Acceleration at The Southport School: Research-Based Policies in Action

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'All children deserve to learn something new every day.'

-Dr Julian C Stanley

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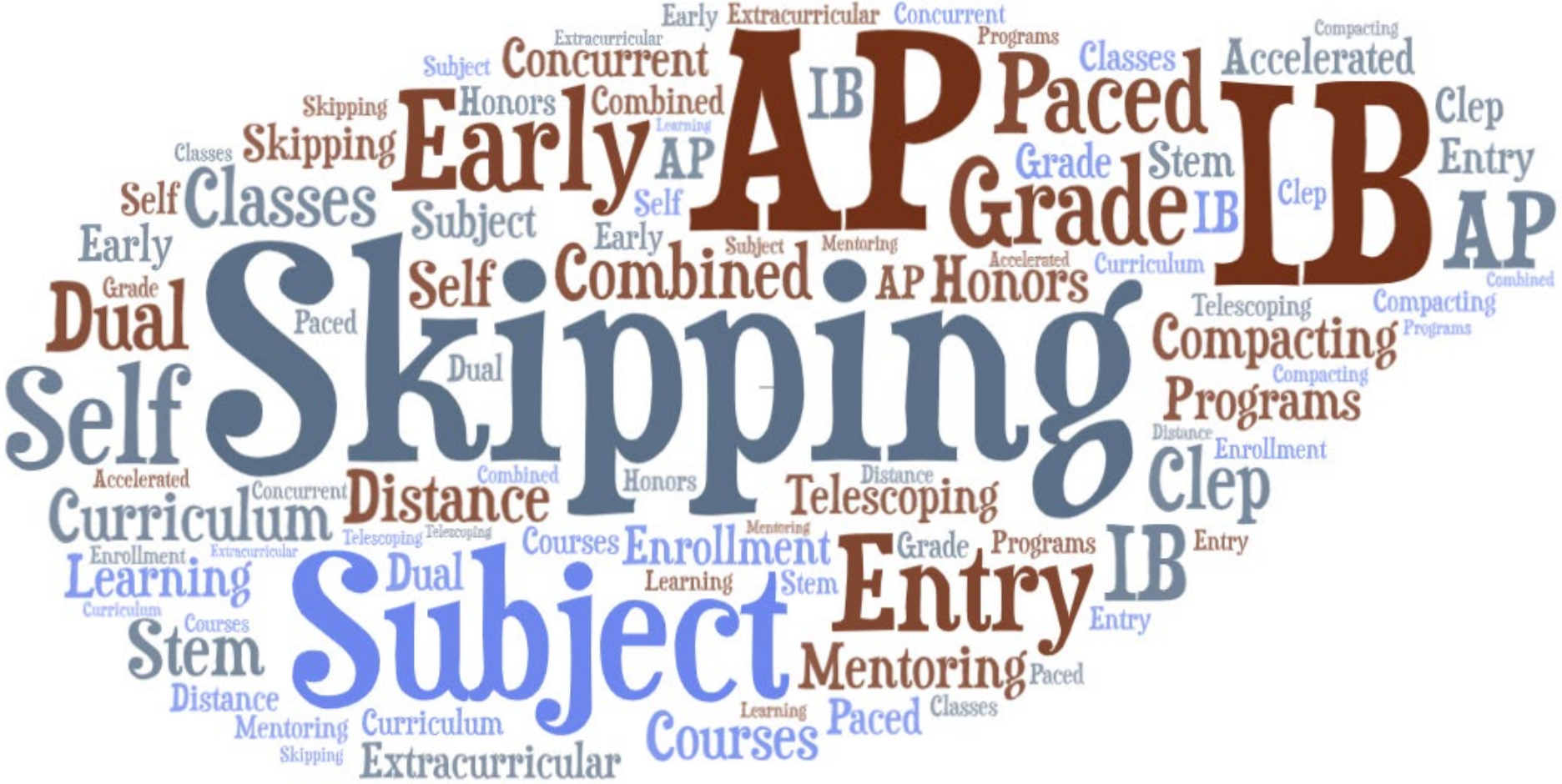
Background & Introductions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Relevant Literature: A Nation Deceived (2004)

- American schools routinely avoid acceleration.
- Acceleration means matching the level and complexity of the curriculum with the readiness and motivation of the student.
- Accelerated students feel academically challenged and socially accepted; they tend to be more ambitious and earn graduate degrees at higher rates than other students.
- Interviewed later, a vast majority state that acceleration was an excellent experience and may have even wished for further acceleration.
- Beliefs that limit acceleration are: limited information; focus on keeping age cohorts intact; worries about hurrying childhood and social issues; 'equity' concerns; and worries that other children will be disadvantaged. These beliefs are not based on research.

Relevant Literature: Releasing the Brakes for High- Ability Learners (2011)

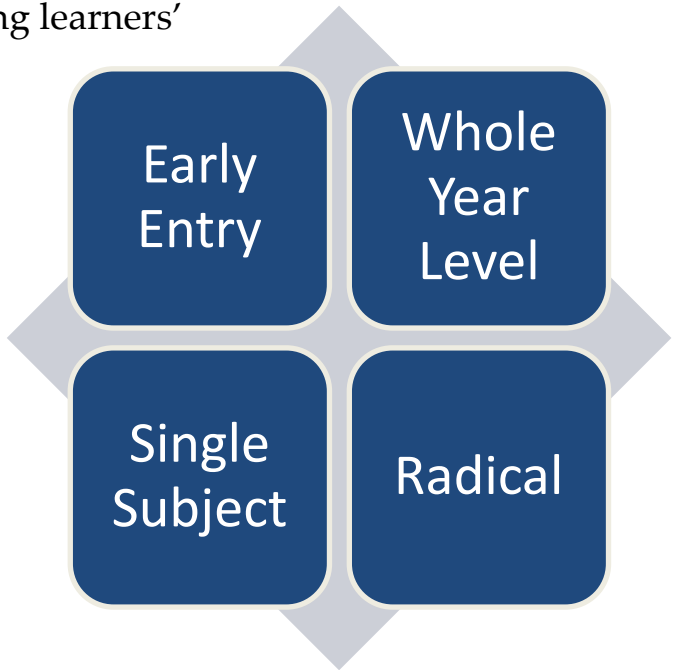
- The purpose of the study was to examine perceptions around acceleration, summarise research and examine current practice.
- There is considerable variation between practices across Australia around acceleration and a general lack of clarity.
- Concerns exist from some community members around the social-emotional impacts of acceleration.
- Parents face challenges in advocating for acceleration.
- Students are supportive of acceleration but stress that acceleration alone is not enough.
- Suggestions include: programs for young gifted students, training for educators, further research (social-emotional & maturity), advocacy training for parents.

Relevant Literature: Overview

- Acceleration, including early entry to school and university coursework, is the most effective intervention for gifted children; radical acceleration is most effective for highly gifted students.
- Supportive programs include AP, IB, personalised learning and innovative STEM programs.
- Acceleration is often cost-free and has both **social** and **academic** benefits.
- The IOWA and above-level testing are highly effective in identifying students for appropriate acceleration.
- Appropriate resourcing and communication is essential, particularly relating to acceleration for twice-exceptional students.
- Parental involvement is key.
- Major changes in perception and overall clarity around acceleration are needed, at all levels of society and government.

Definitions- TSS Acceleration Policy

Acceleration is an educational intervention that moves students through an educational program at a faster rate than usual or younger than typical age; **<u>appropriate</u>** acceleration will help them to become 'confident…successful lifelong learners'



TSS Acceleration Policy

The research evidence on the effectiveness of acceleration is very positive. Kulik et al, states that accelerated students outperform non-accelerated students by approximately one year.

Research from Benbow et al, shows that 71% of accelerated students are satisfied, with many others wanting additional acceleration.

In order to be successful, acceleration must be applied in a consistent procedural format which is both research and evidence-based.

Early Entry

Is:

- when a child who displays academic and social readiness begins school at a younger age than most other children do (e.g. at age 4 rather than at age 5);
- a form of grade skipping
- most unobtrusive/least disruptive

The fundamental principle *best interests of the child*

Section 17 of the Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017 allows early entry to Prep for a child who:

EITHER

- will be at least 5 years and 5 months on 31 December in the proposed year of attendance at school (i.e. a child who turns 5 on or before 31 July); AND
- is considered ready for education in the year of schooling considering the child's attributes;

OR

- had started education in another country, Australian state or territory that is equivalent to Prep; AND
- is considered ready for education in the year of schooling considering the child's attributes.

A July birthday or previous school enrolment in another state or country, does not guarantee early entry to Prep in Queensland.

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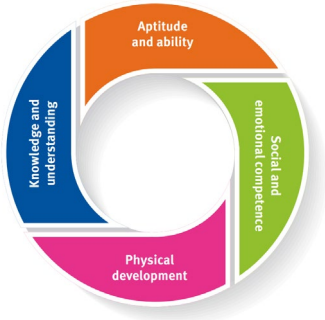
https://education.qld.gov.au/parents/Documents/early-entry-prep-framework.pdf

Four attributes to consider

- Aptitude and Ability
- Social and emotional competence
- Physical development
- Level of knowledge and understanding



The process

Step 1
Check age or prior Prep education eligibility
Discuss child attributes to be assessed

Step 2
Commence application process

Step 3
Collect and assess evidence

Step 4
Make a decision

Step 5
Record the decision

Step 6
Notify the parent of decision

https://education.qld.gov.au/parents/Documents/early-entry-prep-framework.pdf

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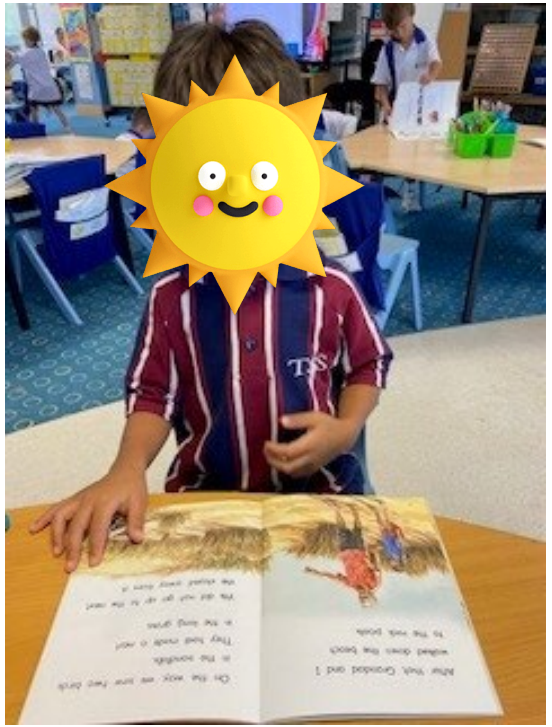
Case study

Four years 2 months

- Advanced reading skills
- Needs inferential comprehension
- Verbal ability high
- Rich vocabulary
- Learning to use this in writing (fine motor)
- Socially emotionally ready(currently learning how to school)
- Gradual progression



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Single-Subject Acceleration: Models

- **Cohort**: A cohort of students demonstrating capability in a single subject are grouped together and access the next grade level curriculum in a classroom of same-age peers. This may include curriculum compacting of on-grade level material.

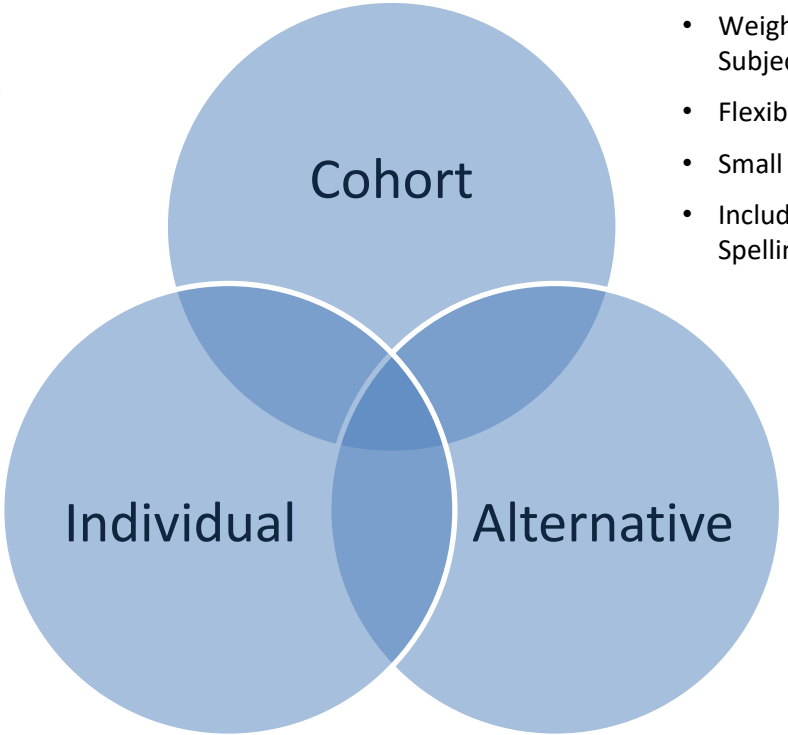
- **Individual**: An individual student accesses the next grade level material in a classroom with above-age peers.

- **Alternative**: An individual student accesses above-grade level curriculum through an individualised program (e.g. online learning, distance education, self-paced instruction).

Single-Subject Eligibility

Case Studies

- Highly selective
- Significantly above-level
- Appropriate for 2+ years ahead in a single subject
- Housed in on-level accelerated class and ATD Centre



- Weighted matrix developed with ATD & Subject HoD
- Flexible, ongoing, iterative
- Small classes
- Includes enrichment (e.g., APSMO, FPS, Spelling Bee)

- Highly selective
- Flexible and Individualised
- Organised with Subject HoD
- May be short- or long-term

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Single Subject Accelerated Case Study

Preschool:

- The origins of Pi – ancient civilisations;
- Fibonacci sequence,
- Thinking beyond excellence in the four operations

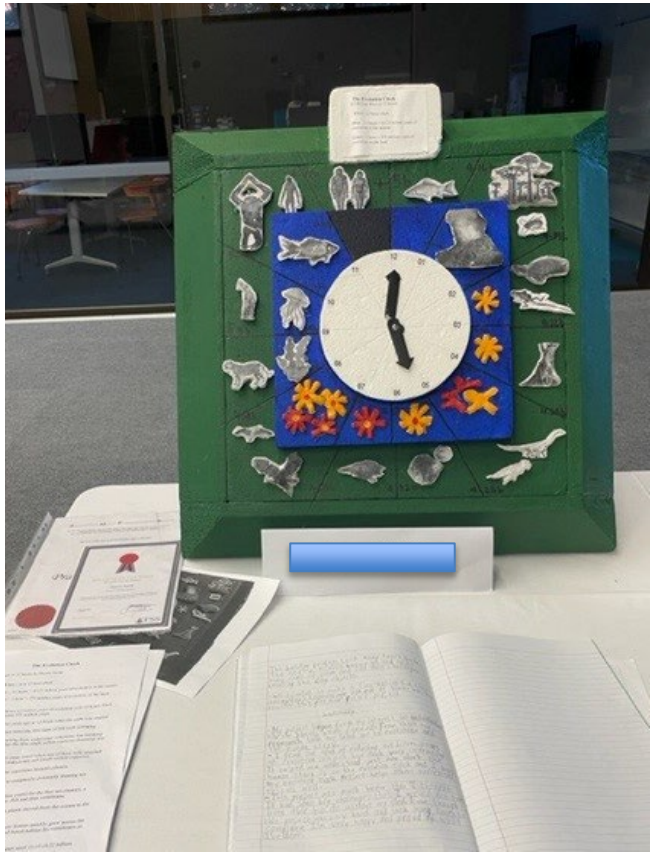
Year 1:

- Problem solving program small group intervention twice a week
- Increasing complexity
- Acceleration began

Year 2:

Inquiry project - From Big Bang to Humans

24hour clock



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Single-Subject Acceleration

Longitudinal study – current Year 12 (Year of graduation 2023)

CLASS	AVERAGE	
Year 7 Accelerated	83.40	
Year 8 (Top Mathematics class)	78.65	
Year 8 Accelerated	86.49	
Year 9 (Top Mathematics class)	72.03	
Year 9 Accelerated	75.73	
Year 10 Maths Methods	59.5	
Year 10 Accelerated MM	77.6	
Year 11 MM	68.3	
	INT	EXT
Year 11 Accelerated MM	89	88
Year 12 MM	74	77

STUDENT	JOINED	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	External results
1		C+	B	C	GENERAL	
2		A-	A-	B+	B-	B
3		B+	A-	A-	A	A
4		B+	A-	A-	B+	A
5		B	B+	C	B-	B
	YEAR 9			B-	B-	B
6		B-	B+	B	LEFT	
7		A+	A	A-	B+	A
8		B-	A-	B	C+	B
9		C+	B	C-	REPEAT	
10		A	A	A-	B+	A
11		B+	A-	B-	B	B
	YEAR 8		A	B+	A-	A
12		A	A+	A-	B	A
13		A+	A	B+	B+	A
14		B+	A	B+	B+	A
15		C+	REPEAT			
	YEAR 8		B+	C	GENERAL	
16		A	A	A-	A-	A
17		A	A+	A	A	A
18		A-	A	A-	LEFT	
	YEAR 8		A	A-	B-	A
19		B	B+	B	C+	A
20		A	A-	B+	B	A
21		A-	A	B+	LEFT	
22		A-	A	B+	LEFT	

Whole Grade Acceleration- Eligibility

Eligibility for whole grade acceleration is based the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS third edition).

The IAS provides:

- A more objective look at the student;
- An analysis of the major factors to be considered in making a decision;
- Guidelines for weighting the relative importance of the major factors;
- Documentation of the student's strengths and concerns
- A numerical range to guide the discussion and decision of acceleration; and,
- A standard of comparison with students who have had successful accelerations.

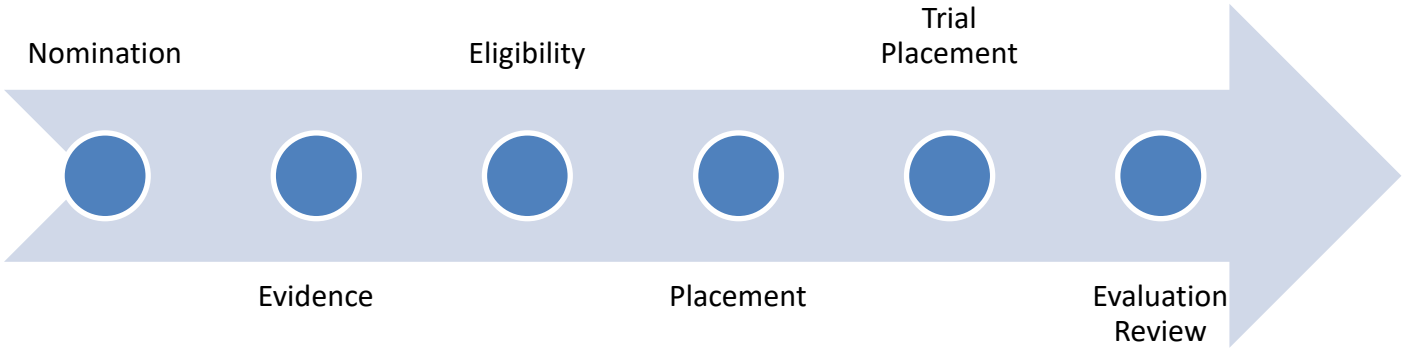
Whole Grade Acceleration - Considerations

The IAS considers factors including the age of the child, the offerings of the school, and whether a sibling will be in the same grade. The IAS rates and categorises the most salient issues for consideration by educators and parents.

The subtotals are:
(1) Academic Ability, Aptitude, and Achievement;
(2) School and Academic Factors;
(3) Developmental Factors;
(4) Interpersonal Skills; and
(5) Attitude and Support.

The cumulative score from all of these factors is the primary determinant considered by the principal and support team for whole grade level acceleration eligibility.

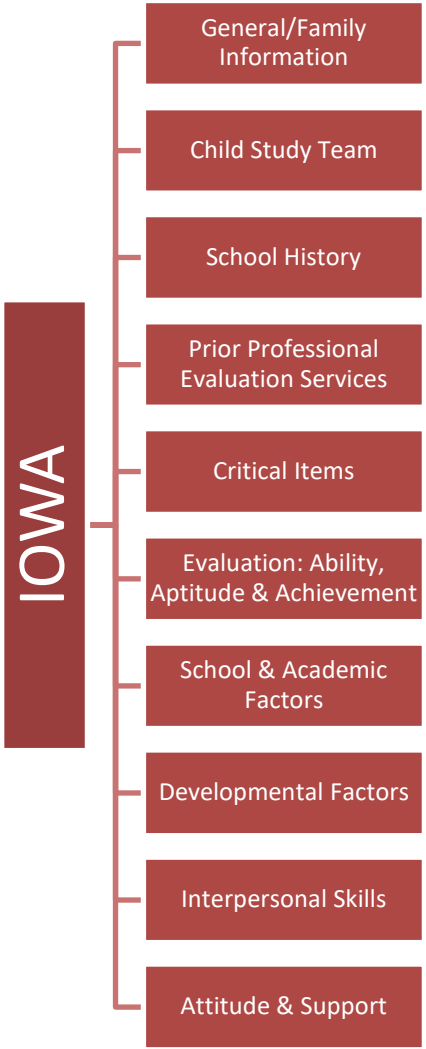
Whole Grade Acceleration



Whole-Year Level Acceleration Practices at TSS

- Guided by the *TSS Acceleration Policy*
- IOWA Scale for Acceleration

- Child Study Team includes:
  - ATD Coordinator
  - Member of SLT
  - School Psychologist
  - 2 teachers
  - Housemaster
  - Parent(s)/Carer(s)



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Case Studies – Whole Grade Acceleration

Table Discussion Questions:

What are the current practices at your school?

Do you have any questions for group discussion?*

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