How do I know if my child is a good candidate for acceleration?

A student is considered a good candidate if they:
• Clearly demonstrate above-average ability in all subject areas;
• Clearly demonstrate accelerated performance when compared to peers in abilities;
• Have excellent skills in critical thinking and solve problems well;
• Enjoy challenges and difficult tasks;
• Have physical size and motor skills comparable with the proposed acceleration grade level; if size is dramatically different, this can be discussed on the impact and how the discrepancy will be managed;
• Demonstrate a positive attitude, neither over-estimating or under-estimating their ability;
• Are self-motivated and complete tasks unasked;
• Are motivated to excel;
• Adapt easily socially and emotionally to new and/or challenging environments;
• Received challenging and enriching instruction, but still cannot have their needs met at the current grade level.

My child says he/she is bored. Does this mean they should be accelerated?

This statement in isolation is not a reason to refer a student for the acceleration process. It is important to understand that being “bored” can have a number of meanings. It does not always have to mean that the curriculum is not challenging enough. In some instances, it can actually mean that something may be a little too challenging for the student, so the student is using avoidance to engage in the task. Through dialogue with your child and their teacher, it is important to get some insight on what exactly being “bored” means. Is it too easy? Too hard? Not an area of interest? Something else?

After talking with my child’s teacher, we believe that after receiving challenging and enriching differentiated instruction, the child’s needs are not best met in their current placement. What should we do?

Sometimes despite numerous enrichment and extension opportunities provided, it is possible that your child needs the additional challenge of a subject or whole grade acceleration. This intervention is for a small percentage of the population, and a student need not be identified as gifted in order to be referred for acceleration. A whole grade acceleration will address the needs of a student who demonstrates readiness academically, socially, and emotionally in all areas to support a move to the next grade level.

The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) is an instrument used for whole-grade acceleration K-8 across the nation. The IAS requires the acceleration committee to look at assessment data, school and academic factors, developmental factors, interpersonal skills, school and family attitude and support as well as critical items such as siblings in the accelerated grade level or the student’s ability is less than one standard deviation above the mean.

The whole grade acceleration becomes a permanent placement so one must examine the potential for long-term achievement. Accelerated students should be expected to achieve, relative to their new grade peers, at a high level that is generally comparable to their performance in their previous grade. These students are typically in the top 10 percent in a class and one would expect them to remain in the top 10 percent throughout their academic career. Thus, test scores should be strong in order for acceleration to be successful.