

MEMORANDUM

TO: Principals

FROM: Tim Egnor, Executive Director for Curriculum Services

DATE: September 21, 2011

SUBJECT: 4th or 5th Grade Acceleration

New legislation states that fourth and fifth grade students scoring a level 4 or 5 on FCAT Reading or Math may be eligible to take middle school courses.

The 4th/5th Grade Acceleration Packet Includes:

- House Bill 7197 Communication Plan
- St. Johns County School District Elementary Whole Grade Acceleration Check List
- Course Acceleration Checklist
- Course Acceleration Request
- Audit Forms
- Elementary School – Student Progression Plan – pages 18-20
- Parent Resources Guide – page 21
- 4th or 5th Grade Acceleration Option Flowchart
- 4th or 5th Grade Virtual Acceleration Opportunities FAQ's

Please let me know if I can assist you in any way to answer questions, to clarify directions, or to offer suggestions.

House Bill 7197 Communication Plan

In an effort to comply with the notification requirements of HB 7197 the following course of action has been developed.

1. Please post a message regarding acceleration options on your school web page. The message could be as simple as:

Parents who wish to consider course or grade level acceleration should review appropriate placement criteria referenced in the District Student Progression Plan <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/depts/cs/spp> and Parent Resource Guide <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/parents/resource>.”

2. If you have a newsletter or other communication medium, please include a blurb regarding acceleration options. You could use the same information as found in “1”, or develop a simple statement from this sample:

Single subject acceleration is an option for fourth or fifth grade students who meet district criteria to advance to the next grade level for a specific course. Interested parents should refer to the District Student Progression Plan <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/depts/cs/spp>, Parent Resource Guide <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/parents/resource> and /or contact a school counselor to discuss the full academic and social ramifications of single subject acceleration. Additional testing to verify mastery of current grade level standards is required. Middle school courses are accessible only through virtual courses. Approval by the Director of Instructional Services and Director of Guidance and Choice is required.

3. Information similar to the statements in “1” and “2”, will be posted on the District Home Page, under “For Parents and Students” and also on the new Guidance and Choice web page <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/depts/gpc/>.
4. On the back of the elementary report card where customized information and messages can be added, please include a brief statement regarding acceleration. The message derived from the previous communications or something like:

“Students in grades 4 and 5 with FCAT scores at levels 4 and 5 may be eligible for accelerated course work. Further information regarding acceleration may be found in the Student Progression plan <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/depts/cs/spp> and Parent Resource Guide <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/parents/resource>.

Our intention is to have a consistent district-wide response to this legislation. Since we have allowed acceleration in the past (both traditional and virtual) we are not developing a new policy, only modifying our existing practice to meet the requirements of the HB 7197. Another requirement of the legislation is that school officials confirm in an auditable manner that the accelerated placement of the student was “appropriate”. With that in mind, by maintaining our current criteria we would not anticipate a significant increase in the number of students utilizing acceleration as an appropriate placement.

If you have questions or concerns regarding part of the plan, please contact Tim Egnor and thank you for your attention to this matter!

ST. JOHNS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Elementary Whole Grade Acceleration Check List

Student's Name _____ School _____

Date _____

Please have the following documents completed/attached when submitting a request for whole grade acceleration. Acceleration packet information should be sent to the Director of Instructional Services for review. The most current Iowa Acceleration Scale Booklet must be used, not copied, and completed in entirety. You may obtain the IOWA from the Director of Instructional Services. Please use the checklist below containing directions for each IOWA Acceleration Scale section and other criteria needed for acceleration evaluation.

- _____ IOWA Acceleration Scale Booklet Section I: General Information
- _____ IOWA Acceleration Scale Booklet Section II: Critical Items – mark any that apply
- _____ IOWA Acceleration Scale Booklet Section III: School History – mark any that apply
- _____ IOWA Acceleration Scale Booklet Section IV: Assessment of Ability
 - Students will be administered the Reynolds Intellectual Ability
- _____ Intelligence Assessment Report
- _____ Woodcock-Johnson III Scores (Brief reading and Brief math)
- _____ Progress Monitoring Scores (ThinkLink, FAIR)
- _____ FCAT Scores (if applicable)
- _____ Copy of current report card

Additional Comments:

F O R I N S T R U C T I O N A L S E R V I C E S U S E O N L Y	
Information reviewed and sent to Director of Instructional Services.	
Whole grade acceleration	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Denied
Director, Instructional Services Signature	
Date	

NOTE: STUDENT NEEDS TO BE MONITORED FOR FIRST SIX WEEKS OF CHANGE OF PLACEMENT TO ASSESS PROGRESS. IF ACCELERATION IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR STUDENT, STUDENT MAY RETURN TO FORMER PLACEMENT.

Course Acceleration Checklist

Student's Name: _____

Current School: _____ Date submitted: _____

Requested Course: _____

Considerations reviewed with Parent Date of conference _____

- Accelerated coursework becomes a part of your student's permanent record.
- Your student will still be responsible for mastering all standards in their current grade level courses and also will be required to take their current grade level FCAT. Integrated curriculum standards (such as literacy and social studies) may be missed through acceleration, yet covered on future assessments required for middle school promotion.
- Parental involvement in the entire process of accelerated coursework is necessary for student success.
- Your student should have excellent study skills, be self-motivated, and be able to work independently.
- Your student may be taking the virtual course at school working independently, with no direct assistance from an on-site instructor. Please keep in mind that SJCS D end of course scores exceeded those of FLVS last year.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Review of academic history
- Parent/Teacher/Counselor/Principal Recommendations
- 4/5 FCAT Level from previous year in Reading or Math
- 80% Score on 4th and/or 5th grade End of Course exam
- Virtual instruction is only available to 4th or 5th grade students taking middle grade courses

Recommendation:

Parent _____ Agrees* Disagrees Date _____

* Agreement includes consent for appropriate student testing

Teacher _____ Agrees Disagrees Date _____

Counselor _____ Agrees Disagrees Date _____

Attach to "Request for Course Acceleration"

Course Acceleration Request

Student Name:	Teacher:
School:	Grade Level:
Date of Request:	School Year:
<p>Data in Support of Single Subject Acceleration:</p> <p>FCAT Assessment in <input type="checkbox"/> Reading _____ OR <input type="checkbox"/> Math _____</p> <p>Date of Assessment: _____</p>	
<p>Guidance Counselors Communication with Parent Date: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Course Acceleration Checklist attached <input type="checkbox"/> Parent in agreement <input type="checkbox"/> Parent not in agreement</p>	
<p>Results of EOC Assessment: <input type="checkbox"/> 4th Grade _____ <input type="checkbox"/> 5th Grade _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts _____ OR <input type="checkbox"/> Math _____</p>	
<p>Recommendation of Principal: _____(initial)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Remain in current class with differentiated instruction</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Move to _____(grade) with _____(teacher) for _____(subject)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Instruction for _____ (middle school only). Choose only one.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> M/J 1 Language Arts Advanced</div> <div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> M/J 1 World History Advanced</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> M/J 1 Math Advanced</div> <div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> M/J 1 Science Advanced</div> </div>	
Send Completed Form to the Director for Instructional Services	
<p>Approval of Director for Instructional Services:</p> <p>Signature: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Approval of Director of Guidance and Choice: (for Virtual School Option Only)</p> <p>Signature: _____ Date: _____</p>	

Place in student's cumulative record when returned to school.

Enrollment Verification for St. Johns County School District Elementary School Students Taking Grades 6-8 Courses Offered by Florida Virtual School

STUDENT INFORMATION:			
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name	
Student No. Identifier, FL _____	Student Grade Level _____	Date of Birth ____ / ____ / _____	
ENROLLMENT INFORMATION: (District of Enrollment)			
District No. 55	District Name St. Johns County School District	School No. _____	School Name
INSTRUCTION INFORMATION:			
District No. _____	District Name Florida Virtual School	School No. 0500	School Name Florida Virtual Middle School
Course Code Directory _____	Course Title		
<p><i>Section 1002.37, F.S., authorizes the Florida Virtual School to offer grades 6-8 courses to advanced public school students in grades 4 and 5.</i></p>			
<p>Is the course selected above appropriate for the student based on the student's academic history? _____ Yes _____ No</p>			
<p>Is the course selected above a grade 6-8 course? _____ Yes _____ No</p>			
<p>Is this student a public school student? _____ Yes _____ No</p>			
<p><i>By signing below, I acknowledge that the FTE for the course listed above will be reported for funding by FLVS and the home school district will not report the student for funding for this course. A one year-long course is equivalent to 1/6 FTE and one semester is equivalent to 1/12 FTE. The combined total of all FLVS and school district FTE may not be reported as more than 1.0 FTE in for the school year.</i></p>			
Signature	DATE	Signature	DATE
Principal or Authorized Representative		Florida Virtual School Authorized Representative	

Enrollment Verification for St. Johns County School District Elementary School Students Taking Grades 6-8 Courses Offered by St. Johns Virtual School

STUDENT INFORMATION:			
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name	
Student No. Identifier, FL _____	Student Grade Level _____	Date of Birth ____ / ____ / _____	
ENROLLMENT INFORMATION: (District of Enrollment)			
District No. 55	District Name St. Johns County School District	School No. _____	School Name
INSTRUCTION INFORMATION:			
District No. 55	District Name St. Johns County School District	School No. 7004	School Name St. Johns Virtual School
Course Code Directory _____	Course Title		
<p><i>Section 1002.37, F.S., authorizes the Florida Virtual School to offer grades 6-8 courses to advanced public school students in grades 4 and 5.</i></p>			
<p>Is the course selected above appropriate for the student based on the student's academic history? _____ Yes _____ No</p>			
<p>Is the course selected above a grade 6-8 course? _____ Yes _____ No</p>			
<p>Is this student a public school student? _____ Yes _____ No</p>			
<p><i>By signing below, I acknowledge that the FTE for the course listed above will be reported for funding by SJVS, the home school district. A one year-long course is equivalent to 1/6 FTE and one semester is equivalent to 1/12 FTE. The combined total of the SJVS and the currently attended brick-and-mortar school of the St. Johns County School District FTE may not be reported as more than 1.0 FTE in for the school year.</i></p>			
Signature	DATE	Signature	DATE
Principal or Authorized Representative		St. Johns Virtual School Authorized Representative	

Elementary School - Student Progression Plan – pages 18 – 20

B. Acceleration

Promotion by Acceleration in Grades K-5

When outstanding abilities and skills are demonstrated, a student may be considered for accelerated grade placement. The student must also demonstrate physical, social and emotional maturity. In each acceleration case considered, the recommendation shall be communicated to the student's parent or guardian in a conference with the principal (or designee), and a written confirmation of the decision shall be furnished to the parent or guardian. In the event that a conference is not possible, written communication to the parent or guardian is deemed sufficient. The District's Whole Grade Acceleration Protocol must be used for all acceleration requests; the Whole Grade Acceleration Checklist is available from the Director of Instructional Services. Consistent with school board rules and in accordance with state statute 1012.28 (5) F.S., the Superintendent has designated the principal of the school as the final authority in the placement of students in programs or classes. The acceleration process does not supersede initial placement age criteria provided in Florida Statute 1003.21:

For kindergarten, the student must be 5 years on or before September 1 of the school year.

For first grade, the student must be 6 years old on or before September 1 of the school year.

Whole Grade Acceleration

Acceleration is the skipping of a grade, or part of a grade, based on exceptionally high achievement by a student. This is documented on the St. Johns County Acceleration Form, FCAT Level 4 or 5 in reading and mathematics, evidence that the student will benefit from the instructional program at the advanced grade level and that acceleration is appropriate. No student can be eligible for acceleration if he/she has ever been retained. Requests for Whole Grade Acceleration should be completed before November 1.

When such administrative assignment of a student involves two schools, an agreement between the two principals is required. The probable long-range academic, social and emotional effect of the decision shall be reviewed by the Intervention Team. The principal, with the recommendation of the Intervention Team and with the approval of the superintendent or designee, has the responsibility for making such assignments. However, a student shall not be accelerated without parent or guardian consent. Student progress shall be reviewed to maintain continuous advanced placement. The student should be monitored for the first six weeks of the change of placement to assess progress. If acceleration is not appropriate for the student, the student may return to the former placement.

The student's cumulative guidance record and report card shall be noted to indicate "accelerated grade placement" and the major reasons for the acceleration. In the cumulative record, the name of the principal making the assignment is indicated. Parents or guardians must be notified formally in writing that their child is receiving an accelerated grade placement to the next higher grade. A copy of this notification must also be filed in the cumulative folder.

Single Course Acceleration

In order to allow students to progress on their own customized learning paths (CLPs), the following procedures allow for demonstration of mastery and **single course acceleration**. It is necessary to complete the district's Course Acceleration Checklist and Course Acceleration Request, both available from the school counselor. Consistent with school board rules and in accordance with state statute 1012.28 (5) F.S., the Superintendent has designated the principal of the school as the final authority in the placement of students in programs or classes. Grade level text must be used for all students except those students who have successfully completed the district acceleration process.

Public school students in grades four or five who earned a level 4 or level 5 on the FCAT in reading or math are eligible for single course acceleration after demonstrating mastery of the current grade level course standards. When a student is accelerated, they are still responsible for mastering all standards in the current grade level

courses and will be required to take all current grade level FCAT assessments. Integrated curriculum standards such as literacy and social studies may be missed through acceleration yet included on future assessments required for middle school promotion. In addition, math and science topics are presented only once rather than being repeated year after year. Therefore, the parent should consider carefully the full academic and social ramifications of acceleration and confer with the school counselor to determine if single course acceleration is appropriate for the student based on the student's academic history, teacher recommendation, ability to work independently and the long range academic, social and emotional effect of acceleration. The Request for Acceleration Form should be completed before November 1.

- Fourth grade students who earned a level 4 or level 5 on the FCAT in reading or math and demonstrate at least 80% mastery of the fourth grade level course standards are eligible for consideration of single course acceleration to a fifth grade level course in reading or math. If they also demonstrate 80% mastery of fifth grade level course standards, they are eligible to take a sixth grade level course.
- Fifth grade students who earned a level 4 or level 5 on the FCAT in reading and demonstrate at least 80% mastery of the fifth grade level course standards in reading and writing may advance to M/J Language Arts I Advanced, M/J World History Advanced, or M/J Science I Advanced; fifth grade students who demonstrate at least 80% mastery on the fifth grade level course standards in math may advance to M/J Math I Advanced. (1001.42 F.S., HB 7197)

Middle school courses are accessible only through virtual instruction and require the approval of the Principal, Director of Instructional Services and the Director of Guidance and Choice.

St. Johns Virtual School (SJVS) is the provider of first choice for virtual instruction; however in situations in which SJVS cannot fulfill the need, students may qualify to access the services of Florida Virtual School (FLVS).

Procedure for Course Acceleration

- A teacher or parent who believes a student might be a candidate for course acceleration shall contact the school counselor and share classroom evidence and FCAT performance in support of the student's possible assignment to the next grade level course.
- The counselor reviews the evidence and completes the **Course Acceleration Checklist** with the parent.
- If testing is authorized by the parent on the **Course Acceleration Checklist**, the counselor shall notify the principal and obtain the appropriate assessment(s) from the office of Instructional Services.
- The teacher shall administer the assessment(s) and consult with the Curriculum Specialist to determine if the student demonstrates mastery, defined as 80% or better.
- If the student achieves a mastery score of 80% or above, the teacher shall note the areas that the student has not yet mastered and instruct the student in those areas prior to or while the student is taking the next course in sequence.
- The principal and counselor shall complete and submit the **Course Acceleration Request** to the Director for Instructional Services.
- The Director for Instructional Services shall review mastery documents, make a final determination and notify the school within five days of the decision.
- If virtual school is required for the next course level, the Director of Instructional Services will send the **Course Acceleration Request** to the Director of Guidance and Choice for registration.
- If acceleration is to a virtual school, the progress of the student in the new course shall be monitored by the virtual teacher.
- If the acceleration is to another teacher's classroom, the sending teacher shall monitor the student's mastery of the items not mastered on the assessment(s) and keep the receiving accelerated course teacher apprised of the student's progress.

- At the end of the accelerated course, the classroom teacher(s) and a school administrator shall review FCAT and course performance to determine appropriate placement for the next school year. The student's CLP would include one of the following two scenarios in elementary school:
 - (1) the student would remain in the same grade level course the following year with differentiated instruction to expand the student's knowledge and skills, or
 - (2) the student would move to the next course in the sequence.

For example, a grade 4 student who demonstrated mastery of grade 4 math and was accelerated to grade 5 math might progress adequately through the year but be a candidate for more and differentiated instruction in grade 5 math the following year, **or** he/she might demonstrate mastery of the grade 5 math standards and be moved to the comparable course at the next level during the fifth grade school year – in this case M/J Math I Advanced through SJVS or FLVS.

DRAFT

Advanced Academic Opportunities in Elementary School

Whole Grade Acceleration

Acceleration is the skipping of a grade, or part of a grade, based on exceptionally high achievement by a student. Acceleration may be considered when the student has outstanding abilities and skills, social and emotional maturity, a score of 4 or 5 on the FCAT in reading and/or math, and meets other district criteria. Parents who may be interested in the complete application for acceleration process should consult with their child's teacher and the school counselor.



Acceleration does not supersede the initial placement age criteria as specified in Florida Statute 1003.21:

- For kindergarten, the student must be 5 years on or before September 1 of the school year
- For first grade, the student must be 6 years old on or before September 1 of the school year

Course Acceleration

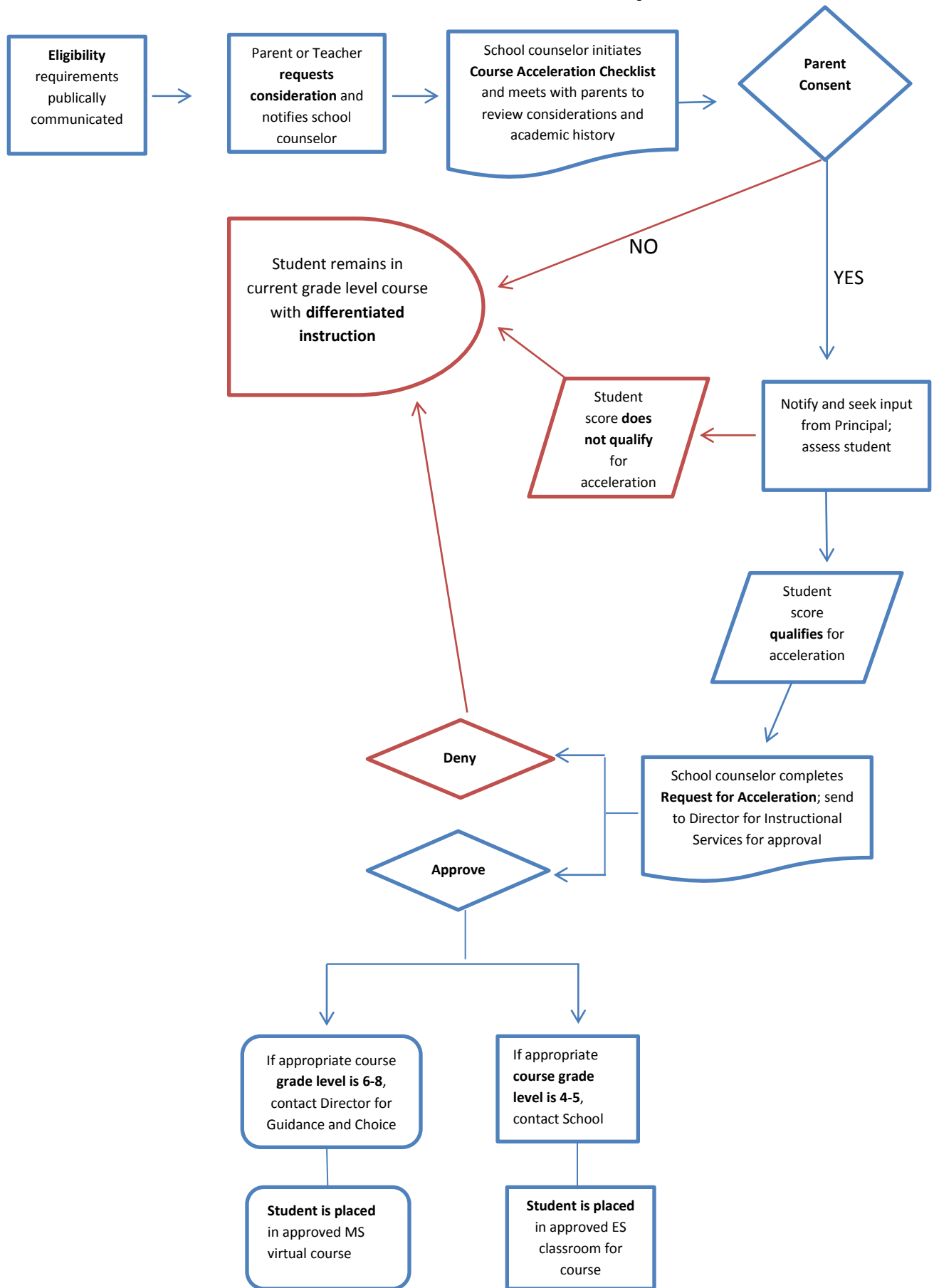
Students in grades four or five, who earned a score of 4 or 5 on the FCAT in reading or math, may be eligible for course acceleration after demonstrating mastery of the current grade level standards. When a student is accelerated, there is no guarantee that all of the foundation curriculum has been mastered. This is particularly critical in math since topics are presented only once, rather than being repeated year after year. The parent should consider carefully the full academic and social ramifications of acceleration. The parent may confer with the school counselor and teacher to determine if course acceleration is appropriate for the individual student based on the student's academic history, teacher recommendation, ability to work independently and the long range academic, social and emotional effect of acceleration. There is an application process that involves additional testing and final approval by the Principal and Director of Instructional Services.

Fourth grade students who have a level 4 or level 5 on the FCAT *in reading or math* and who meet district criteria may be eligible for course acceleration to a fifth grade level course. If they also meet the district criteria for fifth grade course acceleration they may be eligible to take a sixth grade level course. Middle school courses are accessible only through virtual school and may be completed at home or at school.

Fifth grade students who have a score of level 4 or level 5 *in reading* and meet district acceleration criteria may accelerate to an advanced middle school language arts, science or social studies course; fifth grade students who have a level 4 or level 5 on the FCAT *in math* and meet district criteria may accelerate to middle school Advanced Math I. As stated above, middle school courses are accessible only through virtual school and may be completed at home or at school. Approval by the Principal, Director of Instructional Services and the Director of Guidance and Choice is required.

For additional information on acceleration, please contact your school counselor or see the Elementary School Student Progression Plan on the District website at: <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/depts/cs/spp>.

4th or 5th Grade Acceleration Option



4th / 5th grade Virtual Acceleration Opportunities FAQ's

- 1. How does new legislation affect my child?** 4th and 5th grade students scoring a level 4 or 5 on FCAT Reading or Math may be eligible to take middle school courses.
- 2. Am I required to place my child in a virtual class?** No, the requirement is for the school to notify you of this opportunity. Your child will not be placed in a virtual course without your permission. In addition, the school administration must determine that acceleration is academically appropriate.
- 3. Why must the administration determine that it is academically appropriate to accelerate my child?** If your child is placed in a middle school virtual class, then he/she will not be enrolled in the same current grade-level course. As an example, consider a 5th grader who scored a level 4 or 5 on FCAT Math. The FCAT test identifies this student as a potential candidate for acceleration because he/she performed above grade level in 4th grade math standards. Before determining that this 5th grader should be placed in 6th grade math we must also determine that he/she has mastered the 5th grade math standards. If accelerated, this student would never receive direct instruction in the 5th grade standards and success in math is dependent on mastering the standards at each grade level. Therefore, the school must be certain that the student has achieved mastery at the previous grade level (FCAT) as well as in any grade level content that would be missed as a result of acceleration.
- 4. My 4th grader scored a 4 or a 5 on the FCAT Reading and/or Math. Can I request acceleration into 5th grade virtual classes?** No, virtual classes are available at the 6th, 7th and 8th grade levels only. We do not have a virtual option for 5th grade level courses through this program.
- 5. If my child participates in this course(s), who will be the teacher?** If your student takes a course through St. Johns Virtual School, then the teacher will be employed by St. Johns Public Schools and is available locally via phone or email when needed. If taking a Florida Virtual School course, then the teacher is employed by Florida Virtual School. Each teacher will be state-certified, fingerprinted, and background checked required regardless of the employer.
- 6. How will my child communicate with the teacher?** Students and parents will communicate regularly with the teacher primarily through email and phone. St. Johns Virtual teachers have office hours to meet with students in person.
- 7. Will my child be able to accomplish all coursework at school?** Probably not. Most Middle School courses require a significant amount of time and "homework" that the student will need to accomplish to remain on pace in the course.
- 8. What FCAT test will my student take if he/she is enrolled in an accelerated course?** Your student will take the FCAT tests that are required for his/her grade level. Although your student may be enrolled in a course for a higher grade level, he/she is still classified as a 4th or 5th grader and therefore will take all of the FCAT assessments for the assigned grade level.
- 9. I see that courses are available through St. Johns Virtual School (SJVS) or Florida Virtual School (FLVS), what is the difference?** SJVS is a franchise of FLVS. SJVS is the provider of first choice for virtual instruction however in situations in which SJVS cannot fulfill the need, students may qualify to access the services of FLVS. The significant difference is with the instructor and school calendar. SJVS teachers are employed by St. Johns Public Schools and coursework must be completed by June 6, 2012. The deadline is a firm one and if a student has not completed a course by the last day of school, they will not pass the course.

10. **How will promotion be impacted by enrollment in an accelerated course?** The school must consider your child's performance in the online course(s) to determine promotion. Failure to complete a course or to receiving a passing grade may have an impact on your student's promotion.

11. **What if the student finds the course too difficult and wants to drop it after they have started?** The student has 28 calendar days from the time of enrollment to drop the course without penalty. After that time, a grade of W/F (withdrew failing) will be assigned to the course and the student must make the course in middle school. The student will then return to the previously assigned on-grade-level class.