

## **Grade Acceleration Case Study: Compacting Kindergarten and First Grade into One Year**

“Helen” turned six in March. She attends a single gender elementary school in a public school district. Helen’s mom brought her to kindergarten screening hoping that the all-girls school would have options for her education. Helen could already read. Her mom had checked several schools, none of which offered special programming or acceleration. From Helen’s kindergarten teacher:

“From the moment I met Helen, I knew she was not going to be a typical kindergarten student. Sure, I noticed she was rating higher on her screening, and her mom mentioned that she was able to read, but I have had that happen before. After Helen’s perfect score on the screening, I gave her several pre-decodable books (typically introduced in October) and she breezed through them. I moved to the decodable books, (we usually get to them in December), she read the highest book in the set fluently. She was also able to read the picture books in our collection. I found her number skills also well developed. It was apparent to me that Helen would need more than any challenge I could provide her. I consulted with the principal, 1st grade teacher and school psychologist.”

Helen attended both kindergarten and first grade this school year, with the plan to gather data throughout the year to decide whether to accelerate her to second grade for next year. We used the Iowa Acceleration Scale to help with the determination. Helen had all core subject instruction in the first grade classroom.

From her first grade teacher:

“Helen learns very quickly and adapts to any situation. She has a great personality, which allows her to fit into our classroom without feeling as if she is too young. The first graders have accepted her, as one of their own. Helen has mastered first grade to the point of outscoring many of our typical first graders.”

According to Helen’s kindergarten teacher, “Helen has continued to grow both academically and socially throughout the school year. She is fun to be around. She is social, yet not too loud. She has a sense of humor, she is very inquisitive, and has a great attitude. She loves to problem solve and likes to take her own route to solve the problem.”

From Helen’s mom:

“Helen has a sister, Caroline, who is two years older. Helen was in day-care and her sister in pre-school when Helen started to pick-up everything Caroline was learning. Next Caroline was teaching her directly. At 3½, Helen attended preschool with four and five year olds. She learned to read very quickly.

Helen loves to do school work and Caroline loves to help Helen learn. Helen often sets competitive challenges for herself about the next thing she will learn. Caroline even

“shows off” to the kids in the neighborhood by having Helen show them what she can do.”

If you ask Helen today what her life plan is, she will tell you she wants to be a princess with her own castle. She said, “Princesses need to be smart to help all their people”.

Process used to determine whether to accelerate Helen a whole grade:

Participate in kindergarten classroom setting every day,

Offer instruction for first grade core subjects with 1st grade and monitor progress.

Complete Iowa Acceleration Scale, 2nd edition. (IAS)

WISC-IV used to measure cognitive Ability (she scored 1 standard deviation above the mean)

Aptitude assessments by having her take district-wide Stanford at 1st grade level.

(Reading was at the 70 th percentile, Math was at the 52nd percentile)

Individually administered Woodcock Johnson III Tests of Achievement (Broad reading, math and written language scores at the 99th percentile.)

Helen’s final score on the IAS indicated that she was a good candidate for whole-grade acceleration.

Helen was in effect accelerated from kindergarten to first grade this school year.

However, we wanted her to have the kindergarten experience and decided to have her try both grades, rather than rush to place her in first grade. By the time all the data was collected for the IAS, we had plenty of functional assessment information to confirm that Helen had mastered 1st grade requirements. Helen will be in 2nd grade for the 2006-2007 school year.