

The district acceleration policy and implementation requirement by HB 79 became effective March 29, 2007. The district policy is required to be either the ODE model policy or a policy covering similar issues that was adopted by the district board. If the district did not adopt the state model, they were required to submit their policy to ODE for approval. Changes to the policy are required to be submitted to ODE for approval. The following represents a number of questions the Department has received regarding implementation of acceleration policies:

**April, 2012**

**What is the ODE-approved process for evaluation of students referred for possible early entrance to kindergarten or first grade or whole-grade acceleration?** *The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS), 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* is currently the only acceleration assessment process approved by ODE for evaluating candidates for early entrance to kindergarten and whole-grade acceleration for students in kindergarten through Grade 8. ODE selected the IAS because it is the only tool that uses longitudinal research studies on acceleration to reliably predict success for students whose parents and teachers are considering these options. Local evaluation committee members who determine accelerated placement for students have found the tool useful. For more information about acceleration, click [here](#).

**How does the ODE-approved acceleration evaluation process include consideration of the rigor of the district's curriculum?** Use of the IAS is the only approved process for evaluating students, however the decision to accelerate rests with the district evaluation committee. The committee is charged with matching the results from the IAS with the rigor of the district curriculum to determine correct placement for the student.

**What if the district wants to create a process for evaluation of candidates for acceleration that is different from the *Iowa Acceleration Scale, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*?** Districts may create a fair and thorough process and submit it to ODE for approval. The submission must include longitudinal research studies on the acceleration evaluation process that reliably predict success for students whose parents and teachers are considering this option.

**What if there is a policy or procedure in the district (for example, a 125 IQ score) that conflicts with *Iowa Acceleration Scale* criteria?** If districts have conflicting policies regarding acceleration in their policy manuals then certain policies are ***outdated and should be removed***. Policies under kindergarten entrance and acceleration prior to the 2007 adoption of the ODE-approved acceleration policy are ***outdated***. When parents call ODE regarding district policies, they are advised using the approved district policy on file in the Office for Exceptional Children.

**Can the district use a screening tool to determine who should proceed through the entire IAS process?** No. Without the information provided by the IAS the district does not have enough information to determine a student's readiness for acceleration.

**What if a child being evaluated for possible early entrance to kindergarten or first grade or whole-grade scores an IQ below 115?** The *IAS* states that if the student's ability (measured by IQ) is less than one standard deviation above the mean that acceleration is "not recommended". However, the form

strongly encourages the team to complete the IAS. In cases like this, ODE has determined that the district may inform the parents that acceleration is "not recommended", but the district might want to consider continuing the testing. From cases we have reviewed here, parents can be uncomfortable with a decision based on one score and may appeal to the superintendent.

**Can the district set a specific deadline date for referrals for early entrance to kindergarten or first grade?** Children who are referred for evaluation for possible accelerated placement sixty or more days prior to the start of the school year shall be evaluated in advance of the start of the school year so that the child may be placed in the accelerated placement on the first day of school. Districts may *encourage* parents to refer children by an earlier date to ensure that parents will know of accelerated placement early enough to determine childcare needs for the school year.

**What committee members are required to evaluate students referred for possible acceleration?**

The committee must be comprised of:

- (a) a principal or assistant principal from the child's current school;
- (b) a current teacher of the referred student (with the exception of students referred for possible early admission to kindergarten);
- (c) a teacher at the grade level to which the student may be accelerated (with the exception of students referred for possible early graduation from high school);
- (d) a parent or legal guardian of the referred student or a representative designated by a parent or legal guardian of the referred student;
- (e) a gifted education coordinator or gifted intervention specialist. If a gifted coordinator or gifted intervention specialist is not available in the district, a school psychologist or guidance counselor with expertise in the appropriate use of academic acceleration may be substituted.

**Can students be referred for acceleration in a verbal conversation?** Referrals for acceleration evaluation should be either a written message to the principal or on an official district form.

**What tools must the district have in place to confirm and guide the acceleration?** The acceleration evaluation committee shall provide written confirmation of the acceleration to the principal and the student's parents within 45 days of the referral. The committee shall develop a Written Acceleration Plan (WAP) that specifies the placement of the student in an accelerated setting and strategies to support a successful transition to the setting. The committee must designate a school staff member to ensure successful implementation of the WAP.

**What happens if the acceleration evaluation committee does not accelerate a referred student?**

The committee shall provide a written decision to the principal and the student's parents within 45 days of the referral. The student's parents may appeal the committee decision in writing to the district Superintendent within 30 days of being notified of the committee's decision.

**Do state funds for kindergarten enrollment flow when a child who is not 5 by the district cut-off date enters kindergarten?** Yes. For a traditional public district any student enrolled in kindergarten regardless of age will be included in the funded count for the district.