

# A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students

*The Templeton National Report on Acceleration*

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# *A Nation Deceived*

*What Parents, Teachers and Other Professionals  
Should Know  
About the  
Templeton National Report on Acceleration*

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## Presenters

- **Debbi Andrews, MD**
- parent
- Developmental pediatrician, U of Alberta
- involved in multi-disciplinary developmental assessment of children with special needs, including gifted
- **Debra Arnison Sutton**
- parent
- AABC/EABC member
- involved in developing Alberta Education's "The Journey: A Handbook for Parents of Children Who Are Gifted and Talented"

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## Background

- summit on acceleration at University of Iowa in May 2003 → formulate national report on acceleration
- what schools need to know in order to make the best decisions about educating highly capable students
- **A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students**

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## Background

- alarm to schools on the need to provide accelerative experiences for brightest students
- solid research base over last 50 years continuously demonstrates positive impacts of acceleration
- but educational establishment remains skeptical

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## Background

- tackles current misconceptions about acceleration and dispels their impact through
  - research
  - examples of effective practice
  - real-life stories of students
- provides informed responses to key questions about acceleration

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## Background

- describes types of acceleration
- addresses social concerns
- demonstrates cost effectiveness of acceleration for colleges, schools, and parents
- gives specific ideas for what teachers and parents can do to help promote appropriate acceleration

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## About the Title

A Nation Deceived:

How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students

- authors say *deceived* is a very strong word, but reflects daily experience
- provocative—and accurate
- "When we tell ourselves that our brightest students would not benefit from acceleration, we deceive ourselves, our students, and the nation."

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## What is acceleration?

- Acceleration *is*:
  - moving through the traditional curriculum at a rate **faster** than typical
  - **appropriate** educational planning
  - **matching** the level and complexity of the curriculum with the readiness and motivation of the student
- Acceleration is *not*:
  - pushing or hurrying a child
  - forcing a child to learn advanced material
  - making a child socialize with older children before he or she is ready

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## What's in the book?

- Volume 1: a user friendly executive summary that is accessible to all audiences
- Volume 2: the research papers that support the summary for people who want the details
  - 11 chapters written by experts in gifted education and acceleration
  - each focuses on an important aspect of acceleration
  - sound and comprehensive review of the acceleration literature as it relates to gifted students

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## Executive Summary - 1

- Schools routinely avoid academic acceleration
- Acceleration easiest and most effective way to help highly capable students
- Myth: grade skipping stunts a child socially
  - Fact: 50 years of research shows that moving bright students ahead often makes them happy

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## Executive Summary - 2

- Students who are moved ahead:
  - tend to be **more ambitious**
  - earn **graduate degrees** at higher rates
  - have an **excellent school experience**
  - feel **academically challenged** and **socially accepted**
  - are **not bored** in school like many highly capable students who are forced to follow the curriculum for their age-peers

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### Executive Summary - 3

- *A Nation Deceived* is part of an initiative to get these findings into the hands of parents, teachers, and principals
  - Report available free to schools, the media, and parents requesting copies
  - <http://www.nationdeceived.org>
  - Hard copy and e-copy easily accessible to a wide audience
  - Publicity about the report, eg newspapers, *Time* magazine feature article

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### Executive Summary - 4

- Report includes information on:
  - entering school early
  - skipping grades in elementary school
  - Advanced Placement program
  - starting college/university ahead of time
  - comments and experiences of accelerated students, Deans of Colleges of Education, a school superintendent, and a school board member
  - research by leading education experts
- Detailed research information in Volume II

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### Executive Summary - 5

- Why haven't schools, parents, and teachers accepted the idea of acceleration?
  - **Lack of familiarity** with the research
  - **Philosophy**: must keep children with age group
  - **Belief**: acceleration hurries children out of childhood
  - **Fear**: acceleration hurts children socially
  - **Worry**: offending other students if one child is accelerated
  - **Politics**: concerns about equity

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### Executive Summary - 6

- these reasons not supported by research
- report provides teachers and parents the knowledge, support, and confidence to consider acceleration
- report hopes to change the conversation about educating bright children by bringing up acceleration as a possibility

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### Volume 2 - A quick walk through the chapter headings

### Chapter 1: Types of acceleration: Dimensions and issues

- W. Thomas Southern and Eric D. Jones
- 18 types of acceleration practices
  - which are the most well documented for effectiveness and cost
  - the few problems experienced stemmed from incomplete (poor) planning
- educators need to consider the best option(s) for acceleration, given the individual student and the specific circumstances

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## 18 Types of Acceleration

Grade-based and Subject-based

1. Early Admission to K
2. Early Admission to Grade 1
3. Grade-Skipping
4. Continuous Progress
5. Self-Paced Instruction
6. Subject-Matter Acceleration/ Partial Acceleration
7. Combined Classes
8. Curriculum Compacting
9. Telescoping Curriculum
10. Mentoring
11. Extracurricular Programs
12. Correspondence Courses
13. Early Graduation
14. Concurrent/Dual Enrollment
15. Advanced Placement
16. Credit by Examination
17. Acceleration in College
18. Early Entrance into Middle School, High School, or College

From "Types of Acceleration: Dimensions and Issues," by W. T. Southern and E. D. Jones, *A Nation Deceived*, V. II, Chapter 1, pp. 5-12.

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## Chapter 2: Meta-analytic studies of acceleration

– James A. Kulik

- *no other arrangement for gifted children works as well as acceleration*
- *accelerated students more likely to aspire to advanced educational degrees*
- *acceleration far more effective in raising student achievement than the most successful school reform models*

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## Chapter 3: Long-term effects

– David Lubinski

- *longitudinal studies indicate accelerative curriculum educationally and developmentally advisable*
- *if curriculum moves too slowly, boredom and discontent frequently ensue*
- *intellectually precocious students who accelerate in middle school and high school view their pre-college education much more positively than non-accelerated intellectual peers*
- *acceleration critical for developing world-class scientific leaders*

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## Chapter 4: Public policy

– James J. Gallagher

- *educators have been largely negative about acceleration, despite abundant research evidence*
- *if want a major change in acceptability of acceleration, will probably need to use all the engines of change: legislation, the courts, administrative rules, and professional initiatives*
- *what has to change is not written policy, but the **attitudes** of policy makers*

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## Chapter 5: Academic effects

– Karen B. Rogers

- *acceleration falls into two broad categories (grade- and subject-based)*
- *question for educators seems to be not **whether** to accelerate a gifted learner but rather **how***
- *review of 380 studies revealed that **almost all forms of acceleration result in growth in achievement***

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## Chapter 6: Social-emotional status

– Nancy M. Robinson

- *it is a **myth** that acceleration is inherently dangerous for gifted students*
- *as a group, gifted children are socially and emotionally more mature than their age mates*
- *for many gifted students, acceleration provides a better personal maturity match with their peers*
- *no studies showed deleterious social-emotional effects of acceleration*

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## Chapter 7: Talent searches and accelerated programming

– Paula Olszewski-Kubilius

- *Talent Search scores can be used effectively to select students for acceleration*
- *research evidence from Talent Searches strongly supports that acceleration works*

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## Chapter 8: Whole-grade acceleration

– Nicholas Colangelo, Susan G. Assouline, and Ann E. Lupkowski-Shoplik

- *we have evidence and mechanisms to make whole grade acceleration a low-risk/high-success intervention for qualified students*
- *the **Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)** is a proven and effective instrument for helping schools make decisions about whole-grade acceleration*

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## Chapter 9: Radical acceleration

– Miraca U. M. Gross

- *Radical acceleration results in graduating from high school 3 or more years before age mates*
- *gifted students pursuing individualized programs of radical acceleration achieve high, sometimes extraordinary, levels of academic success*
- *no indication of social or emotional maladjustment arising from well-planned programs of radical acceleration*
- *radical accelerants socialize well with their older classmates*

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## Chapter 10: Early entrance to college

– Linda E. Brody, Michelle C. Muratori, and Julian C. Stanley

- *research on early entrants is extremely positive*
- *much evidence of*
  - short-term academic success
  - long-term occupational success
  - few social and emotional difficulties
- *many alternatives to full-time early college entry*
  - AP courses, dual enrollment, distance education, and summer programs

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## Chapter 11: Twice-exceptional students

– Sidney M. Moon and Sally M. Reis

- *little research on effectiveness of acceleration with twice-exceptional students*
- *effective acceleration for twice-exceptional students is time and resource intensive*
- *twice-exceptional students can benefit from interest-based talent development programs that expose them to accelerated content in their areas of strength*

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## Evidence-based decision making

- *Not a new idea*
  - *growing trend toward evidence-based decision making in medicine*
  - *politicians beginning to want evidence for programmes in*
    - *Health care*
    - *Social programmes*
    - *and now education. . .*

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## Evidence-based decision making

- Steps include
  - *Finding all the evidence* (locating research results, "literature review" or search, using computer-based search engines)
  - *Critically reviewing pieces of evidence*
    - just because something is published doesn't mean it was well-done or true
  - *Comparing methods and results of studies*
  - *Drawing conclusions* (consensus) about results to guide practice

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## Why is an evidence-based approach so important?

- Interventions like health care, social programmes and education
  - affect us all
  - cost money
  - have a limited resource pool
  - may have life-long effects
- We need to do things that work and are cost effective, make them available to the right people, and **DO NO HARM!**

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## An example. . .

- In late 1980s, importance of language to learning reading became apparent
- Curricula using a "whole language" approach with emphasis on comprehension (but actively discouraging phonics) adopted by whole school systems: it "felt right" and fit with teachers' educational philosophy
- There was only one problem: ignoring phonological awareness **DIDN'T WORK!**

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- Overwhelming evidence in the literature says phonological approaches are the single best way to teach most beginning readers
- Despite this evidence, it has taken about 10 years to convince schools systems to go back – **WHY?**

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## Facts versus philosophy

"Apparently the cultural values favouring a standard period of dependency and formal education are stronger than the social or individual need for achievement. . . . When the research findings clash with cultural values, the values are more likely to prevail." Getzels and Dillon, 1973

"A man hears what he wants to hear

"And disregards the rest . . ." Paul Simon lyric

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## Getting people to trust evidence is an uphill battle

- We like what makes us feel good
- Science/research/facts can make us feel confused and uneasy
- One size fits all is an easy solution
- **BUT** we come in many sizes
- We may feel good now, but bad later when things go wrong or don't work
- With a little effort we can understand and use research to do what's best for our children

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## What makes good research?

- Careful testing against a control group
  - Placebo effect
- Large sample sizes
- Replication by other researchers
- Lack of bias by researcher
  - Conflict of interest
- **A NATION DECEIVED is a meta-analysis**

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## Meta-analysis

- "Meta-" a Greek combining form meaning "with" or "after"; denotes a higher order or second order process
- "Meta-cognition" = reasoning about reasoning processes
- "Meta-linguistics" = higher-order language skills
- "Meta-analysis" = research that analyses prior research

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## What is meta-analysis?

- Research technique that locates all studies looking at the same research question and groups the results together to come to a consensus result
- Because of the large number of subjects, we are able to make powerful statements about **effect size**, the standardised difference between intervention and control subjects

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## Effects of acceleration

- Effect size:
  - 0.2 "small", 0.5 "moderate" and 0.8 or more "large"
- Two types of studies
  - Accelerated vs. same age, same IQ non-accelerated controls (so, in different grades)
  - Accelerated vs. older, same IQ non-accelerated controls IN THE SAME GRADE
- **The only thing that is different is acceleration. . .**

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## Effects of acceleration

- Same age controls – 11 studies
  - Accelerated outperformed bright non-accelerated students on achievement tests
  - Effect size averaged 0.8
- Older same class controls – 15 studies
  - In all but 2 studies, younger accelerated students performed THE SAME as their older classmates
  - Effect size averaged -0.04 (almost no difference)

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## What makes this book so important to parents?

- *It's good news!*
- *acceleration works*
- *children who are ready DO benefit from acceleration: academically and socially*
- ***the most effective curriculum intervention for gifted children***

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## *What makes this book so important to parents?*

- *acceleration in its many forms is:*
  - **constructive**
  - **appropriate**
  - a **highly effective** intervention for bright students
- *acceleration is also a virtually cost-free intervention*
  - to student
  - to family
  - to school system
  - to community

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## *What makes this book so important to parents?*

- *acceleration can save bright young minds*
- *in many cases, it saves years of loneliness and social isolation for students who:*
  - don't fit in with age-peers
  - are hungry for friends who share similar interests

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## *Parents need to know...*

- *Acceleration is:*
  - an important issue because of the legitimate educational needs of high ability students
  - a matter of need, not a matter of the number of students who need it

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## *How teachers can help*

- *recognize gifted students*
- *point that child to new challenges and make sure school remains a positive experience*
- *make sure a child is **accurately evaluated for readiness to be accelerated***
- *inform child's parents about acceleration*
- *minimize teaching what students already know*

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## *How teachers can help*

- *Myth: gifted children can teach themselves*
  - **Reality: experts say academically talented students need qualified, informed teachers.**
    - **the teacher is critical in the life of every gifted child, even when the child has informed, supportive parents**
- *recognizing the needs of gifted students does not mean short-changing any other students*

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## *How teachers can help*

- *be aware of the research on acceleration and of the 18 types of acceleration*
- *know there are strategies like the Iowa Acceleration Scale to determine whether a child is ready to be accelerated*

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## *How teachers can help*

- *attitude?*
  - “After years of absorbing negative perceptions about acceleration, many teachers may need to reconsider their ideas. It’s all about continued professional development.”
- *know that the overwhelming majority of accelerated students are happy with their educational experience and are well-adjusted socially*
- *use Volumes I and II of A Nation Deceived to help the next highly capable student they teach*

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## *Where can I get A Nation Deceived?*

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