

Lower Merion School District

301 East Montgomery Ave, Ardmore, PA 19003-3399

Guidelines for the Acceleration of Middle School Students

The Lower Merion School District recognizes its obligation to provide all students with a rigorous and challenging education. For most of our students, that obligation is met with an array of services and instruction that occur within the regular education curriculum. However, the District also recognizes that some students may require Acceleration. For purposes of these guidelines, Acceleration is the practice of presenting curriculum content earlier or at a faster pace than otherwise represented in grade level standards. These guidelines set forth the District's practice in determining whether a student qualifies for *Acceleration* and the appropriate kind of acceleration. *These guidelines apply to students where Acceleration is being considered for Grades 6-8.*

Definitions:

1. **Whole Grade Acceleration** shall mean the movement of a student from the current grade level placement to the next grade level. In the protocols explained below, a student being considered for Whole Grade Acceleration must meet the criteria based on scores on all listed assessments.
2. **Subject Matter Acceleration** shall mean the movement of a student from the current grade level subject placement to an advanced subject placement. The student will remain with his/her peers of the same age and grade for most of the school day. Subject Matter Acceleration may occur in a number of ways including, but not limited to, curriculum compacting, alternative instruction, or instruction in that subject at the next grade level.
3. **Enrichment** shall mean extending grade level instruction to greater depth or breadth or a combination of both through the use of alternative or supplemental materials as delivered by the regular education teacher or the gifted support teacher.
4. The **Acceleration Team** shall be comprised of the principal or assistant principal, school psychologist, classroom teacher, gifted support teacher, Lower Merion Gifted Supervisor or his/her designee, and the parents/guardians. Other staff may be included in these team meetings at the discretion of the principal. For the collection of Level I data, the principal may choose to gather a smaller school team for review of student data.

Timeline:

As more specifically described below, these Guidelines are designed to be completed within forty-five (45) school days of receipt of the Request for Acceleration. Parent requests for Acceleration will

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only be accepted one time per academic year, in either spring or fall. Reconsideration for Acceleration can be made 12 months from the date the previous Acceleration process ended.

Students must participate in the following LMSD courses: Integrated Math (1, 2 &3) and Biology. Acceleration past these courses will not be granted.

For purposes of these guidelines, a student considered for Acceleration may not meet the multiple criteria for gifted education as set forth in Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania Code. However, where a student has been referred by a parent or teacher for Acceleration but has not been recently evaluated for the Lower Merion mentally gifted program, the team will consider whether the student meets Lower Merion’s criteria for screening for the mentally gifted program as the team collects the data required by these guidelines.

When a student has been identified as a “Mentally Gifted Student”, the Acceleration Team, as defined above, may also act as a GIEP team.

The Lower Merion School District will determine eligibility for Acceleration according to these guidelines. No assessment that falls outside those assessments regularly administered in the student’s classrooms (i.e., grade level benchmark exams, unit tests, PSSA) shall be administered, in compliance with these guidelines, without written consent from the parents/guardians. Certain assessments will require the prior written permission of the student’s parent/guardian.

1. The student’s parents/guardians, his/her teacher, a counselor or administrator may initiate a referral for Acceleration. That referral should be made using the **LOWER MERION REQUEST FOR ACCELERATION FORM**, which can be obtained from the child’s principal or designee.
2. Upon receipt, the principal shall schedule a meeting of the school team. A member of the team shall be appointed as a case manager by the team to collect the Level I data listed below and enter the information on the Middle School Acceleration Protocol, attached.
3. To be eligible for Acceleration, the data gathered for the student must meet the Level I screening criteria as established, below. Level I progress data is gathered to establish a pattern of high achievement that suggests additional content rigor is required for this student. The assessments listed below identify sources of data and guiding performance criteria that building teams should review and consider in making a Level I determination.
 - **Report card** showing consistently high performance in all subject areas.
 - **Lower Merion Benchmark Assessments** (when available in the content area or across all content areas) that place the student in the upper 5% of grade level students on these exams. Benchmark Exams that have been administered within the past 12 months (as measured from the date of the initial request), when available, will be the basis for this Level I screening criteria.
 - **Curriculum Based Measures** including a review of the most current Text Dependent Analysis response.
 - **PSSA Scores** (when available) that shows the student Advanced in the content area or Advanced in all content areas.

Timeline. Level I screening, including the collection of data outlined above and a meeting with the parents, will take no more than fifteen (15) school days from the receipt of the **Request for Acceleration**.

Data for Level I will be collected on the **Middle School Acceleration Protocol**. At the conclusion of data collection, the school team will meet to process the results and make a determination, based on this data, on whether to proceed to Level II. If a decision is made to not move forward to Level II screening, the principal, classroom teacher and case manager will discuss appropriate enrichment opportunities for the student with the parents. The Acceleration Team will communicate this decision, in writing, to the parent and to the classroom teacher.

4. Students who meet Level I criteria will be eligible to move to Level II. To be eligible for Acceleration, the Acceleration Team will consider the sources of data, listed below, and guiding performance criteria.
 - *Next Level Benchmark Exams*: When applied to Level II screening, Next Level Benchmark Exams require a student to pass, at the 90% level, a cumulative benchmark exam in the grade level/course to be skipped to show mastery of content sufficient to consider movement to the next grade level or content level class.
 - *Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)*: Student to demonstrate proficiency on an above grade level DRP in the proposed accelerated grade.
 - *Text Dependent Analysis (TDA)*: Student to demonstrate proficiency on an above grade level TDA in the proposed accelerated grade.
 - Other assessments and measures, as required by the Acceleration Team

Those assessments in blue, above, require written permission by the parents prior to the administration of the assessment.

5. For students being considered by the team for Whole Grade Acceleration, the *Iowa Acceleration Scale* will be administered after the student meets the Level II screening criteria, above, as reviewed by the Acceleration Team. In addition to considering academic data, the Iowa Acceleration Scale evaluates social and emotional factors that may help the team understand the impact of acceleration on the child.

The results of data collected and assessments administered in Level II will be shared with the Acceleration Team. If the team does not endorse a decision to Accelerate, a written explanation will be prepared by the principal, or his/her designee, outlining the reasons for denial. When a decision is made to not move forward to Accelerate, the Acceleration Team will discuss appropriate enrichment opportunities for the student with the parents and teacher(s). If the team makes a decision to Accelerate, then the team will consider Acceleration options that meet the student's needs. Where Acceleration is recommended, a transition plan will be drafted by the case manager in collaboration with members of the team. The Acceleration Team will develop a timeline in collaboration with the teachers and parents for Acceleration. Opportunities for teachers to meet and share information on the student will be provided prior to the date the student will be accelerated into a grade level or subject matter classroom.

Timeline: Level II screening information will be collected and shared with the Acceleration Team within thirty (30) school days of the decision to move from Level I to Level II; provided, however, that the final Acceleration Plan and the potential grade level or subject matter acceleration may occur outside of this timeline as determined by the Acceleration team. These timelines may be extended when extraordinary circumstances warrant and, when this occurs, the Case Manager shall communicate that extension and the reasons to the teacher(s) and parents.

GIEP Considerations

Where a decision to Accelerate a student is made and when the student is identified as a Gifted Student, appropriate modifications to the Gifted Individual Education Plan (GIEP) may be made at the discretion of the GIEP team. For purposes of making these modifications to the GIEP, the Acceleration Team may serve as a GIEP Team.

Math Subject Area Acceleration Considerations

1. The District will not approve acceleration through or the “skipping” of a course(s) that is/are associated with a Keystone Exam. (Integrated Math 1 and 2)
2. Courses taken outside of the District through individual means, including CTY through Johns Hopkins, are not recognized as replacement for Lower Merion courses.
3. Students must progress through the math courses in the approved sequence: *Math 6, Math 7, Math 8 (or Math 7/8), Integrated Math 1, Integrated Math 2, Algebra 2 (or Integrated Math 3 beginning in fall 2021), Pre-Calculus, Calculus*
4. Students will not be permitted to accelerate into the next math course in the sequence after the first marking period has ended, with the exception of extraordinary circumstances. Requests for math acceleration must be made before that time.