



# Acceleration Procedures

[Public Act 100-0421](#) – also known as the Accelerated Placement Act – was passed by the Illinois General Assembly on November 19, 2017, and went into effect on August 25, 2017. Guidelines for the bill are as follows:

- Illinois public school districts to adopt and implement policies on acceleration that, at minimum, provide opportunities for...
  - early entrance to kindergarten,
  - early entrance to first grade,
  - opportunities for accelerating a student in a single subject area and
  - opportunities for “whole grade” acceleration (sometimes referred to as “grade skipping”).

The law requires that district acceleration policies include:

- A provision that states that participation in accelerated placement is not limited to those children who have been identified as gifted and talented, but rather is open to all children who demonstrate high ability and who may benefit from accelerated placement;
- A fair and equitable decision-making process that involves multiple persons and includes a student’s parents or guardians;
- Procedures for notifying parents or guardians of a child of a decision affecting that child’s participation in an accelerated placement program; and
- An assessment process that includes multiple valid, reliable indicators.

Other components mentioned in the law include:

- Procedures for annually informing the community at-large, including parents or guardians, about accelerated placement opportunities and the methods used for the identification of children eligible for accelerated placement;
- A process for referral that allows for multiple referrers, including a child’s parents or guardians: other referrers may include licensed educational professionals, the child, with written consent of a parent or guardian, through a licensed educational professional who has knowledge of the referred child’s abilities, or in case of possible early entrance, a preschool educator, pediatrician, or psychologist who knows the child; and
- A provision that provides that children participating in an accelerated placement program and their parents or guardians will be provided a written plan specifying the type of acceleration the child will receive and strategies to support the child.
- The legislation also directs ISBE to collect and disseminate data on academic acceleration.

## Introduction

In District 63, we are committed to empowering all students to succeed in a changing world. This includes providing engaging, differentiated learning experiences for all students to help them succeed academically as well as socially and emotionally.

Educational paths come in all shapes and sizes; what is considered the right path for one student may not be appropriate for another. The decision for a child to enter school early, or accelerate to the next grade level, can have a profound effect on the child's academic and social performance for the remainder of their school career. It is a decision that needs to be taken seriously. Early school experiences shape self-confidence and influence children for the rest of their lives.

Please carefully consider whether enrolling early or accelerating to the next grade level will be of long-term benefit for your child. If you have any questions about your child's education prior to making a referral, please reach out to their teacher and/or school administrative team.

## Key Terms

- “Accelerated placement” means the placement of a child in an educational setting with curriculum that is usually reserved for children who are older or in higher grades than the child. Accelerated placement is not limited to those students who have been identified as gifted and talented, and eligibility shall be open to all students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, English proficiency or socioeconomic status.
- “Early entrance to kindergarten” is the admission of a student to Kindergarten who will not yet be five years old by September 1 of that school year.
- “Early entrance to first grade” is the admission of a student to first grade who will not yet be six years old by September 1 of that school year and who has not completed kindergarten. Students who are younger than six upon starting first grade but who were admitted early to kindergarten do not need to be reevaluated prior to admission to first grade.
- “Whole grade acceleration” is the practice of assigning a student to a higher grade level than is typical given the student's age on a full-time basis.
- “Individual subject acceleration” is the practice of assigning a student to specific, more challenging content than is typical given the student's grade level placement.

## Publication of Acceleration Policy and Referral Procedures/Forms

- Copies of this policy and referral forms for evaluation shall be made available to district staff and parents at each school building and shall be published on the District 63 website.

## Initiation of Evaluation Process

- **Referral Process**

- Referrers: Any student residing in District 63 may be referred by a teacher, administrator, psychologist, or a parent/guardian to the school principal for evaluation for possible accelerated placement.
- Referral Intake Form: The referrer shall complete the appropriate section of the referral form and submit it to the school principal.
- Once the referral form is completed and officially submitted to the school principal, the clock on the 30 calendar day evaluation process begins.

- **Written Parent Consent**

- The principal of the referred student's school shall obtain written permission from the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to evaluate the student for possible accelerated placement.
- Consent is presumed when the individual referring the student for evaluation is a student's parent or legal guardian.

- **Timeline**

- Students residing in District 63 who are referred for possible accelerated placement during the school year shall receive a determination within 30 calendar days.
- Students residing in District 63 who are referred for possible accelerated placement 60 or more days prior to the start of the school year shall be evaluated in advance of the start of the school year.
- In all other cases, including but not limited to students transferring into the district, evaluations of a referred student shall be placed in the age appropriate grade. Initial placement will also be up to the principal's discretion until the evaluation process can be completed.

## Acceleration Evaluation Process

- District 63 utilizes a fair and equitable decision-making process that involves multiple people. The multi-person evaluation team is responsible for gathering relevant, reliable and comprehensive data in order to determine whether and what type of accelerated placement is appropriate for a student.
  - A diverse evaluation team will, at minimum, include the following stakeholders:
    - School principal or assistant principal
    - School psychologist
  - If needed, additional stakeholders will join the multi-person evaluation team.
- **Early Entrance to Kindergarten**
  - Currently reside within the East Maine School District 63 boundary (proof of residency is required)
  - Provide original birth certificate.
  - Students who turn five between September 2 and September 30 must demonstrate exceptional achievement and aptitude (i.e., 95th percentile and above). Attention and maturity levels are

also considered. If parents request to move forward with the process they will need to complete the following forms:

- [Parent Request for Early Entrance to Kindergarten](#)
  - Child Information Form A (completed by parent) - *included in link above*
  - Child Information Form B (completed by current preschool) - *included in link above*
- Once all forms are turned into the principal at the requested school, an evaluation process will take place within 30 calendar days. For all requests received after June 1, the evaluation will take place during the second week in August.
- A District 63 psychologist will evaluate early entrance applicants to kindergarten using a school readiness assessment in addition to other early literacy, numeracy, and motor assessments.
- Once the evaluation is complete parents will receive the results of the evaluation. If students meet the the eligibility requirements of scoring at or above the 95th percentile, the multi-person evaluation team, along with the parent(s), will meet - all within the 30 day evaluation window - to discuss the results. The student must meet the required benchmarks, as outlined in the rubric, along with evaluation team agreement, for the student to qualify for early admittance to kindergarten.
- Students who turn five on or after after October 1 must demonstrate exceptional achievement and aptitude (i.e., 95th percentile and above). The student must have a complete psychological evaluation conducted by an accredited non-district psychologist paid for by the student's parents. The evaluation must include assessments in cognitive ability, pre-academic and/or academic skills, fine motor skills, and social-emotional functioning (preferably with social-emotional information collected from parents as well as a preschool teacher). The child must demonstrate superior intellectual ability. Individual intelligence tests such as the Stanford-Binet, Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scales of Intelligence, or another comparable psychometrically sound ability test may be used. A standard score of at least 120 is required to be considered for early entrance (i.e., 95th percentile and above). If parents request to move forward with the process and the student meets the criteria, they will need to complete the following forms:
- [Parent Request for Early Entrance to Kindergarten](#)
  - Child Information Form A (completed by parent) - *included in link above*
  - Child Information Form B (completed by current preschool) - *included in link above*
  - Provide copy of psychological evaluation report from accredited non-district psychologist paid for by the student's parents.

Once all forms are turned into the principal at the requested school, an evaluation process will take place within 30 calendar days. For all requests received after June 1, the evaluation will take place during the second week in August. Once the evaluation is complete parents will receive the results of the evaluation. If students meet the eligibility requirements of scoring at or above the 95th percentile, the multi-person evaluation team, along with the parent(s), will meet - all within the 30 day evaluation window - to discuss the results. The student must meet the required benchmarks, as outlined in the rubric, along with evaluation team agreement, for the student to qualify for early admittance to kindergarten.

- **Early Entrance to First Grade**

- In order for a student to be considered for early entrance to first grade, the student must meet the following criteria:
  - Currently reside within the East Maine School District 63 boundary (proof of residency is required)
  - Successfully complete the registration process, and/or provide an original birth certificate.
  - *Preferred, but not required:* Successfully completed kindergarten in a private, parochial, charter or other public school. A copy of the student's final kindergarten report card will be requested. Preferably, the kindergarten teacher should be fully certified and holds an Illinois Professional Education License (or its equivalent from another state)
  
- If parents request to move forward with the process and the student meets the criteria, they will need to complete the following forms:
  - [Parent Request for Early Entrance to First Grade](#)
  - Child Information Form A (completed by parent) - *included in link above*
  - *Preferred, but not required:* Child Information Form B (completed by school of current or exited kindergarten) - *included in link above*
  
- Once all forms are turned into the principal at the requested school, an evaluation process will be scheduled to take place within 30 calendar days. For all requests received after June 1, the evaluation will take place during the second week in August. No students will be considered for early entrance after August 1.
  - The multi-person evaluation team will conduct the assessments, which encompasses the following:
    - Language development
    - Academic proficiency
    - Social/emotional readiness
  
- Once the evaluation is complete parents will receive the results of the evaluation. If students meet the eligibility requirements of scoring at or above the 95th percentile, the multi-person evaluation team, along with the parent(s), will meet - all within the 30 day evaluation window - to discuss the results. The student must meet the required benchmarks, as outlined in the rubric, along with evaluation team agreement, for the student to qualify for early admittance to first grade.
  
- **K-8 Subject Acceleration**
  - K-5 Subject Acceleration
    - Due to the staggering of schedules at the elementary level for grades K-5, subject acceleration is achieved through differentiated instruction within the general education classroom. Meaning, classroom teachers will utilize multiple sources of data and instructional strategies to meet the needs of each individual learner within the general education classroom.
  
  - 6-8 Subject Acceleration
    - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores, teacher recommendation, and when applicable, subject placement tests, are used to select students for accelerated subject area classes in math. For Language Arts, classroom teachers will utilize multiple sources

of data and instructional strategies to meet the needs of each individual learner within the general education classroom.

- **K-8 Whole Grade Acceleration**

- The district offers two windows in which whole-grade acceleration may be requested:
  - i. Between September 1 and November 15
  - ii. Between April 1 and May 31
- In order for a student to be considered for whole grade acceleration, the student must be referred by a teacher, administrator, psychologist, or a parent/guardian to the school principal for evaluation for possible accelerated placement. The referrer must complete the [Whole Grade Acceleration Referral Form](#). Once the form is completed and turned into the principal, a 30 calendar day evaluation process begins.
- This request does not mean that at the end of the 30 days your child will be accelerated. If it is determined that they qualify for acceleration, the team will meet to create a transition plan including a start date for the transition. Ideally, transitions will occur at a natural break in the school calendar.
- The student must meet the qualifications of each benchmark to proceed to the next:
  - **Benchmark #1:**
    - Students must have taken the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment at least 3 times within the district's assessment window in order to be considered for whole-grade acceleration, AND
    - More than 50% of the data points in each subject (reading AND math) must be 95th percentile or above.
  - **Benchmark #2:** Students must score above the 95th percentile on a cognitive abilities assessment.
  - **Benchmark #3:** Students must score above the 95th percentile on assessments measuring:
    - Academic achievement (individually administered)
    - Social and emotional strengths
    - Self-concept
  - **Benchmark #4:** If the student meets the criteria for benchmarks #1-3, the evaluation team, along with the parent(s), will schedule a summative meeting to make a final placement decision based on all of the evaluation information collected.
    - If the student is deemed by the team to qualify for a whole grade level acceleration placement, the team will create an implementation plan to support the student's transition into a new grade level.
    - This request does not mean that at the end of the 30 days your child will be accelerated. If it is determined that they qualify for acceleration, the team will meet to create a transition plan including a start date for the transition. Ideally, transitions will occur at a natural break in the school calendar.

- **Procedures for Notifying Parents/Guardians**

- A parent or guardian of the evaluated student shall be notified in writing of the outcome of the evaluation process within 30 days of the submission of the referral to the principal.
- A parent or legal guardian may appeal in writing the decision of the evaluation team to the District 63 Superintendent within 30 days of being notified of the evaluation team's decision. The superintendent shall review the appeal and notify the parent or guardian who filed the appeal within 30 days of receiving the appeal. The superintendent's decision is final. However, the student may be referred and evaluated again one calendar year from the evaluation team's written final evaluation report.
- The decision that a student is or is not eligible for acceleration (and, if applicable, the acceleration plan) shall be communicated to the student's current teacher(s) and to all teachers (including specialists) and relevant administrative personnel.

### **Accelerated Placement**

- The evaluation team shall create a written placement and transition plan for a student selected for whole grade acceleration or acceleration in an individual subject area. The written plan will be provided to the student's parents or guardians. Any accommodations or modifications the student is entitled to receive under an IEP or 504 Plan shall be available in the accelerated setting.
- The policy shall provide guidance regarding how the accelerated student's transition will be monitored and by whom. During the transition period specified in the written plan, the accelerated student's parent or guardian may request in writing that the student be returned to the non-accelerated setting without penalty.