

No. 140

SECTION: Programs

TITLE: Acceleration

CATASAUQUA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

ADOPTED: May 14, 2012

| | #140 — Acceleration | | |
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| I. <u>Purpose</u> | <p>Catasauqua Area School District’s mission is to provide all students with a rigorous, rich, and challenging education. To satisfy this mission, some students may require acceleration. Further, the state gifted education regulations provide that a gifted student’s education placement must provide opportunities to participate in acceleration or enrichment, or both, as appropriate for the student’s needs. The premise of acceleration is that the educational placement of a student should match the mastery level of the student rather than the student’s age. Acceleration may take many forms, such as single-subject acceleration, curriculum compacting, dual enrollment, credit by examination, advanced placement courses, early entrance to school, whole-grade acceleration, continuous progress, self-paced instruction, and telescoping curriculum. The purpose of this policy is to state the District’s general policy with respect to acceleration and its application in certain specific circumstances.</p> | 1 | |
| 22 Pa. Code, § 16.41(b)(3) | | 2 | |
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| II. <u>General Statement; Scope</u> | | <p>The Catasauqua Area School District will permit qualifying students to pursue one or more forms of acceleration, as appropriate. Nothing in this policy shall interfere with the rights and procedures applicable under Federal and Pennsylvania laws and regulations to special education and special education for gifted students and the provision of individualized gifted education or special education, including, where appropriate, acceleration pursuant to a gifted individualized education plan or individualized education program.</p> <p>For purposes of this policy, the term “special student” shall mean a student who is a gifted student within the meaning of 22 Pa. Code chapter 16, or a student with a disability within the meaning of 22 Pa. Code chapter 14.</p> | 17 |
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| <p>III. <u>Identification of Students to be Considered for Acceleration: Procedures</u></p> | <p>#140 — Acceleration</p> <p>A. Special students shall be considered for acceleration where appropriate during the development of their gifted individualized education plan or individualized education program.</p> <p>B. A student who is not receiving special or gifted education may be referred for acceleration consideration to the school principal.</p> <p>1. The referral must be in writing on the District’s Request for Acceleration Form, and may be made by the student’s parent/guardian, a District staff member, counselor, school psychologist, or administrator, or by the student himself/herself.</p> <p>2. The criteria which may justify a referral for acceleration consideration and which will be considered in determining whether to provide acceleration include:</p> <p>a. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS) scores above benchmark goals.</p> <p>b. On grade-level PSSA scores of high Advanced (upper 50% of advanced scores) in Reading and/or Math.</p> <p>c. On grade-level 4Sight assessment scores of high Advanced (upper 50% of advanced scores) in Reading and/or Math.</p> <p>d. On grade-level Study Island assessment scores of high Advanced (upper 50% of advanced scores) in Reading and/or Math.</p> <p>e. Curriculum based assessment scores in the 95th percentile or above.</p> <p>f. Above grade level assessment scores in the 50th percentile or above.</p> <p>g. Diagnostic assessment scores above grade level.</p> <p>h. Other standardized achievement or aptitude test scores in the 90th percentile or above.</p> <p>i. Overall IQ score one or more standard deviations above the mean.</p> <p>j. Student products of high quality or other evidence of outstanding performance.</p> | <p>Page 2</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p> <p>26</p> <p>27</p> <p>28</p> <p>29</p> <p>30</p> <p>31</p> <p>32</p> <p>33</p> <p>34</p> <p>35</p> <p>36</p> <p>37</p> <p>38</p> <p>39</p> <p>40</p> <p>41</p> <p>42</p> <p>43</p> <p>44</p> <p>45</p> <p>46</p> <p>47</p> <p>48</p> <p>49</p> <p>50</p> |
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- C. Upon receipt of a Request for Acceleration Form, the principal (or his/her designee) shall immediately review the District’s procedures concerning the screening and evaluation process for identifying students who are thought to be gifted (“**gifted identification procedures**”). If required by the gifted identification procedures, the principal (or his/her designee) shall direct the applicable District employees to take appropriate action, and no further action shall be taken with respect to acceleration of the student until the gifted identification procedures are completed.

- D. If either (a) no action is required under the gifted identification procedures with respect to the student following the referral for acceleration, or (b) the gifted identification procedures are completed and as a result the student is not to receive specially designed instruction through a gifted individualized education plan or an individualized education program, then the principal (or his/her designee) shall request written permission from the student’s parent or legal guardian to evaluate the student for possible accelerated placement. No evaluation shall proceed without such consent.
 - 1. If the parent/guardian consents, then the principal (or his/her designee) shall convene an acceleration evaluation team that may include a building administrator, gifted program coordinator, classroom teacher(s), school counselor, and school psychologist. The team shall seek input from the parent or guardian, and may also consult with the student. The membership of the team may be modified depending on the student’s needs and the type of acceleration being considered.
 - 2. The acceleration evaluation team shall conduct a fair and thorough evaluation of the student, using a variety of data sources, including standards-based and curriculum-based assessments, and the student’s maturity and desire for acceleration. The acceleration evaluation team shall consider the criteria described in part III, B, 2 above, the following factors and skills, and any other information it deems relevant:
 - a. Academic Factors — attendance, motivation, attitude toward learning, academic self-concept, grade level(s) of any sibling(s).
 - b. Development Factors — age, physical size, motor coordination.
 - c. Interpersonal Skills — emotional development, behavior, relationships with peers, relationships with teachers.

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3. Upon completion of their evaluation, but no later than 45 school days after the District receives consent from the parent/guardian to evaluate, the acceleration evaluation team shall issue a written decision to the principal and the student’s parent or legal guardian. If the team determines that the student qualifies for one or more forms of acceleration, the decision shall include a written acceleration plan which includes:
 - a. The appropriate type(s) of acceleration; and
 - b. Strategies to support a successful transition to the accelerated setting.
4. The student’s parent/guardian may appeal any decision of the acceleration evaluation team to the District Superintendent, in writing, within 30 school days after receipt of the team’s decision. The Superintendent shall review the appeal and notify the parent/guardian of his/her decision within 30 school days after receipt of the appeal. Except as provided in paragraph 5 below, the Superintendent’s decision shall be final.
5. No acceleration plan issued by the acceleration evaluation team or by the Superintendent shall be implemented without the consent of a parent/guardian of the student.
6. The Superintendent (or his/her designee) shall appoint a staff member to oversee the implementation of the acceleration plan. If problems develop, this staff member shall coordinate a review of the matter with the acceleration evaluation team, the parent/guardian, and the student. The acceleration evaluation team may recommend a modification or revocation of the acceleration plan where appropriate. The modification or revocation shall be implemented with the consent of the parent/guardian. In the absence of such consent, the Superintendent shall permit the continuation of the original acceleration plan if the parent/guardian expressly and in writing waives the proposed modification or revocation and any claim that the original acceleration plan is not appropriate for the student. If the parent/guardian fails or refuses to sign either a consent to the modification or revocation or a waiver under this paragraph 6, the Superintendent shall take such action as he/she deems in the best interest of the student.

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IV. Specific Situations Addressed

Cf., Centennial School District v. Commonwealth, Department of Education, 517 Pa. 540, 539 A.2d 785 (1988); New Brighton Area School District v. Matthew Z., 697 A.2d 1056 (Pa. Cmwlth. 1997).

A. Acceleration Limited to District Curriculum.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this policy, students who qualify for acceleration, including gifted students, shall only be accelerated within the scope of the District’s curriculum. Thus, for example, if the District’s curriculum does not include a course in Linear Algebra, then a student may not be accelerated to a course in Linear Algebra taught at a college or university, regardless of whether the student has completed all mathematics courses offered by the District.

B. Courses Taught by Outside Educators — GPA.

A student participating in a course taught by an educator outside the District which is arranged or approved by the District as part of the student’s education by the District (such as a college or university course or an Advanced Academics course), will receive credit for the course for District purposes to the same extent as for a regular District course taught by a District instructor, *except* that the course grade will not be factored into the calculation of the student’s grade point average.

C. Testing Out of a Course.

1. A student who qualifies for acceleration may be recognized as being competent in the subject matter of a course not taken by the student if the student:
 - a. Achieves a score of at least Advanced on the Keystone Exam (if any) which is associated with the course; or
 - b. Achieves a score of at least 93% on the final examination administered for that course.

A student who is so recognized with respect to a course may be referred to as having “tested out” of that particular course.

2. The academic transcript of a student who tests out of one or more courses shall include the names of all such courses, with an appropriate descriptor indicating that the student did not take the course but was recognized as being competent in the subject matter of the course through superior performance on an approved test.

3. Course credit shall *not* be awarded to a student for any course that the student tests out of taking, and no such course shall be counted towards the minimum number of credits required for graduation.
4. The test scores received by a student for any course that the student tests out of taking shall not be factored into the calculation of the student's grade point average. A course that a student tests out of taking shall not in any other manner be considered in determining the student's grade point average.
5. A student who tests out of a course which is a prerequisite for taking another course shall be treated as having satisfied that prerequisite.
6. A student who tests out of a course which is required for graduation shall be treated as having satisfied that particular graduation requirement.
7. If (a) there is a graduation requirement that a student take and pass a minimum number of courses in a particular subject area, (b) the student tests out of one or more courses in that subject area, and (c) there are no remaining courses under the District curriculum in that subject area that the student has not already completed or tested out of taking, then the student shall be treated as having satisfied that particular graduation requirement.

This rule is illustrated by the following examples:

- a. Assume there is a graduation requirement that a student take and pass four high-school level courses in Subject X, and the District offers four high-school level courses in Subject X. A student who takes and passes three of those courses, and tests out of the other course, will be treated as having satisfied that particular graduation requirement.
- b. Assume there is a graduation requirement that a student take and pass three high-school level courses in Subject Y, and the District offers four high-school level courses in Subject Y. A student who takes and passes only two of those courses, and tests out of a third course, will *not* be treated as having satisfied that particular graduation requirement. There is still one course in Subject Y that the student can take. The student will either have to take and pass the one remaining course (and so satisfy the graduation requirement by taking and passing three courses), or test out of that course (and so satisfy the graduation requirement by taking and passing two courses, testing out of two courses, and having no other courses available).

D. Student Payments.

1. Students taking a dual enrollment course (*i.e.*, one which offers to provide both credit for District high school purposes and college credit), must pay all of the cost required to attain the college credit. High school credit for the dual enrollment course will still be awarded even if the student elects not to pay for and receive the college credit.
2. Students taking an Advanced Placement course must pay all of the cost for taking the Advanced Placement examination. High school credit for the Advanced Placement course will still be awarded even if the student elects not to pay for and take the Advanced Placement examination and thus not receive any associated college credit and/or college course acceleration.
3. If a student participates in an online course which is arranged or approved by the District as part of the student’s education by the District in order to provide acceleration for the student within the scope of the District’s curriculum, the District will pay all of the costs of the online course.

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