

## ***Challenging our academically advanced students...***

*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*

Martin Luther King Jr.

In our efforts to insure that all students learn to the best of their abilities, the academically advanced students are frequently underserved. Programs differ from school to school. Many different programs exist, but a standardized delivery model is not currently in place. The result is that too often unchallenged advanced students get bored, get lazy, or get in trouble. In order to provide an equitable education for them, we need to accelerate them to the level of their academic abilities, not to the level of their chronological peers.

In some cases, grade-skipping is appropriate, depending on the social and emotional maturity of the child. However, single subject acceleration should be promoted at all levels. Acceleration as an intervention is strongly supported by decades of research but is largely ignored in most schools.

We also need to set up a system that encourages academic risk at the high school level. For example, many high school students often enroll in average classes where they can easily make an “A” and protect their Grade Point Average (GPA). We need to change grading scales so that advanced classes are rated on six points instead of four points – this change would mean that students could take an advanced class and make a “C” while still receiving the same weight for GPA as an “A” in the average class. Then students will challenge themselves and achieve a much deeper and richer education.

High-performing students should have increased opportunities to receive college credit while attending high school. The school district’s partnerships with Pensacola Junior College and the University of West Florida should be strengthened so that more students can explore opportunities. Online classes can provide additional coursework not currently offered within the school district and will allow students to pursue courses in which they have an interest.