

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Waiver for Subject-Accelerated Elementary and Middle School Students

### Background

In July 2025, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) submitted a request to the U.S. Department of Education to extend and expand its existing waiver under the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. This waiver allows elementary and middle school students who are subject-accelerated in reading/language arts, mathematics, or science to take the assessment aligned with their course of study, rather than the grade-level test typically administered to students in their enrolled grade. Additional information was submitted in August 2025, and the waiver was approved for school years 2025–2026 through 2028–2029.

This waiver builds on Ohio’s prior success with middle school acceleration and reflects a broader commitment to aligning assessments with instruction. It supports evidence-based practices that promote academic growth, reduce unnecessary testing, and provide equitable access to rigorous coursework for advanced learners across all grade levels. The waiver ensures that students’ performance and participation on these assessments will be used for federal accountability purposes in the year the test is taken. For high school students who have completed all end-of-course (EOC) exams in a subject area before entering high school, the ACT or SAT will be used to fulfill federal testing requirements.

### Accountability

*Q: Are subject-accelerated students included in Value-Added on the Ohio School Report Cards?*

**A:** Yes. All accelerated students who take an Ohio State Test (OST) or End-of-Course (EOC) exam are included in district Value-Added measures—even in their first year of acceleration. Most are also included in building-level Value-Added. For more details, see the [How Accelerated Students Are Included in Growth Measures](#) document.

*Q: Are subject-accelerated students included in Gifted Value-Added?*

**A:** Yes, if the student is also identified as gifted. Gifted Value-Added measures include the performance and growth of gifted students, including those who are accelerated. Accelerated students who are not identified as gifted are not included in Gifted Value-Added.

*Q: How are subject-accelerated students counted in the Performance Index?*

**A:** Subject-accelerated students are included like all other students. The Performance Index awards more points for higher performance levels. Additionally, students with a Written Acceleration Plan (WAP) who take a test above their enrolled grade and score Proficient or higher receive a bonus weight:

- *Proficient* is counted as *Accomplished*
- *Accomplished* is counted as *Advanced*
- *Advanced* is counted as *Advanced Plus*

This bonus applies only to subjects with a WAP and is based on the Student Acceleration Record (FB) reported in EMIS for the current school year. All state tests in reading/writing, mathematics, science, and social studies are eligible.

An acceleration record must be reported each year the student is accelerated in a subject for the bonus to apply.

*Q: Why did Ohio choose the ACT and SAT for 11<sup>th</sup> graders?*

**A:** [State law](#) requires the administration of nationally standardized assessments used for college admission. Following a state competitive process, ODEW and the Chancellor of Higher Education chose the ACT and SAT. In turn, districts choose which of these two tests to administer to students in the spring of their eleventh grade year.

*Q: Can districts use online curriculum for subject acceleration?*

**A:** Yes. Districts may use online curriculum when in-person instruction (e.g., transportation to another building) is not feasible. This ensures continued access to appropriately challenging coursework.

## **Acceleration Process and Policy**

*Q: What is the process for subject-accelerating a student?*

**A:** Subject acceleration involves placing a student into a higher-level course in a specific subject. A Written Acceleration Plan (WAP) is required for all subject- or whole-grade-accelerated students. The WAP outlines instructional strategies, supports, and monitoring. Acceleration is not limited to gifted students and is supported by research showing positive outcomes. For more, see [Academic Acceleration for Advanced Learners](#).

## **Impact on Teachers and Certification**

*Q: Are accelerated students included in teacher Value-Added measures?*

**A:** Yes. Accelerated students are included in teacher Value-Added calculations. Their results are analyzed as separate cohorts to reflect their unique academic paths, ensuring fair and accurate growth measurement. For detailed examples, please refer to the scenarios outlined in the [How Accelerated Students Are Included in Growth Measures](#) document.

*Q: Are teachers or districts penalized if a student is subject accelerated into a course outside the teacher's credentialed grade band?*

**A:** No. In Ohio, a teacher is considered properly certified if more than 50% of the students in a course fall within the grade range of the teacher's credential. A single accelerated student does not affect certification status or result in penalties.