Acceleration vs. Remediation

The Opportunity Gap

In the TNTP report, The Opportunity Myth, researchers set out to find out why so many students graduating from high school are unprepared to meet their goals for college and careers. They discovered an opportunity gap in which too many students spend most of their time in school without access to four key resources:

- grade-appropriate assignments,
- strong instruction,
- deep engagement, and
- teachers who hold high expectations.

There is a strong tendency for schools, based on past practice, to want to remediate student learning gaps and **delay access** to grade-level work until all the missing learning is remediated. Unfortunately, research shows that this approach moves students backwards by continuing to widen the academic gap between students who are being remediated and their grade-level peers (Rollins, 2014).

The TNTP researchers found, "*When students who started the year behind grade level had access to stronger instruction… they closed gaps with their peers by six months; in classrooms with more grade-appropriate assignments, those gaps closed by more than seven months.*"

What is Accelerated Learning?

Too often students with perceived academic gaps are put into remediation classes. Their access to grade-level content is delayed until all their academic gaps are filled. Research has shown again and again that this does not work (Rollins, 2014). Instead, learning should be accelerated. Accelerated learning keeps students moving forward on their intended grade-level trajectories by strategically preparing them for success in current grade-level content.

Acceleration prepares students for new learning combined with "just-in-time" teaching of missing key skills and concepts in the purposeful context of current lessons.

Opportunities to accelerate learning rely on robust Tier 1 instruction that includes grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers who hold high expectations for students. This robust instruction should be enhanced with supports targeted to the skills and services students need to stay on grade level.

A Sense of Urgency

The pandemic and the unplanned shift to remote learning have widened this opportunity gap for many students across the state. Many children have experienced less than optimal situations during the pandemic, whether related to a lack of in-person learning opportunities, social isolation, resource scarcity, or family or caregiver stressors. Daniel J. Bryant, in *The Rise of Adverse Childhood Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Bryant, Oo, & Damian, 2020), has already documented the increase of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) during the pandemic. Retention and remediation are the go-to models for addressing learning loss but are based on deficit views of students and only serve to delay learning and further decrease student self-confidence and engagement. Now more than ever, educators need to provide students with "the most personalized and engaging instruction possible" by committing to

accelerating learning for students who have fallen behind instead of remediating their learning (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020).

Acceleration vs. Remediation

Often educators associate acceleration with gifted education. However, academic acceleration includes a wide variety of educational and instructional strategies educators use to advance the learning progress of all students regardless of where they are in their learning trajectory. **Acceleration** focuses on preparing students for success with upcoming new learning and lays the foundation for continued academic growth. **Remediation,** on the other hand, delays opportunities to learn new content until students have mastered all missing skills and concepts, leaving them further and further behind their grade-level peers. The table below outlines the key differences between acceleration and remediation.

Acceleration	Remediation
High expectations for all students • Provides all students with access to effective, grade-level, Tier 1 instruction focused on the essential skills and concepts for that grade.	Low expectations for some students • Supplants Tier 1 instruction for the most academically vulnerable by pulling students from the Tier 1 instruction for remediation.
Just-in-time support • Supports are based on evidence of what a student knows and what they need for upcoming lessons based on clear grade-level learning goals for those lessons. • Provides more exposure to grade-level essential skills and concepts by aligning supports with current classroom instruction.	Just-in-case support • Supports attempt to reteach every missing skill, based on the misconception that before students can learn new information, they must go back and master everything they missed. • Often focuses on drilling students on isolated skills that might not be relevant to current grade-level lessons.

What does grade-level mean?

For most students, their grade-level learning trajectories are tied to age. With good Tier 1 instruction, including regular benchmark assessments of grade-level skills and concepts, 75-80% move through each grade with little or no need for extra support. There are students, however, whose learning trajectories are not necessarily tied to age. Some students advance through grade-level content quickly and are ready to move on earlier than others. On the other hand, some students with disabilities and some others may need more time to move through the essential skills and concepts of the grade level in a given discipline or may be

working on content more typical for a different grade or age level. Students with more significant disabilities may have alternate curricula aligned to their individual needs and post-school goals. Educators must recognize that some students are on different Tier 1 learning trajectories and must be prepared to provide the appropriate level of Tier 1 instruction.

Getting Started with Accelerated Learning

Michigan Department of Education Guides

To support educators in their understanding of accelerated learning and why accelerated learning is especially important in the aftermath of the pandemic, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is providing a series of guides on accelerated learning topics such as targeting support with tutoring, Tier 1 grade level instruction, and student engagement. The guides will be posted on the accelerated learning page of the MDE website which will continue to be updated with additional guides and other resources.

The Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP)

MICIP should be used by districts in planning for and implementing an accelerated instructional model.

Resources for Accelerated Learning

Acceleration: Jump-Starting Students Who Are Behind (ascd.org)

This excerpt from the book Learning in the Fast Lane: 8 Ways to Put All Students on the Road to Academic Success makes the case for accelerated learning and provides a framework for implementing acceleration.

http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/114026/chapters/Acceleration@_Jump-Starting_Students_Who_Are_Behind.aspx

Acceleration, not Remediation: Lessons from the Field

This report from the Thomas Fordham Institute provides insights from school leaders who have implemented an acceleration model.

https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/acceleration-not-remediation-lessons-field

Guiding Schools' COVID-19 Recovery Decisions Using Data and Evidence

The EdResearch for Recovery Project at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University has published a series of research briefs in five categories: Student Learning, School Climate, Supporting All Students, Teachers and Leaders, and Finances and Operations.

https://annenberg.brown.edu/recovery

Learning Acceleration Guide

This toolkit from TNTP outlines specific goals and strategies that can help schools begin to accelerate the learning of students back to grade level in any instructional format—in-person, virtual, or hybrid. The toolkit provides special emphasis on the two most important things schools should prioritize right now: grade-appropriate assignments and strong instruction.

https://tntp.org/covid-19-school-response-toolkit/view/learning-acceleration-guide

Rethinking Intervention - Instruction Partners

This document provides a series of conversations with education leaders, researchers, and practitioners. The conversations challenge educators to think deeply about what drives and challenges intervention and how to accelerate student learning after many months away from school. Resources include videos and guides for professional learning communities.

https://instructionpartners.org/rethinking-intervention

Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond

This report provides an overarching framework that focuses on how policymakers, as well as educators, can support equitable, effective teaching and learning regardless of the medium through which that takes place. This framework provides research, state and local examples, and policy recommendations in 10 key areas that speak both to transforming learning and to closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

https://restart-reinvent.learningpolicyinstitute.org

The Acceleration Imperative: A Plan to Address Elementary Students' Unfinished Learning in the Wake of COVID-19

This open-source, evidence-based resource from the Thomas B Fordham Institute provides a model recovery plan designed to evolve with the input of users.

https://caocentral.wiki

References

Bryant, D. J., Oo, M., & Damian, A. (2020). The rise of adverse childhood experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 12(S1), 93-94. https://doi.apa.org/fulltext/2020-43450-001.html

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Rollins, S. P. (2014). *Acceleration: Jump-Starting Students Who are Behind*. Retrieved from ASCD: http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/114026/chapters/Acceleration@_Jump-Starting_Students_Who_Are_Behind.aspx