Iowa acceleration scale (IAS): A guide for whole-grade acceleration K-8

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BOOK REVIEW (Davidson Institute) - The Iowa Acceleration Scale is a tool to help educators and/or parents determine if grade acceleration is an appropriate option for a particular student. It also provides a basis for interactions between parents and teachers on the subject.

Reviewed by the Davidson Institute for Talent Development.

At some point every school encounters a student who needs acceleration. The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) is a tool designed to guide educators in making important decisions regarding whether a particular student is a candidate for whole-grade acceleration (grade-skip).

The decision to accelerate a student is one of the more difficult and controversial questions that educators and parents may encounter. However, many gifted and talented children need a curriculum that matches their abilities, potential, and current performance levels. The IAS provides a structured format to guide a child study team in the discussion and decision about the type of acceleration that might be most appropriate for a given child.

The IAS is an exceptional tool for facilitating communication between parents and educators. The IAS manual provides case studies, examples, and documented research showing that acceleration is a sound educational option for some bright children. It focuses on the child being considered with questions and subsequent rating scale regarding the child’s intellectual and emotional development, family and school issues, and areas which could be potential problems. The manual also includes a list of the top ten issues regarding acceleration accompanied by vignettes and recommendations based on examples provided in the text. Questions designed to identify these and related issues and concerns include the following:

1. How important are academic ability and achievement in considering whether or not to accelerate?
2. When is the best time to accelerate a student?
3. How important is the age and school grade of siblings considering acceleration?
4. How important are non-academic, developmental characteristics such as age and physical size?
5. What about acceleration for the student who is advanced academically but not socially-emotionally?
6. What constitutes appropriate school support for an acceleration to proceed?
7. What is the role of the parents?
8. What if the student is involved in competitive school athletics?
9. Why is acceleration an educationally sound option in the current education environment?
10. What might happen if we keep students who appear ready for acceleration at their current grade level?

The scale is designed as an informative tool for parents and educators rather than as a test. Use of this tool can assist in dispelling myths about exceptionally bright students in general, as well as inform academic placement decisions for individual students. The IAS form includes several sections designed to gather information that will help determine whether whole grade acceleration, or other accommodations, are most appropriate for a particular student. The sections include general information, critical items, school history, prior ability and achievement test results, prior professional evaluations, academic ability and achievement, school and academic factors, developmental factors, interpersonal skills, attitude and support, and a summary and planning sheet.

Items on the IAS are given numeric value and are grouped in categories which guide the discussion, decision-making and planning. In instances where the IAS score does not show the child to be a good candidate for acceleration, other possible interventions are listed. The IAS will help educators and parents consider all of the necessary, even critical, aspects regarding possible acceleration of academically precocious students. The manual includes a substantial section summarizing educational and psychological research that can be used to support the investigation of appropriate academic arrangements for exceptionally bright students. In addition to addressing the strengths of well-informed placement decisions, the IAS manual contains a reference section for further reading, as well as suggestions for planning based on the collection and discussion of relevant information for the IAS form.

The IAS has been used in every state and in several countries. The second edition is designed to be easier to use and understand, as well as serving to clarify the utilization of aptitude testing and provide additional information on the use of the scale with preschool and primary school children. The IAS is available for purchase as a kit which includes a manual with a set of 10 forms. Forms are available for purchase, separate from the manual, on this order page. Parents or educators may purchase the kit.

In the event that the kit is purchased by a parent, the parent may wish to donate the additional forms and the manual to the school to further encourage the use of this valuable tool. Those individuals who have purchased the IAS kit and completed the scale may contact the Belin & Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development for a consultation regarding the information collected. (The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development is dedicated to the education of gifted and talented students through research, service, and training.)

For more information on the Iowa Acceleration Scale and/or to purchase this tool, please visit Great Potential Press at http://www.greatpotentialpress.com or the Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration at http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/IAS.aspx.

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Comments

Contributed by: Parent on 5/1/2008
Unfortunately, I called the publisher and they no longer sell individual forms to parents. They did email me some information to give to the school in hopes that they might be persuaded to purchase the product. It's also important to note that to complete the Iowa Acceleration Scale, the child must have had an IQ test: WJ Cog., WISC, Stanford-Binet, K-ABC, or DAS.

Contributed by: Parent on 5/19/2004
I ordered this manual from Amazon and ordered one set of forms from the other website listed, for $10. Thanks for the advice! Can't wait to get the materials!

TIP: If you are a parent ordering through Great Potential Press, let the order taker know that. They will sell the manual and ONE set of forms at a greatly reduced price (you don't need 10 sets of forms).

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