

Accelerated Placement Policy Guidance for Districts

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What type of data do school districts need to review?

[Public Act 101-0654](#) states that following a review of disaggregated data on the participation and successful completion rates of students enrolled in an accelerated placement program, each school district shall develop a plan to expand access to its accelerated placement program and to ensure the teaching capacity necessary to meet the increased demand **on or before November 1, 2022**. The plan does not need to be submitted to ISBE. The plan is to assist districts in updating their accelerated placement policy. The purpose of this plan is for districts to identify ways in which accelerated placement options can be expanded and address any opportunity gaps that may indicate equity of access issues. The Gifted and Accelerated Report in SIS could be a useful reference for districts to monitor the status of their accelerated data submitted to ISBE and to assist districts when updating their accelerated placement policies.

2. What does “accelerated placement” mean?

Accelerated placement means the placement of a learner in an educational setting with curriculum that is usually reserved for learners who are older or in higher grades than the learner. Accelerated placement opportunities need not be limited to early entrance to kindergarten or first grade, acceleration in a single subject, and/or grade acceleration.

3. What does the accelerated policy need to include?

- a. Such a policy **must** include:
 - i. Provision that participation in accelerated placement is not limited to those children who have been identified as gifted and talented, but rather is open to all children who demonstrate high ability and who may benefit from accelerated placement.
 - ii. Fair and equitable decision-making process that involves multiple persons and includes a student’s parents or guardians.
 - iii. Procedures for notifying parents or guardians of a child of a decision affecting that child’s participation in an accelerated placement program.
 - iv. An assessment process that includes multiple, valid reliable indicators.
 - v. A procedure to allow for the automatic enrollment for Grades 9–12 in the following school term, of a student into the next most rigorous level of advanced coursework if the student meets or exceeds state standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, or science on a state assessment.
- b. The policy **may** include or incorporate by reference the following components:
 - i. Procedures for annually informing the community at large, including parents or guardians,

- ii. A process for referral that allows for multiple referrers, including a child's parent or guardians. Other referrers may include licensed education professionals; the child, with the written consent of a parent or guardian; a peer, through a licensed education professional who has knowledge of the referred child's abilities; or, in case of possible early entrance, a preschool educator, pediatrician, or psychologist who knows the child.
- iii. A provision that ensures that children participating in an accelerated placement program and their parents or guardians will be provided with a written plan detailing the type of acceleration the child will receive and strategies to support the child.
- iv. Procedures to provide support and promote success for students who are newly enrolled in an accelerated placement program.
- v. A process for the school district to review and utilize disaggregated data pertaining to participation in an accelerated placement program to address gaps among demographic groups in accelerated placement opportunities.
- vi. A provision for continuous monitoring to be sure students are placed in the best academic setting.
- vii. A policy for how to handle students transferring into the district with special consideration for students transferring in from outside of the state or coming from districts who do not use the same assessments.

4. What do "meets or exceeds" state standards look like?

- [Illinois Assessment of Readiness](#) (IAR) scores for Level 4: Met Expectations and Level 5: Exceeded Expectations are designated as "meeting or exceeding state standards" for grade 6-8.
- [Illinois Science Assessment](#) (ISA) scores of Level 3: Proficient and Level 4: Exemplary are designated as "meeting or exceeding state standards" for grades 5, 8, and 11.
- Scores of 8th-10th-grade students at or above the [college readiness benchmarks](#) set forth by the College Board on the PSAT 8/9 or PSAT 10.
- Scores of 11th-grade students at or above a score identified as within [Level 3: Meets State Standards](#) on the SAT.
- Scores indicating a student is either meeting or exceeding standards or performance indicators for same age peers from a locally selected, nationally normed assessment may be used instead of the state assessment.

5. What is included in the next most rigorous level of advanced coursework?

- The "next most rigorous level of [advanced coursework](#)" will vary based on the courses and curriculum offered at the school. It would include any curriculum or course that is beyond the next level that learners would normally matriculate to when not being accelerated.
 - Options include dual credit, pre-Advanced Placement, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, honors class, enrichment opportunities, gifted programs, other programs offered by the district for advanced learners, content area or course-level acceleration, virtual courses, or whole grade acceleration.

6. What is the next most rigorous level of advanced coursework for 12th grade students?

It could be Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, honors course work, college coursework, or dual credit course work. This could include alternative coursework that better aligns with the student's postsecondary education or career goals.

7. What should I do with a student in grades 9–12 who is identified for automatic acceleration?

- A student who meets or exceeds state standards in ELA shall be automatically enrolled into the next most rigorous level of advanced coursework (defined previously in No. 5) in English, social studies, humanities, or related subjects.
- A student who meets or exceeds state standards in mathematics shall be automatically enrolled into the next most rigorous level of advanced coursework (defined previously in No. 5) in mathematics. (This could apply to AP Computer Science and some Career and Technical Education courses.)
- A student who meets or exceeds state standards in science shall be automatically enrolled in the next most rigorous level of advanced coursework (defined previously in No. 5) in science.

8. What do districts use to determine whether a student meets or exceeds state standards?

- Districts can use the student's most recent state assessment to determine whether a student meets or exceeds state standards.
 - For example, results from the most recent state assessment taken in Grades 6–8 may be used for students entering Grade 9.
 - The results from a locally selected, nationally normed assessment may be used instead of the state assessment for other high school grades if those results are the most recent.

9. Who needs to create an acceleration placement policy?

All districts must create an accelerated placement policy that meets the provisions in No. 3a. Districts with grades 9–12 need to have a provision for automatic enrollment in their policy.

10. Can parents or guardians decline automatic enrollment?

Parents or guardians can choose to have their students enroll in alternative coursework that better aligns with the student's postsecondary education or career goals. Parents or guardians can decline to have students enrolled in accelerated courses. Districts will need to keep records in accordance with their records retention policy. Districts should talk with their local ROE/ISC office about documentation needed.

11. Where do districts need to post their Accelerated Placement Policy?

Districts need to make the policy public. They should post the policy in a manner consistent with how they make other educational program information public.

12. What school year will automatic acceleration impact students?

Districts need to have the automatic enrollment policy in place prior to the start of school year 2023-24 and districts will use scores from that school year to automatically enroll students during school year 2024-25.

13. What support is there for smaller districts regarding acceleration?

Districts that may not have the teacher capacity or course offerings to support acceleration can use the [Illinois Virtual Course Catalog](#). Other options for acceleration can include independent course study, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate courses, dual credit, internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning programs, honors courses, college courses, and course by examination. The [Illinois Association for Gifted Children](#) has resources to assist in implementing evidence-based practices and policies to support acceleration in schools and districts.

14. Since we can use the Illinois Virtual Course Catalog for the next most-rigorous coursework, are these courses free/no cost? Or is it required that schools absorb the cost? Or can families pay for the course? What if a family cannot pay for the course?

Public school districts that enroll students in courses from the catalog can request reimbursement from ISBE, subject to appropriations by the General Assembly. Please view the [Illinois Virtual Course Catalog Program FAQ](#) for more information on reimbursement.

15. If a parent or guardian chooses to have a student enrolled in alternative coursework do schools still indicate the student as accelerated in SIS?

At this time, the Student Information System (SIS) does not include an option to code students who are enrolled in alternative coursework. ISBE is considering ways to improve data collection and data quality. Districts will need to keep records in accordance with their records retention policy. ISBE also recommends administrators should talk with their local ROE/ISC office about documentation needed.

16. Is there an opt-out process or policy for schools if a school feels a student is not ready?

Currently, there is only the parent/guardian option to opt out.

17. When placing ninth graders, who makes the acceleration plan – the high school or junior high?

When considering acceleration policies and student placement, vertical alignment is essential and members of all impacted schools should work together to develop policies and procedures to ensure smooth transitions and equitable access for students. This would apply to any grade levels that are school/building transition years.

18. What should a district do if a student is no longer performing at a level they should once identified as accelerated?

Districts are not required to have a continuous monitoring or exit provision in their acceleration policy, but it is recommended that they create an acceleration policy that allows for this to be sure students are placed in the best educational setting.

19. What do “school’s readiness standards” mean for early entrance?

Districts have local control when designing their early entrance policy. According to the Accelerated Placement Act, districts must have a local policy adopted and publicly available for early entrance to kindergarten and first grade.

20. Is there a model or direction when a student is registering and is not interested in accelerating? Are there suggestions on how to proceed if the student does not want the acceleration but the parent may?

The statute specifies that only parent/guardian can opt a student out of accelerating. Districts have local control over how this process will look. Districts need to be sure to have documentation of a parent opting the student out of acceleration in order to not accelerate the student.

21. Can an eighth grader follow an accelerated track?

Yes, eighth graders can follow an accelerated track. Students of any grade level have been and continue to be allowed to be accelerated commensurate with local district policies.

22. If a student takes geometry and struggles, can a district enroll them in an in-between course rather than the next most-rigorous course level?

Any student who meets or exceeds the state standards in mathematics shall be automatically enrolled into the next most-rigorous level of advanced coursework in mathematics. Upon mandated notification of automatic enrollment, parents and guardians of students identified for automatic acceleration have the option of choosing to waive the acceleration and instead enroll the student in alternative coursework that better aligns with the student’s postsecondary education or career goals. Example: The notification letter for parents could identify alternative coursework options should they choose to waive the acceleration for mathematics and enroll the student in geometry if they determine skipping geometry is not in alignment with a student’s postsecondary education or career goals.

- 23. a. If a student was in pre-algebra in eighth grade and then meets or exceeds in math on the IAR, can they be placed directly into Algebra 2? How does this impact our graduation requirements that stipulate Algebra 1 or the integrated equivalent?**
- b. In Grades 9-12, students accelerate. How does this impact graduation requirements when a course may get skipped? How does this look in a high school district?**

ISBE is aware that there is a conflict in the legislation mandating graduation requirements and automatic acceleration. We are working with our legal and legislative teams to resolve the conflict prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year, when the automatic enrollment mandate goes into effect. At this time, we recommend districts update their accelerated placement policies with language related to allowances for individual student waivers to graduation requirements if such course of action is determined by parents or guardians to be most in alignment with a student’s postsecondary education or career goals. ISBE will provide further clarification and guidance following the 2024 spring session of the General Assembly.

24. Can a district meet the requirements of the act by providing open access to all courses for students?

At this time, open access for courses does not meet the automatic acceleration requirement. Section 14A-32 requires mandatory automatic enrollment for students to be placed into the next most rigorous level of coursework.

25. Can districts charge a fee for additional testing/administrative work when placing students in accelerated courses?

No, such fees are considered impermissible tuition charges, in violation of Article X, Section 1 of the Illinois Constitution. The Free Education clause states in relevant part that “[e]ducation in public schools through the secondary level shall be free.” Schools that are charging fees to assess and identify students as eligible for acceleration programs may be in direct violation of Section 14A-25 (which prohibits discrimination in the context of accelerated programming). Charging a fee might effectively block some students from being identified as eligible participants. Dual Credit college course credit and AP Exam or Capstone fees are not considered typical tuition charges.

26. Under 105 ILCS 5/14A-32, how should “multiple valid, reliable indicators” be defined?

This one is very straightforward. “Multiple” means there must be more than one indicator utilized. “Reliable indicators” would refer to metrics that have established reliability estimates. Most of the state or nationally normed assessments available are in this category. It should be noted that this does not apply to the automatic enrollment language because that is a state mandate and only applies to Grades 9-12. The “multiple valid, reliable indicators” would apply to Grades K-8 and acceleration policies for Grades 9-12 that would be implemented outside of the mandate.