# **Summer Acceleration Academy Guidebook**

# **Table of Contents**

**Sections** **Page**

Overview of Acceleration Academy Model ……………………………………………………………....…….………….. 3

Instructional Guidance ………………..…….……………………………………………………………….………..…………..... 4

Student Selection …………………..….……………………………………………………..…..….………………………………… 5

Teacher Recruitment and Selection ………….…………………………………………..……………………………..…..… 6

Final Grant Reporting ……………………..…………………………………………………………………………………….….... 7

# Disclosure Statement

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# **Overview of Acceleration Academy Model**

An Acceleration Academy is a week-long academic program designed to accelerate student learning through engaging, standards-aligned lessons that meet the specific academic needs of students participating in the program. Each Acceleration Academy focuses on a specific content area and students who attend an Academy receive the equivalent of approximately one extra month of learning in one week. Acceleration Academy classes can either provide students with targeted supports to master grade-level standards or provide accelerated learning opportunities for advanced learners.

Acceleration Academy teachers should be selected through a rigorous application process to ensure all classes are taught by highly effective teachers. Teachers should be selected based on their ability to positively impact student learning and achievement through thoughtful planning, relationship-building, and creative, efficient instruction. The combination of more, highly-focused, instructional time led by exceptional teachers has resulted in positive student outcomes in several districts that have implemented the Acceleration Academy model with fidelity.

**In-Depth Case Study of Acceleration Academies**

* <http://goldenticketlawrence.newprofit.org/> - An in-depth case study of the Acceleration Academy program in Lawrence, MA, commissioned by [New Profit](https://www.newprofit.org/). The online case study includes videos of interviews with students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

**Research on Acceleration Academies**

* A study focused more generally on the turnaround efforts in Lawrence, MA, [*Can States Take Over and Turn Around School Districts? Evidence From Lawrence, Massachusetts*](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/schueler/files/schuelergoodmandeming_lps_eepa_2017.pdf), specifically highlighted the Acceleration Academies as a strategy that had a significant impact on student achievement, as measured by MCAS
* A study of the program in Springfield, MA, [*Making the Most of School Vacation*](https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/edfp_a_00269), also showed positive effects on student outcomes

**Key Components of Acceleration Academy Model**

* Instruction is provided in-person
* Lessons are tailored to the specific needs of students and should involve engaging, standards-aligned learning experiences
* Students are invited to participate in an Academy based on specific metrics
* Students receive at least 20 hours of in-person instruction in the same content area during the Academy
* Students in elementary and middle school grades attend at least 1 specials or enrichment class each day (highly recommended but not required)
* Class sizes are small (10-12 students per content teacher)
* Students are taught by the same content teacher for the duration of the Academy
* Classes are taught by highly effective teachers who are hired through a selective application process
* Teachers are given the autonomy to create lessons based on their students' specific needs and/or focus standards as well as instructional expectations set by the district or school

# **Instructional Guidance**

In order for Acceleration Academy teachers to have a targeted **instructional focus** for the week, districts should analyze student assessment data to determine areas of greatest need. To determine the instructional focus(i) for the week, districts should analyze preliminary MCAS data (if available), benchmark/interim assessment data, and/or other curriculum-based assessment data. Based on the analysis, districts should narrow the instructional focus(i) for the week to key concepts and/or standards that will prepare students for the grade they will be attending in the upcoming school year. Depending on the level of data available, districts should determine an instructional focus in one of two ways:

* **Targeted instructional focus by grade level** – Identify multiple instructional foci (different groupings of concepts/standards) for the Academy week and assign a particular instructional focus (i.e., group of concepts and/or standards) to individual teachers who will then be grouped with students who require additional support or acceleration in that focus area.
* **General instructional focus by grade level** – Determine trends for each grade level and assign teachers from the same grade level the same set of concepts/standards for that grade level to focus on for the Academy week.

Districts and/or schools should also develop clear instructional expectations for the Academies and communicate both the instructional focus and instructional expectations to teachers prior to the Academies.

If districts and/or schools have **high-quality instructional materials (HQIM)** that align to the instructional focus for the week, the districts/schools should provide these materials to teachers to either use or adapt as appropriate based on students’ academic strengths and needs, as evidenced by assessment data.

Once a district has determined the instructional focus and instructional expectations for an Academy, gathered available HQIM that aligns with the instructional focus, and selected teachers for the Academies, the district should either schedule planning meetings to review the instructional focus, instructional expectations, and HQIM with teachers or email teachers this essential information. After this information has been communicated to teachers, teachers should be given the autonomy to draw from their own expertise to develop high-quality units and lessons (i.e., no mandated instructional materials or curriculum) to meet the specific needs of their students.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Many vendors have created summer specific program materials so please consider reaching out to your vendors to see if any materials have been developed and are available.**

# **Student Selection**

Once an instructional focus has been identified for the week, district leaders should work with participating schools to analyze available sources of student data to determine which students would benefit the most from extra instruction in these areas.

**Student Selection for Early Literacy Academy**

Districts should use data from, when available, a [valid and reliable screening assessment](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/screening-assessments.html#approved) to determine which students would benefit most from attending a week-long program focused solely on early literacy.

**Student Selection for ELA and/or Math Academies**

After a district has identified focus standards for the week, districts and schools should analyze multiple sources of student-level data to determine which students would benefit the most from a high dose of targeted instruction during an Academy week. Because an Academy should only focus on a few key standards/concepts, students who, based on data gathered throughout the school year, would benefit the most from targeted instruction to solidify their understanding of these key concepts and/or focus standards should be considered first for invitation to an ELA or Math Academy. Students who, based on multiple data points, may require more prolonged interventions to master these concepts/standards should be considered for other, longer-term interventions.

**Student Recruitment and Attendance**

Student participation in the Academies will require a concerted effort by school administrators, teachers, and district leaders to inform students and parents about the accelerated learning opportunities provided by the Academies. Invitation to the Academies should be viewed as a celebration of a student’s hard work and desire to learn, not as a required intervention.

* **Outreach:** The district and participating schools should inform both students and their families about the Academies and promote the program as an opportunity for students to receive engaging, small group instruction led by exceptional teachers that will accelerate student learning and prepare students for the grade level they will be entering.
* **Securing Commitment:** Invited students and their families should commit to attending for the duration of the program, and schools should clearly identify how and whether students will be able to get to and from school during the Academy week.
* **Creating a Waitlist:** This program’s effectiveness rests on students attending for at least 80% of the available instructional hours (at least 4 out of 5 days or 16 out of 20 instructional hours). If there are more students interested in attending, or if there are more students identified for a given Academy than there are seats available, the district should create a waitlist to draw from if originally selected students drop out prior to, or in the first two days of, the Academy.
* **Incentivizing Student Attendance:** Consider engaging with the local business community and philanthropists to provide incentives for students who have perfect attendance. Students who choose to attend an Academy during their summer break should be celebrated and, if possible, rewarded for their commitment to learning.
* **Attendance Monitoring:** Getting students to attend on the first day will greatly impact attendance for the remainder of the Academy and missing even one day of instruction is almost equivalent to missing a week of instruction in one content area. Site facilitators and clerks/parent liaisons should closely monitor student attendance and call families of absent students each morning. If students withdraw from the program on Monday, site facilitators should invite waitlisted students to attend for the remainder of the week.

# **Teacher Recruitment and Selection**

Recruiting and selecting highly effective educators is paramount. To ensure classes are taught by highly effective teachers, districts should consider:

* Advertising the opportunity, and the stipend, as widely as possible to attract the largest number of highly effective educators
* Selecting teachers through an application process that ensures highly effective teachers are chosen to teach during the Academy week. Criteria to consider:
  + Number of years of experience teaching the specific content area of an Academy
  + SEI endorsement (especially if the district is planning to invite a high percentage of English Learners)
  + Professional development and/or accolades related to the specific content area of an Academy
  + If available, SGP of students taught by the educator over several years
  + Experience planning and teaching intensive, engaging, hands-on or project-based lessons
  + Experience teaching an [early literacy curriculum](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/) (for Early Literacy Academy)
* Conducting classroom walk-throughs/observations throughout the Academy week to ensure instruction meets expectations and to provide feedback, if needed.

**Teacher Observations**

Site facilitators and/or academic coaches should observe teachers several times throughout the week and complete a teacher observation form for each teacher. The observation form can be used to provide feedback as needed as well as inform planning and hiring decisions for subsequent Summer Acceleration Academies.

Site facilitators and/or academic coaches should also provide teachers constructive feedback throughout the week if they feel the feedback will help the teachers alter their instruction to better meet the needs of their students.

# **Final Grant Reporting**

As stated in the Grant Assurances document, districts awarded Summer Acceleration Academies Grant funding are required to participate in grant monitoring and reporting. Outlined below are the reporting requirements for this grant. Please note, DESE will provide templates and directions to collect the required information prior to the reporting deadline.

**Grant Reporting Requirements**

Districts must prepare and submit to DESE the following materials after the project duration of the grant has ended:

* **Attendance Rosters** – Daily attendance rosters for the Summer Acceleration Academies (Absent, Present, Tardy) including students’ names, SASID, AY2024 grade level, and class assignment for the Academy week
* **Observation Rubric(s) –** District created observation rubric(s) used to facilitate feedback and coaching throughout the Acceleration Academy week(s)

At the end of the Summer Acceleration Academies, districts will also be asked to complete a short survey to collect general enrollment and attendance information.