

Da Vinci Academy - Grade Acceleration/Change Policy
Approved by the Board of Trustees 4/19/2010

- Da Vinci Academy's Mission is to provide intellectually gifted and talented students a unique educational community that develops a student's strengths, interests and potential.
- Our Vision is that we aspire to be an extraordinary school for gifted and talented students.
- The Educational Philosophy of the school promotes a unique and innovative education community using mixed age grouping and cross grade level activities.

Given Da Vinci's Mission, Vision and Philosophy the school recognizes that there may be intellectually gifted students whose educational needs may best be served by placement in a grade that varies from their age peers. However, given our fundamental principles and overall ability to meet the individual needs of our students, the need for grade change or acceleration will likely be rare.

The school will evaluate each request on an individual basis, working with the parents to develop a decision that is in the best interest of the child.

Early entrance to Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten:

- a. Da Vinci will consider accepting a student with a birthday that falls after the beginning of the school year.
- b. Students must meet the same requirements that are expected of students in the grade level and demonstrate readiness socially, emotionally and cognitively.
- c. Staff will communicate regularly with the family regarding the student's progress and will recommend whether or not the student is ready to move to the next grade level at year end.

The school administration will develop a process and procedure for assessing the appropriateness of any grade change or acceleration request which should include the following:

- a. An assessment through testing of the ability, aptitude and achievement of the student at current grade level and above grade level.
- b. An assessment of the child's social and emotional development.
- c. Information from current teacher/s, receiving teacher, parents and any outside professional assessments provided.
- d. A trial period for assessing the appropriateness of the grade change or acceleration.
- e. A consideration of the needs of the whole child without undo emphasis on one part of the evaluation process.

In all cases, after consideration of all the information, the final decision rests with the Head of School.

Guide for Determining the Appropriateness of Grade Acceleration

Following the establishment of the school's Grade Acceleration/Change Policy in 2010, the Mission and School Life Committee worked to develop an instrument that would help guide families and the school in determining the appropriateness of grade acceleration. While the final decision is inherently unquantifiable and rests with the Head of School, the committee believed an instrument that can help families to understand the type of information that will be taken into consideration and the likelihood of the success of acceleration would be beneficial.

As a starting point, the committee depended upon the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS). The IAS was developed over a 15-year period from the research and clinical experiences of professional staff at the Belin-Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development at the University of Iowa. While the IAS is the most respected guide to grade acceleration in the field of gifted education, aspects of the IAS are intended primarily for a public-school population. Because of the unique mission and student population of Da Vinci Academy, it was necessary to make some modification to the IAS, creating a Da Vinci Academy Acceleration Instrument.

Overview of the Da Vinci Academy Acceleration Instrument

Da Vinci Academy shall seek to evaluate both standardized test data and descriptive information that is more subjective. Information in various areas will be awarded point values to arrive at an overall score that can be placed upon a spectrum ranging from Poor Candidate for Acceleration to Excellent Candidate for Acceleration.

This instrument is primarily designed for students currently in grades 3-6. Modifications will be made as appropriate for evaluating younger students. Parents should discuss possible modifications or alternative testing procedures with the Head of School prior to any testing.

Standardized Testing Portion

The standardized testing portion of Da Vinci Academy's Acceleration Instrument consists of three different types of assessments, an IQ test, a test of the student's academic achievement, and an off-grade-level assessment of the student's academic aptitude. While the WISC-4, CTP-4, and EXPLORE tests are the preferred assessments for each of these areas, the school may consider other appropriate assessments and adjust the results to equivalent norms. While IQ testing must be administered by a licensed psychologist, the school can administer achievement and aptitude testing at nominal cost to the family.

Descriptive Information Portion

In addition to standardized testing, Da Vinci will seek to gather as much relevant information as possible regarding the student. The descriptive portion of the instrument is to be filled out 3 by the school and the child's parents. An average of the two composite scores will be used.