

Full Grade Acceleration from the Parent and School Perspectives

Academic, Familial, Social,
and other Factors

Jeff Roberts: Supervisor of Gifted Education & Student Services,
Seneca Valley School District

Beth LaGamba: Seneca Valley Parent

Big Ideas for This Workshop

We'll share one particular case in which a school district and parents considered options, including full grade acceleration, to meet a student's needs.

Questions to Consider:

- × Is full grade acceleration the right choice for a student?
- × What data should be collected to determine the instructional level of a student?
- × How can thought be given to all of the myriad of factors to determine whether acceleration is appropriate?
- × How best can a student be supported who does accelerate?

Case Study: Meet James (pseudonym)

- × **Born:** June, 2010 (currently 8 years, 5 months)
- × **Family:** oldest of two boys, parents teachers
- × **Interests:** outdoor & imaginative play, coding/robotics/maker activities, board/card games, some team sports, swimming, piano, reading for pleasure
- × **Early Academic Strengths:**
 - + Early reader- letter names before talking, sight words at 2 or 3
 - + Early interest in math- problem solving; early intuitive understanding of place value, time, fractions, multiplication/division, etc.,
 - + Learned new concepts very quickly

School Entry

- × Started ½ day kindergarten at 6 years, 2 months
- × Parent requests upon enrollment
 - + gifted multidisciplinary evaluation
 - + K teacher with skill for differentiation upon enrollment
- × Kindergarten experience:
 - + Teacher provided opportunities for high level thinking to all students
 - + Teacher differentiated for all learners consistently
 - + James had lukewarm feelings about kindergarten (“We sit and do papers, all day!”)
 - + Parents and James valued having the other half of the day for learning through play

Initial Data Collection for GWR (Fall 2016)

NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association):

Reading: 99th national percentile (RIT: 196)

Math: 99th national percentile (RIT: 186)

Rates of Acquisition and Retention:

Reported to be above average by both classroom teacher and parents.

Initial Data Collection for GWR (continued)

Reynolds Intelligence Screening: 135 composite score (Mean 100)

WISC -V	Scaled Score	Percentile Rank
Verbal Comprehension	133	99
Visual Spatial	132	98
Fluid Reasoning	144	99.8
Working Memory	14	
Processing Speed	15	
Full Scale IQ	142	99.7

Kindergarten Gifted Services

- × Qualified for Gifted Services
- × Enactment of Initial GIEP
 - + Pull out Gifted Instruction (35 minutes per week with kindergarteners beginning in November)
 - + Classroom Differentiation
 - From parents' and classroom teacher's perspective, pull out and classroom both meeting James' needs

Initial Proposal for Acceleration (February 2017)

- × Gifted education teacher noticed that James' in class performance and achievement test scores (NWEA) more closely matched her 1st grade students
- × Elementary principal notified parents that the district would like to consider full grade acceleration to Grade 1, effective immediately (end of February)
- × Meeting was scheduled to discuss proposal

Initial Meeting Regarding Acceleration (February)

- × Team Members: parents, regular ed., gifted support, principal
- × Parents and K teacher uncomfortable with immediate acceleration
- × Decided to engage in further data collection (ex. curriculum based assessments- end of 1st/2nd math)
- × Parents requested school use IOWA Acceleration Scale
 - + principal/psychologist- don't have tool- will look into getting it
- × Added 2 additional (35 minute) pull-outs per week with 1st

Additional Data Collected

NWEA: Northwest Educational Association MAP Testing

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>%ile</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>%ile</u>
K	Fall 2016	186	99	186	99
K	Winter 2017	204	99	193	99
K	Spring 2017	211	99	205	99

Spring 2017 GIEP Update (May: preparing for Grade 1)

- × Typically hold two GIEPs in a student's first year in PURPOSE program (gifted)
- × Team discussed differentiation that would take place in first grade regular education (ELA and Math particularly). Advised that would primarily occur in the fall with the 1st grade teacher assigned.
- × Proposed areas for enrichment for the following school year include attending pull-out enrichment
 - + 3x week with first grade gifted peers
 - Expressions, Investigations, Spatial Reasoning

Spring 2017 GIEP Update (May: preparing for Grade 1)

- × Options for 1st grade in Math:
 - cyber math for 1st grade concepts
 - cyber math for 2nd grade concepts
 - classroom instruction for 1st grade
 - Classroom instruction for 2nd grade
 - enrichment in math with the PURPOSE teacher
- × Reiterate consideration of full grade acceleration to 2nd grade
- × Parents take the NORA home to consider it
- × Parents decline to approve the NORA

NORA Parent Concerns (May 2017)

Parents struggling to decide what will be best for James... Want more information, more time to decide, yet want decisions made and documented by the district.

- × Additional data collection/reporting requested
 - × Present Levels: most recent NWEA, reading diagnostic assessment, math curriculum based assessments
 - × Progress on Goals: more specific
 - × Second request for objective tool to help with decision (IOWA)
- × Requested math acceleration to 2nd documented in GIEP

Further Data Collection: Math Curriculum Based Assessments (May of K)

Grade 1 End of Year Test: **90%**

11. How many jars of paint are there?

6 jars 26

Grade 2 End of Year Test: **77%**

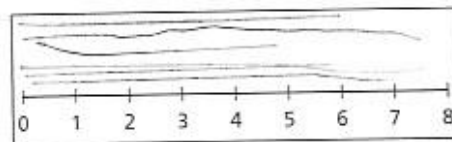
25. Write the total amount of money.

Stacy has 1 dollar, 2 quarters, 1 dime, 2 nickels,
and 4 pennies.

\$ 1.74

26. Ned measures 6 ribbons. The lengths are 7 cm,
4 cm, 7 cm, 6 cm, 5 cm, and 6 cm.

Show the lengths of the strings on this line plot.



Lengths of Strings (centimeters)

line plot

Kindergarten Teacher Statement

“As the classroom teacher, I have been concerned about James skipping a grade. It came up very late in the year, and to be honest, I just worried that someday he might find himself in over his head or not ready for things (socially and otherwise as he gets older) and that us having had him skip a grade would turn out to be the wrong decision for him. When you are the classroom teacher, I guess it feels like there is a lot of responsibility when you make decisions like these for one of your kiddos because you are the one with them all day and the one who sees all their ins and outs. I have seen the data that James well-surpassed the math curriculum on the first and second grade tests that he was given. If it would appear to the team that it would be better off for James to move to second grade instead of first in the Fall of 2017 so that he can thrive, then, for whatever it’s worth, I would support that decision.”

Kindergarten Teacher Rating Acceleration Factors

- Non academic factors should be considered, for example:

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ IOWA ACCELERATION SCALE FORM

13. Relationships with Peers

- Student has extremely poor interpersonal skills and virtually no friends.
Student's interpersonal skills are not as well developed as age mates.
Student's interpersonal skills are appropriate for age.
Student demonstrates good interpersonal skills and prefers to be with older children and/or adults rather than age mates.
Student has good interpersonal skills with age mates, as well as with both older and younger students and with adults.

Please circle one

0

1

2

3

4

Comments or concerns: _____

14. Relationships with Teachers

- Student has poor interpersonal relationships with all teachers.
Student has poor interpersonal relationships with most teachers.
Student has good interpersonal relationships with most teachers.
Student has excellent interpersonal relationships with virtually all teachers.

Please circle one

0

1

2

3

Comments or concerns: _____

Wechsler Individual Achievement Test

Grade 1

<u>Composite</u>	<u>Standard Score</u>	<u>Percentile Rank</u>	<u>Range</u>
Reading	119	90	Above Average
Oral Language	138	99	Superior
Mathematics	150	>99.9	Very Superior
Written Expression	113	81	Average

The above scores are based on spring of 1st grade norms

Grade 2

<u>Composite</u>	<u>Standard Score</u>	<u>Percentile Rank</u>	<u>Range</u>
Reading	118	88	Above Average
Oral Language	127	96	Above Average
Mathematics	118	88	Above Average
Written Expression	93	32	Average

The above scores are based on spring of 2nd grade norms

Team Meeting - July 2017

- × Use the Iowa Acceleration Scale to consider acceleration considers the many factors that influence the success of the student.
- × Gather existing student standardized testing data
- × Determine what additional testing is necessary including ability, aptitude, and achievement testing
- × Gather results and conduct a dry-run
- × Schedule meeting to include parents, current teacher, projected teacher, parents, administrators and others

July 2017 -Reflections on the Process

- × One of the most challenging and controversial decisions for a school and family
 - + Concerns about academic success in the future
 - + Concern about the social/emotional well being of the child in a new grade
- × IAS provides an objective view
- × Identifies individual strength areas and those of concern

Summer 2017-Fall 2017

- × Parents agree that full grade acceleration is appropriate
- × Team identifies receiving 2nd grade teacher
- × New GIEP is drafted for 2nd grade that includes provisions for addressing gaps in learning

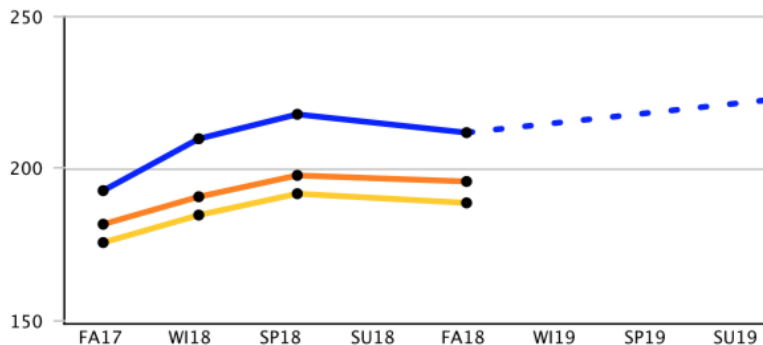
Grade 2 & 3 Performance

“I believe wholeheartedly that acceleration was a good thing for James, both academically and emotionally. For one, he was the same approximate age, and therefore fit in, even not knowing the other kids. Academically he was able to keep up, catch up and exceed grade level expectations. And, not to mention, he had supportive parents to help him. I think if there would have been one of the mentioned areas that James didn't meet, there could have been some difficulty for him.”

- second grade teacher

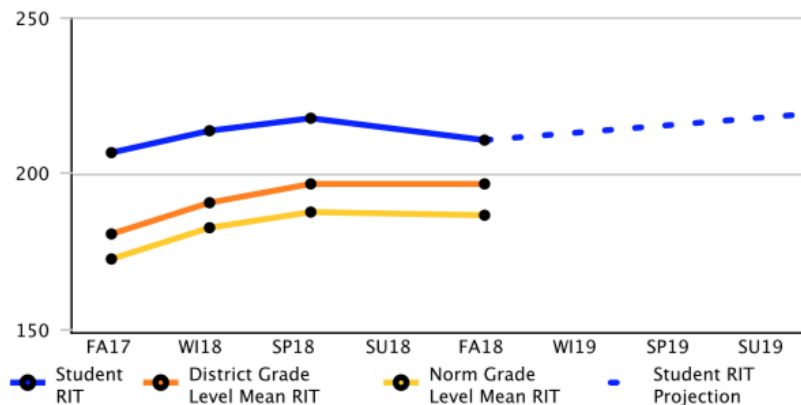
Performance K-3 (NWEA)

Mathematics



Term/Year	Grade	RIT (+/- Std Err)	RIT Growth	Growth Projection	Percentile Range
FA18	3	209-212-215	19	12	93-96-97
SP18	2	215-218-221			96-97-99
WI18	2	207-210-213			95-97-98
FA17	2	190-193-196	7	11	86-91-94
SP17	K	208-211-214			99-99-99
WI17	K	201-204-207			99-99-99
FA16	K	183-186-189			99-99-99

Reading



Term/Year	Grade	RIT (+/- Std Err)	RIT Growth	Growth Projection	Percentile Range
FA18	3	208-211-214	4	13	90-93-96
SP18	2	215-218-221			96-97-98
WI18	2	211-214-218			97-98-99
FA17	2	204-207-210	21	9	97-98-99
SP17	K	202-205-208			99-99-99
WI17	K	190-193-196			99-99-99
FA16	K	183-186-189			99-99-99

Final Thoughts/Important Takeaways

- × An objective tool for weighing many factors was useful to us and helped team members (parents especially) make an ultimate decision.
- × Disagreement can be positive and powerful. Honest dialogue will support making the best decision for the student.
- × Open communication and collaboration between parents and various school personnel was extremely important.

Questions?