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New Report Shows Acceleration Strategies Are Underused in Nation's Schools Despite Their Efficacy

NAGC Endorses Study; Urges States and Local Districts to Remove Barriers

WASHINGTON (April 23, 2015) – A comprehensive study of multiple acceleration strategies to support high-achieving and advanced students shows that such tools are often underutilized despite ample evidence validating their effectiveness.

Acceleration strategies, such as advancing a student by an entire grade or by subject area, starting Kindergarten early or allowing students to take college courses while still in high school, provide advanced students with learning opportunities that are matched to their abilities.

The report, *A Nation Empowered: Evidence Trumps the Excuses Holding Back America's Brightest Students*, was written by the [Belin-Blank Center](#) at the [University of Iowa](#). It examined utilization patterns of multiple acceleration strategies – such as grade-skipping, early entrance to Kindergarten, state residential math and science schools and talent searches such as the [Center for Talent Development](#) at [Northwestern University](#) and the [John Hopkins Center for Talented Youth](#). The report explored the use of such strategies among economically disadvantaged or vulnerable children and the effects of acceleration on a student's social and emotional needs.

"The team at Belin-Blank should be commended for preparing such a comprehensive examination of how frequently – or, as is too often the case, infrequently – acceleration strategies are used as well as the research support that demonstrates the efficacy of such tools when used appropriately," NAGC President Tracy L. Cross, Executive Director of the [Center for Gifted Education](#) at William & Mary, said.

"This report should serve as a guide to educators, administrators and policymakers to ensure education policies provide the opportunities to use acceleration strategies to the greatest extent possible," he added.

Following an investigation of two national longitudinal studies, the report found that less than 1.5 percent of students were accelerated during their academic careers. The report also explored early entrance to Kindergarten, a practice that is not permitted in 16 states, and looked at the use of multiple criteria including a student's abilities, past achievement and aptitude, when making such decisions.

Of particular relevance to policymakers are sections exploring various state policies, such as a Colorado law that permits early entrance to Kindergarten for students who meet the criteria, and the statewide systematic process or roadmap Ohio uses to consider accelerating students.

"There are numerous tools to support educators and parents in evaluating whether and which acceleration strategies should be used to support high-achieving and advanced learners. We need to ensure the tools are used appropriately and that we remove any artificial impediments to acceleration standing in our way," Cross said.