



## **Acceleration in Momentum Academy-Beliefs and Guidelines**

*Adapted from the 2017-18 Acceleration Guidelines of the Parkway School District*

Momentum Academy serve a broad continuum of learners. The mission of MOMENTUM ACADEMY schools is to promote academic excellence in an environment of mutual care and support that builds character, confidence, and community among each and every one of our scholars so that they reach their full potential.

Research and national guidelines provide MOMENTUM ACADEMY Schools with a framework to move forward through a carefully stated and planned process to make appropriate acceleration decisions for our students in a consistent and uniform fashion; thus, ensuring the MOMENTUM ACADEMY mission is fulfilled for those students whose needs may be different than the general population. Therefore, upon occasion, to customize the educational experience for some students, it becomes necessary to accelerate the process. The ensuing policy was developed to provide a consistent set of procedures to follow for making decisions relative to acceleration. Many high-ability students possess “unique academic, cognitive and social needs.” The National Association for Gifted Children established criteria of “Exemplary Standards” for gifted education programming to provide appropriate learning experiences for gifted children. The standards that particularly address acceleration are as follows:

- 2.2E Documentation of instruction for assessing levels of learning and accelerated rates of learning should demonstrate plans for gifted learners based on specific needs of individual learners.
- 3.0E When warranted, continual opportunities for curricular acceleration should be provided in gifted learners’ areas of strength and interest while allowing a sufficient ceiling for optimal learning.
- 4.0E Possibilities for partial or full acceleration of content and grade levels should be available to any student presenting such needs.

The following components will be addressed in the acceleration guidelines:

1. Access: All students K-12 should have access to a referral for consideration of acceleration (see referral process). The guidelines shall be applied equitably and systematically to students referred for acceleration. An acceleration team made up of building and regional members will be formed when a student’s name is brought forward and referred for acceleration.
2. Guidelines for implementation: Categories, types and forms of acceleration are grade-based and content-based, with specific forms outlined. See Acceleration information below.
3. Administrative Oversight: The Acceleration team will oversee all aspects of acceleration occurring in the MOMENTUM ACADEMY Schools (opportunities, tracking of participants, their forms and types of acceleration, and recognition for participation in accelerated opportunities).
4. An appeals process will be in place during all steps of the acceleration process.
5. The guidelines will be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to determine its effectiveness. The guidelines will be reviewed by the Acceleration Team.



## **Definition of Acceleration Terminology**

Acceleration – (by definition) Progress through an education program at rates faster or at ages younger than conventional.

Compacting curriculum – After showing a level of proficiency in the basic curriculum (on a pre-assessment, end of course assessment or common assessment), a student can then be allowed to exchange instructional time for other learning experiences.

Content-based / Subject matter acceleration – This type of acceleration allows students to be placed in class with older peers for a part of the day in one or more content areas. The student may be either physically move to a high-level class for instruction (i.e. a 2nd grader moving to a 5th grade math class), or use higher-level curricular or study materials in their regular classroom.

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

Grade-based acceleration – This type of acceleration typically shortens the number of years a student spends in Momentum's K-8 schools by such mechanisms as whole grade acceleration.

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

Subject Matter Acceleration – Students are placed in classes with older peers for a part of the day (or with materials from higher grade placement) in one or more content areas. This is the most common practice for students who are advanced in one or two content areas but perhaps might not be ready for grade-based acceleration.



## GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERATION FOR ACCELERATION

Step 1: Parents, teachers, administrators, or students may initiate the process of consideration for acceleration by contacting their campus Principal.

Step 2: The Acceleration Team will assemble data from teachers, parents, the student, and school records. This data could include:

- Information required by the Iowa Acceleration Scale, a widely used paper-based tool meant to help schools make effective decisions when considering a whole grade-level acceleration. *Note: If any of the items are selected under "Section II: Critical Items" of the IAS, whole grade acceleration will not be recommended.*
- NWEA (Reading, Math, and Science) Testing Results- *Note: Students will not be considered for full grade-based acceleration if NWEA data indicates that they are not above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in Reading, Math, and Science (if tested).*
- STEP (Reading) Data
- Progress on Blended Learning Programs
- Work/Writing Samples
- Student Observation
- Student IQ Testing- Most likely completed by a third party, such as Miriam Learning Center.
- Feedback from teaching staff, school administrators, school counselor, parents/guardians, and/or the student themselves.
- Sibling data – Does the scholar have a sibling in the same accelerated grade?

Once data has been compiled, the school Principal will schedule a meeting with the Acceleration Team for the purpose of evaluating the suitability of acceleration for a particular student. Potential team members could include: parents/guardians, a building administrator, school counselor/therapist, current teachers, and regional administration (Director of Curriculum and Instruction or Executive Director). Discussions with the student will also be essential in determining if this represents the appropriate strategy for him/her.

Step 3: Step 3: A recommendation will be made for appropriate placement. If whole grade or content area acceleration is not deemed appropriate, the team will discuss and plan the most effective alternative. If whole grade acceleration is recommended, the team will bring the decision with to the Executive Director for final approval. Finally, the team will determine a follow-up plan to assure the success of the student through monitoring. Parents/guardians will be informed of this plan and progress.



## BOARD POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Believing that students wish to experience academic, social, and personal success, the Board of Education of Momentum Academy recognizes the importance of meeting the learning needs of every student as effectively as possible. The board believes that certain learning needs are met in whole class, heterogeneous groups that provide for exchange among students of diverse views and abilities. The board also recognizes there are various methods and structures for meeting the needs of students. Students should be recommended for grade level/course placement based on a collection of data such as test scores, school records, demonstrated competencies, recommendations by teachers, counselors, and administrators, and advocacy by parents/guardians. In all cases, grouping will remain flexible and will be reviewed periodically so that every student experiences the most appropriate learning environment.

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1. If a student desires placement or differentiated assignment other than that recommended by the staff, the parent/guardian and student should request the change and confer with the building level Principal involved to begin and complete a process of review.
  2. The review process should include clarification of the prerequisites, expectations, and responsibilities for success in the class being considered, as well as a review of data used for placement recommendation.
  3. If the members of the Acceleration Team review the data and believe that the student has the skills and motivation necessary for success, the student should be given an opportunity for the requested placement.
  4. If the placement issue is not resolved by consensus, the student may: a. remain in the original placement and direct an appeal to the building Principal or b. be assigned to the desired placement after the parent and student have signed a statement that they have understood the expectations and accepted the responsibilities for success in the desired class. At the center of any decision should be student's motivation and desire for academic, social, and personal success.
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The Momentum Academy Board of Education believes it is important to encourage, support and assist each student to develop academically in a growth pattern harmonious with his/her physical, emotional, and social development. There may be exceptions to the allotted time for students to progress through the six-year elementary school (K-5) curriculum. In arriving at a decision of acceleration or retention of a student, the combined views of the student, parents/guardians, teachers, building and regional administrators, counselor/therapist, and possibly outside evaluators are taken into consideration. All student assessment data, including measures of reading achievement, will be important factors in a decision. In each instance, K-8, the best interest of the student predominates.



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