit.

Centers for Gifted Education and Talent Searches

Academic Talent Search

Talent searches, as well as summer and weekend programs for students in grades 6–9.
California State University, Sacramento, CA
<http://edweb.csus.edu/projects/ATS>

Belin-Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development

Talent searches [Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search—BESTS], grades 2–9; commuter and residential programs, grades 3–12.
The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA
<http://www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank>

Carnegie Mellon Institute for Talented Elementary Students (C-MITES)

Talent search, grades 3–6; commuter programs throughout Pennsylvania, grades K–7.
Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA
<http://www.cmu.edu/cmities>

Center for Gifted Education

Provides graduate education in gifted education; develops and disseminates curriculum for high ability learners.
The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA
<http://www.cfge.wm.edu>

Centre for Gifted Education

University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gifteduc/>

Center for Gifted Education at the University of Arkansas

The Center for Gifted Education at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock provides programs and services to talented students and their families, teachers, and administrators.
<http://www.ualr.edu/giftedctr/>

The Center for Gifted Studies

A major center for gifted education providing services to children, parents, and teachers.
Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY
<http://www.wku.edu/gifted>

Center for Talent Development

Talent searches, grades 4–9; summer and weekend programs, commuter and residential, grades K–12.
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
<http://www.ctd.nwu.edu>

Center for Talented Youth (CTY)

Commuter and residential programs, elementary and secondary students; correspondence courses for various ages.
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
<http://www.cty.jhu.edu>

Davidson Institute for Talent Development

To recognize, nurture, and support profoundly intelligent young people, Reno, NV
<http://www.ditd.org>

Frances A. Karnes Center for Gifted Studies

Grades 7–10.

The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS
<http://www-dept.usm.edu/~gifted>

Gifted Development Center

Denver, CO

<http://www.gifteddevelopment.com>

Gifted Education Research Resource and Information Centre

University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia

<http://gerric.arts.unsw.edu.au/>

Hampshire College Summer Studies in Mathematics

Programs for mathematically talented and motivated high school students.

Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

<http://www.hcssim.org>

The Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children

The Hollingworth Center is a national support and resource network focused on the needs of highly gifted children.

<http://www.hollingworth.org>

Interlochen Center for the Arts

Grades 3–12

Interlochen, MI

<http://www.interlochen.org>

The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC)

Funded by the Jacob K. Javits Act and housed at The University of Connecticut, the NRC is a nationwide cooperative of researchers, practitioners, policy makers from three Core Research-I Universities (University of Connecticut, University of Virginia, and Yale University). Newsletters, monographs, on-line resources, and extensive links to other institutions and resources.

University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu>

Office of Precollegiate Programs for Talented and Gifted (OPPTAG)

Residential summer classes in a variety of subjects, grades 7–9; classes in mathematics during the school year are available for local students.

Iowa State University, Ames, IA

http://www.public.iastate.edu/~opptag_info

Program in Mathematics for Young Scientists (PROMYS)

A challenging program designed to encourage ambitious high school students to explore the creative world of mathematics.

Boston University, Boston, MA

<http://math.bu.edu/people/promys>

Purdue University Gifted Education Resource Institute

Grades 7–12.

Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN

<http://www.geri.soe.purdue.edu>

Research Science Institute

A mentor program in the sciences for rising high school seniors.

Vienna, VA

<http://www.cee.org/rsi/>

Rocky Mountain Talent Search and Summer Institute

Residential and commuter programs for ages 11–16.
Denver, CO

<http://www.du.edu/education/ces/si.html>

Ross Mathematics Program

For 14- to 17-year-olds deeply interested in math and science. Intense math courses.

Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

<http://www.math.ohio-state.edu/ross>

Southern Methodist University Gifted Students Institute and Precollege Programs

Grades 7–11.

Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX

<http://www.smu.edu>

Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth

Grades 7–10.

The Center for Gifted Studies

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY

<http://www.wku.edu/gifted>

Talent Identification Program (TIP)

Residential summer program for grades 7–12.

Educational information provided to grades 4–6.

Duke University, Durham, NC

<http://www.tip.duke.edu>

University of Minnesota Talented Youth Mathematics Program (UMTYMP)

Commuter program in accelerated mathematics for students in grades 5–12.

Institute of Technology Center for Educational Programs

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

<http://www.math.umn.edu/itcep/umtymp>

Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY)

Grades 4–12.

Madison, WI

<http://www.wcaty.org>

Early Entrance to College Programs

Accelerated College Entrance Center

Grades 9–12.

California State University, Sacramento, CA

<http://www.educ.csus.edu/projects/ace>

The Advanced Academy of Georgia

Apply in 10th grade and complete 11th and 12th grade and first two years of college simultaneously.

State University of West Georgia, Carrollton, GA

<http://www.westga.edu/~academy>

The Clarkson School

For students who have completed 11th grade. Early admission to college.

The Clarkson School, Potsdam, NY

<http://www.clarkson.edu/tcs>

The National Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering at The University of Iowa

For high school students who have completed the equivalent of 11th grade.

University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA

<http://www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank>

Program for the Exceptionally Gifted

Girls may apply to this program as early as the 8th grade. Students generally complete their Bachelor's degree within four years.

Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, VA

<http://www.mbc.edu/peg>

Simon's Rock

Early entrance to college for students who have completed 10th grade. Director of Admission

Simon's Rock of Bard College, Great Barrington, MA

<http://www.simons-rock.edu>

University of Washington

Halbert and Nancy Robinson Center for Young Scholars.

University of Washington, Seattle, WA

<http://www.depts.washington.edu/cscsy>

Distance Learning

Advanced Placement Program

Courses offered in many high schools. National examinations given in May each year. High scores earn college credit. Currently, thirty-four courses are available. Students who do not have access to AP courses in their high schools, may enroll in on-line courses through organizations such as APEX Learning Corporation. Many states have state-sponsored grants to pay for online AP courses.

Princeton, NJ

<http://apcentral.collegeboard.com>

Educational Program for Gifted Youth (EPGY)

Computer-based correspondence courses in mathematics, mathematical sciences, and expository writing for academically talented students in kindergarten through 12th grades.

Stanford University, Stanford, CA

<http://www-epgy.stanford.edu>

Extension University

At-home study courses can be completed on-line or through employers and an affiliated Internet training and distance education network.

<http://www.onlinelearning.net>

Iowa Online Advanced Placement Academy (IOAPA)

Belin-Blank Center, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA

The Iowa Online Advanced Placement Academy (IOAPA) is a statewide program offering access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses to all Iowa high school students with a focus on rural/small schools. AP courses are available to students through web-based technology or via Iowa's fiber-optic network. The original goal was to increase participation in Advanced Placement. IOAPA was established in 2001, when Iowa ranked 45th in the nation for number of AP exams taken per 1,000 students. Student enrollment has increased at a rate of 25% per year, and Iowa now ranks 37th in the nation. When students participate in distance-learning classes, drop-out rates of 50% or higher are typical. Not so for IOAPA, which has a drop-out rate as low as 7%. Because of the unique mentoring component to IOAPA, the completion rate for IOAPA students is an extraordinary 93%.

<http://www.iowaapacademy.org/>

Johns Hopkins University

Center for Talented Youth offers Expository Writing and Math Tutorial-by-mail through the Center for Distance Education.

<http://www.jhu.edu/gifted/cde>

Northwestern University

Center for Talent Development offers research information and programs, including Letter Links Learning and correspondence courses for academically talented students in grades 6–12.

Northwestern University, Evanston, IL

<http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu>

The University of Nebraska Independent Study High School

Clifford Hardin Nebraska Center for Continuing Education

Lincoln, NE

<http://dcs.unl.edu/ishs>

Contests and Competitions

American History Essay Contest

Grades 5–8, sponsored by The Daughters of the American Revolution

<http://www.dar.org>

American Mathematics Competition (formerly the AHSME)

Any student who has not graduated from high school is eligible. High scoring students move on to the American Invitational Mathematics Exam, USA Mathematical Olympiad, and International Mathematical Olympiad.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE

<http://www.unl.edu/amc>

American Model United Nations International

<http://www.amun.org>

American Regions Mathematics League (ARML)

An annual national mathematics competition for high school students. ARML is held simultaneously at three sites: Penn State, The University of Iowa, and San Jose State University.

<http://www.arml.com>

Annual Math League Contests

Math League Press, Tenafly, NJ

<http://www.mathleague.com>

Destination Imagination

<http://www.destinationimagination.org>

Future Problem Solving Program

Curricular and co-curricular competitive and non-competitive activities in creative problem solving. Lexington, KY

<http://www.fpsp.org>

Howard Hughes Medical Institute

Precollege science education program.

<http://www.hhmi.org/grants/reports/scienceopp/main>

Intel Science Talent Search

(Formerly the Westinghouse Science Talent Search)

High school seniors submit independent research projects by November 29 each year. Winners receive college scholarships.

Washington, DC

<http://www.sciserv.org/sts>

Junior Engineering Technical Society (JETS)

A national educational organization offering competitions and programs to high school students to promote interest in engineering, science, mathematics, and technology.

Alexandria, VA

<http://www.jets.org>

Knowledge Master Open

<http://www.greatauk.com/KMO.html>

Mandelbrot Competition

For high school students

<http://www.mandelbrot.org>

MATHCOUNTS

A series of competitions designed for grades 7–8.

It is a four-stage, year-long program run jointly by the National Society of Professional Engineers, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, NASA, and the CNA Foundation.

Alexandria, VA

<http://www.mathcounts.org>

MOEMS

Mathematical Olympiads for Elementary and Middle Schools, an in-school academic year competition for students in 8th grade and younger. There are two divisions: “E” for grades 4–6, and “M” for grades 6–8.

Bellmore, NY

<http://www.moems.org>

National Academic Quiz Tournament

<http://www.naqt.com>

National Geographic Bee

Grades 4–8

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geographybee/index.html>

National Merit Scholarships

Students scoring high on the PSAT (taken in 11th grade) advance to other levels in the competition.

<http://www.nationalmerit.org>

National Science Bowl

<http://www.scied.science.doe.gov/nsb>

Odyssey of the Mind

<http://www.odysseyofthemind.com>

Science Olympiad

Competitions, classroom activities, and training workshops used to improve the quality of science education, increase student interest in science and provide recognition for outstanding achievement in science education by students and teachers. Focus on the disciplines of biology, earth science, chemistry, physics, computers, and technology.

Rochester, MI

<http://www.soinc.org>

Scripps National Spelling Bee

<http://www.spellingbee.com>

U.S. Chemistry Team (High School)

American Chemical Society, Washington, DC

<http://www.acs.org/education/student/olympiad.html>

U.S. Physics Team (High School)

American Association of Physics Teachers, American Center for Physics

College Park, MD

<http://www.aapt.org/Contests/olympiad.cfm>

USA Mathematical Talent Search (USAMTS)

<http://www.nsa.gov/usamts>

United States Academic Decathlon

<http://www.usad.org>

Printed Materials

Academic Competitions for Gifted Students

By Tallent-Runnels, M.K., & Candler-Lotven, A.C. (1995). Published by Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA

Competitions: Maximizing Your Abilities

By Karnes, F.A., & Riley, T. L. (1996). Published by Prufrock Press, Waco, TX. This book lists many different contests and competitions.

Developing Mathematical Talent: A Guide for Challenging and Educating Gifted Students

By Assouline, S. & Lupkowski-Shoplik, A. (2003). Published by Prufrock Press, Waco, TX. This book is a multifaceted handbook that integrates the unique roles of educators and parents in responding to the exceptional needs of mathematically talented students.

Directory of Science Training for High Ability Pre-college Students

Science Services, Washington, DC
<http://www.sciserv.org/stp>

Educational Opportunity Guide

From Duke University's Talent Identification Program (TIP). This guide is published annually. Lists many summer and school-year programs throughout the U.S. Students who score high in TIP's Talent Search get a free copy.
Duke University, Durham, NC
<http://www.tip.duke.edu>

Exceptionally Gifted Children (2nd ed.)

By Gross, M.U.M. (2004). Published by Routledge Falmer, London
<http://www.routledgefalmer.com>

Genius Denied

By Davidson, J. & Davidson B. (2004). Published by Simon and Schuster, New York.
<http://www.geniusdenied.com>

Handbook of Gifted Education (3rd ed.)

Edited by Colangelo, N. & Davis, G. (2003). Published by Allyn & Bacon, Needham Heights, MA

Iowa Acceleration Scale

Developed by Assouline, S. G., Colangelo, N., Lupkowski Shoplik, A. E., Lipscomb, J., and Forstadt, L. (2003). Published by Great Potential Press. This guidance instrument provides a systematic and thorough method of decision-making for educators and parents who are considering whole-grade acceleration for students in kindergarten through 8th grade.
Great Potential Press, Scottsdale, AZ
<http://www.giftedbooks.com>

Math Coach: A Parent's Guide to Helping Children Succeed in Math

By Wickelgren, W.A., & Wickelgren, I. Published by the Berkley Books, New York.

Peterson's Summer Opportunities for Kids and Teenagers

This publication is a source of information about summer camps and is updated annually. Order copies through a local bookstore or call 1-800-338-3282.

Periodicals

Advanced Development Journal

Institute for the Study of Advanced Development
Denver, CO.
<http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc>

Gifted Child Quarterly

The official publication of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). Contains articles of interest to professionals and those with some experience in the field of gifted education.
<http://www.nagc.org/Publications/GiftedChild/>

Gifted Child Today

Directed at teachers and parents, it avoids jargon and provides practical advice on working with gifted, creative, and talented children. This magazine is published by Prufrock Press.
<http://www.prufrock.com>

Imagine

A magazine for academically talented students. Produced by the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University and published five times a year.
<http://www.jhu.edu/~gifted/imagine>

Journal for the Education of the Gifted (JEG)

The official publication of the Association for the Gifted (TAG) which is a division of the Council for Exceptional Children, and is aimed at the experienced reader of the literature.
Prufrock Press, Waco, TX
800-998-2208
http://www.prufrock.com/client/client_pages/prufrock_jm_jeg.cfm

Parenting for High Potential

An excellent magazine designed for parents published by NAGC.
Washington, DC.
202-785-4268
<http://www.nagc.org/Publications/Parenting/index.html>

Roeper Review

This publication is designed for professionals. The articles are research-based and often deal with both theoretical and practical issues.
Bloomfield Hills, MI
<http://www.roeperreview.org>

Understanding Our Gifted

Open Space Communications, Inc., Boulder, CO.
303-444-7020 or 800-494-6178
<http://www.openspacecomm.com>

Vision

News from The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development.
The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA
319-335-6148 or 800-336-6463
<http://www.uiowa.edu/~belinctr/vision>

Organizations

Most states have a state organization to promote advocacy for gifted and talented students at the state and local level; provide pre-service and in-service training in gifted education; and support parent/community awareness, education, and involvement. See the NAGC web site for specific information by state.

National Association for Gifted Children

NAGC is a non-profit organization that has been in existence for over 50 years. It hosts an annual convention and publishes two periodicals, a magazine for parents (*Parenting for High Potential*) and a journal for professionals (*Gifted Child Quarterly*). As an organization, its purpose is to serve parents, educators, community leaders and other professionals who work on behalf of gifted children.
Washington, DC
<http://www.nagc.org>

American Association for Gifted Children

The AAGC is the nation's oldest advocacy organization for gifted children. It was established in the late 1940s.
Duke University, Durham, NC.
<http://www.aagc.org>

American Psychological Association (APA) Esther Katz Rosen Center for Gifted Education Policy

The mission of the center is to generate public awareness, advocacy, clinical applications, and cutting-edge research ideas that will enhance the achievement and performance of children and adolescents with special gifts and talents.
<http://www.apa.org/ed/cgep.html>

The Association for the Gifted (TAG)

A special interest group of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Arlington, VA
<http://www.cec.sped.org>

Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children

Dover, NH
303-554-7895
<http://www.hollingworth.org>

Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)

Scottsdale, AZ
206-498-6744
<http://www.sengifted.org>

TAG Family Network

A national association for parents started in Oregon in 1990 and continuing nationwide. Information is available by e-mail: rkaltwas@teleport.com. There is also a TAG Hotline: 503-378-7851.

Belin-Blank Center listserv

To subscribe to this, send an email message to listserv@list.uiowa.edu. Please leave the subject line blank, and include the following in the message text: subscribe gifted-teachers.

Websites

Afterschool.gov

<http://www.afterschool.gov>

American Memory: Historical Collections

<http://memory.loc.gov>

Cyberkids

<http://www.cyberkids.com>

Discovery Channel School

<http://www.school.discovery.com>

Early Entrance College Programs in the USA

A comprehensive site developed by a student who entered college early; for parents and students
<http://earlyentrance.org>

Eisenhower National Commission

Curriculum resources and useful information for math and science teaching:
<http://www.enc.org>

Exploring the Solar System

<http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/science/solar-index.html>

Federal Resources for Educational Excellence

<http://www.ed.gov/free>

Free Firewood

An enormous collection of curriculum materials for students.
<http://www.ignitethefire.com/freefirewood.html>

The Hoagies Gifted Education Page

A general, introductory resource for families.
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org>

KidSource

<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/pages/ed.gifted.html>

Learning Network, On This Day

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday>

The Learning Page

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/index.html>

Mathematics Education at Northern Kentucky University

<http://www.nku.edu/~mathed/gifted.html>

My History is America's History

http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/misc/my-history-p/my-hist.htm

National Gallery of Art

<http://www.nga.gov/education/education.htm>

National Park Service Museum Exhibits

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/index.html>

ShowMe Center

<http://www.showmecenter.missouri.edu>

What You Can Do Right Now

Inform Yourself

Our country's future depends on accurate information. The students likely to become our country's professional, technical, and political leaders are often the very same students with advanced verbal and math skills who are not being well-served by our schools. We must inform ourselves about this issue and do the right thing for our students.

Press for Change

Every citizen can help. Even if your child or your student is not a candidate for acceleration, you can advocate for a change in attitude. Every American wants to see opportunity for all, including the brightest.

It is against our country's character to hold people back and prevent them from pursuing their dreams. We all benefit when schools meet the learning needs of all children.

Vote with Kids in Mind

If a candidate for school board seems informed about the long, positive record of acceleration as a strategy for helping academically advanced children, give that candidate your attention. A candidate who is willing to learn the truth about a subject is often a good choice. Every school board can gain from a candidate who is concerned about all students, including the brightest.

True equality means appropriate opportunities. When you vote, ask yourself whether the candidates are working to create opportunities for all students.

Write Your Legislators

Write your state and federal legislators. Write your school board. Contact your local principal. Let them know:



I recently read A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students, and I'm very concerned. Please take the time to learn about what is happening to our brightest students. I hope you will decide to give them the opportunities they deserve.

For a full report, see <http://nationdeceived.org>



Excuses, Excuses

Here are some of the biggest excuses you will hear in conversations about acceleration:

Excuse #1:

We don't think he is ready for this. Things are fine, and we never know about the social and emotional issues. The student may get picked on if we skip him.

Excuse #2:

This puts a lot of pressure on the child. She's only eight years old! Let her be.

Excuse #3:

We have quite a few smart kids in this school. How do we know this child is different? How do we know he is really ready to skip a grade?

Excuse #4:

There's absolutely no proof that moving a student ahead will help her academically or socially.

Questions Schools Should Ask

Every conversation in America that includes the word "acceleration" should also include three essential, legitimate questions. If a student is being considered for acceleration, make sure these important questions are discussed:

Essential Question #1:

Have we assessed the student's ability correctly so that we know this child is really ready for an advanced, fast-paced curriculum?

Essential Question #2:

Given the results of our assessment, what might be the best form of acceleration for this child?

Essential Question #3:

We know that in a few cases acceleration has not been effective. What can we do as a school to ensure success for the acceleration of this student?

**Informed responses are found
in Volumes I and II of *A Nation Deceived***

**A Nation
Deceived:**

**How Schools Hold Back
America's Brightest Students**