Edina Public Schools
DEFINING EXCELLENCE

Defining Excellence: Elementary Acceleration

2025–2026

This action plan outlines Edina Public Schools' commitment to Academic Excellence with a focus on **Acceleration in Elementary Talent Development**

This report outlines a process for review of the Acceleration opportunity that some students participate in Elementary Talent Development. This review process will occur during the 2025–2026 school year and the process will culminate with a set of recommendations to guide continuous improvement for the 2026-2027 school year. The purpose of this report is to articulate how we will gather and analyze feedback from a broad range of stakeholders before making any decisions.

The final set of recommendations will be presented to the School Board in spring 2026.

Potential areas of focus identified so far include:

- Clarifying the definition of acceleration within elementary Talent Development for internal and external (marketing) audiences.

- Expanding targeted acceleration opportunities in grades K–2.

- Reviewing identification processes and the flexibility for students to move in and out of acceleration.

- Strengthening supports for students and families during transitions.

- Ensuring a more consistent accelerated experience across and within schools.

These preliminary recommendations were generated by the Talent Development Parent Advisory Committee and through informal input from elementary staff and administration. They provide a strong starting point for the review. However, to sustain excellence, the 2025-26 process will be broader, drawing on formal feedback from a larger and more diverse group of students, families, and staff.

The outcome will be a set of community-informed recommendations designed to strengthen and sustain acceleration opportunities for students beginning in the 2026–2027 school year.

An Overview of the Edina Talent Development Framework

Following the completion of the Edina Gifted Education Study in 2017, the Board approved the recommendation to expand from Gifted Education Services to Talent Development. Talent Development is a **framework** with many Teaching and Learning components, thus implementation is an ongoing, multi-year process that requires shifts in mindset, instructional practice, system design, and professional learning.

While "Gifted Education" refers to identifying students who already demonstrate advanced academic abilities through test scores, **Talent Development in Edina is Gifted Education and MORE**. It takes a broader, more inclusive, and proactive approach. It focuses on **nurturing potential in all students** by providing opportunities, support, and meaningful challenges that match each learner's readiness. *A more inclusive approach will not reduce or eliminate opportunities for advanced learners instead it will expand opportunities.*

This shift ensures that students receive the **right instructional match**, so they can **experience optimal growth**, **develop confidence in themselves,** and **stretch their abilities over time**. A Talent Development approach directly supports mental health by **reducing anxiety**, **affirming students' strengths**, and creating learning environments where **each and every** student can **grow at a healthy, sustainable pace.**

The Edina Talent Development Framework provides four learning opportunities to nurture the potential in all students. The framework aligns with the vision of the **Portrait of a Well-Rounded Edina Graduate**, ensuring that **every learner is seen, supported, and stretched** to develop their potential and thrive. These learning opportunities are what define excellence in instruction for all students in Edina.

Talent Development Opportunities

Enrichment

Discovering personal strengths and interests, opportunities to think critically and creatively.

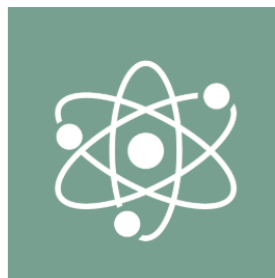

Grades K-12

Extended Learning

Challenging opportunities for learners who are ready to deepen their learning of grade-level standards.

Grades 2-12

Accelerated Learning

Compacted and faster-paced opportunities for learners who are ready to accelerate their learning.

Grades 3-12

Real World Application

Opportunities to apply prior knowledge to prepare for college, career, and life.

Grades K-12

Enrichment and Real World opportunities happen in the classroom with the classroom teacher for MOST to ALL students, while Extended Learning opportunities happen in the classroom for SOME. By making curriculum resource decisions that support rigorous classroom instruction (Tier 1) and providing professional development, all teachers increase the level of rigor for all students on a daily basis. Edina's teachers are phenomenal teachers and the ability to enrich, extend, and incorporate real world experiences in the classroom requires intentional planning and support.

Acceleration happens in a different setting for SOME. This learning entails a teacher working with a group of students who are ready for instruction at a faster pace, thus they are compacting curriculum and advancing learning differently.

A Day in the Life of an Edina Elementary Student

This student has an IEP for writing. He has an outside diagnosis of dysgraphia and a portion of his week is spent working directly with his Special Education Case Manager on his writing goals.

- **Enrichment (for all students at different times):**
  In Social Studies, Mark's class finishes a unit on North America. His teacher sets up stations where students can choose how they want to extend their learning by building a model of a landform, completing a map challenge, researching an explorer, or creating a game. Mark chooses to build, and is excited to share his creation with others.

- **Extended Learning (for some students, at different times):**
  In reading, Mark quickly shows he understands the day's lesson. Instead of repeating what he already knows, his teacher gives him a different activity that goes deeper, while his classmates finish their work. Mark does this during some lessons in reading but not all.

- **Accelerated Learning (for some students, at different times):**
  During math, Mark joins a group of 4th graders from across the grade for accelerated math. Mark is with this group on a daily basis and the Talent Development teacher moves the students through lessons at a faster pace, so that they can take on advanced challenges once they've finished a unit.

- **Real-World Application (for all students):**
  In science, Mark's class works on a *Waves of Sound*, Cornerstone STEAM Project. He designs and builds his own musical instrument using the engineering design process. Later, the class attends the Edina High School Pops Concert to see sound and music come to life in a real-world setting.

By the end of the day, Mark has been stretched, supported, and inspired through different types of learning. He's building academic skills, practicing responsibility, and developing creativity and problem-solving, exactly aligned with the goals of a rigorous Edina education and the Portrait of a Well-Rounded Edina Graduate.

Advancing the Portrait of a Well-Rounded Edina Graduate

through the Edina Talent Development Framework

ACADEMICALLY PREPARED

A Talent Development Framework identifies strengths early and provides experiences that transform those strengths into high levels of achievement. Pairing this with strong instructional matches ensures deep mastery of academics, and equips students to tackle complex issues with confidence.

GLOBALLY COMPETENT INDIVIDUAL

Through authentic learning experiences rich with diverse interactions, students develop the ability to collaborate across differences. They learn to approach the world with curiosity and respect, ready to engage meaningfully in an interconnected global society.

RESPONSIBLE, ENGAGED CITIZEN

When students engage in authentic learning, they connect their schoolwork to real-world purposes. When students see that their work matters, they grow into responsible, engaged citizens who contribute meaningfully to their communities.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR AND COLLABORATOR

When students' potential is nurtured, they learn to value their own strengths while appreciating the diverse talents of others. Over time, they develop the confidence, adaptability, and leadership skills to communicate effectively and collaborate in any community setting.

INNOVATIVE THINKER AND PROBLEM SOLVER

When students learn in settings that provide a strong instructional match, they feel safe to take risks and explore ideas without fear of failure. This nurtures curiosity and enables students to innovate while approaching problems with confidence and persistence.

MOTIVATED LIFE LONG LEARNER

A Talent Development approach cultivates continuous learning, by offering meaningful challenges. Students take ownership of their growth and advocate for their learning needs. This fosters a love of learning that extends far beyond the classroom into every stage of life.
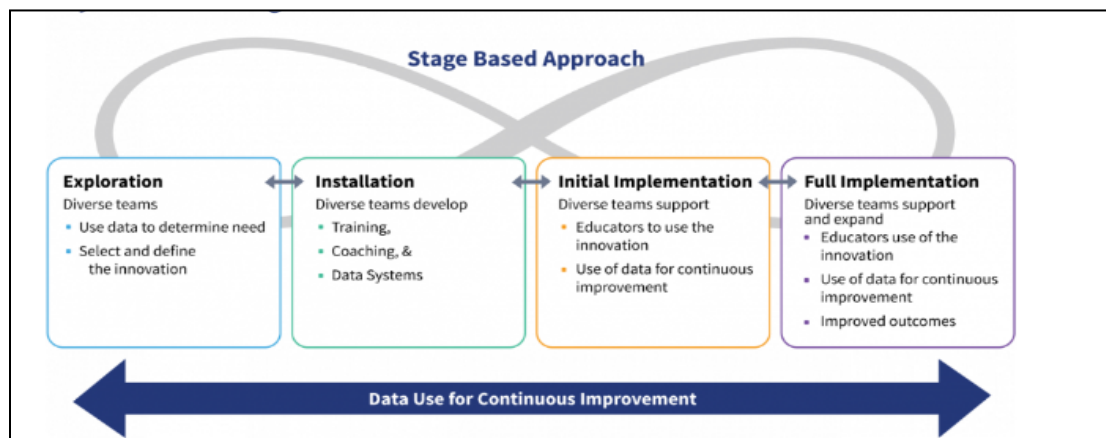
Acceleration

One of the four learning opportunities is **Acceleration**. As part of the overall Edina Talent Development Framework, **Acceleration is for SOME** students and specifically supports students who are demonstrating advanced academic abilities. Elementary Acceleration can include compacted and faster-paced learning that happens outside of the homeroom classroom for math in grades 3-5 and reading in grades 4-5.

Purpose and Vision for a Review of Elementary Acceleration

The Edina Talent Development Framework in its entirety is being implemented through a Stage Based Approach as defined by Implementation Science. In Implementation Science there are 4 stages that outline the journey to ensure full implementation. There is not a defined amount of time spent in each stage, nor is the process always linear.

The Edina Talent Development Framework is comprehensive and complex. Due to the complexity the implementation has been broken down to elementary, middle school, and high school and each level has different implementation plans.

The Elementary Acceleration learning opportunity in the Talent Development Framework is in the **full implementation stage and the review process outlined below will directly support gathering and using data for sustaining excellence for acceleration.**

While this review focuses on Elementary Acceleration, similar reviews and improvements are happening across many curriculum and instructional areas. All of these efforts are guided by the broad, inclusive, and proactive mindset of Talent Development. The philosophy of Talent Development shapes our teaching practices to stretch, support, and inspire students. By providing teachers with strong resources, clear daily structures, and ongoing training that helps them tailor instruction as and when needed, we ensure that each and every student has the opportunity to discover their strengths and thrive.

Focus Areas for the Review of Elementary Acceleration:

What questions, in alignment with the overall Talent Development philosophy, will be answered through the acceleration review.

1. Purpose & Vision for Acceleration

- **Stakeholder Understanding:** How do all stakeholders (staff, families, and students) define acceleration and understand its role within the broader Talent Development Framework?
- **Staff Empowerment:** Are all staff members equipped with the knowledge and resources to guide families and students through acceleration decisions effectively?
- **Communication of Value:** How do we ensure that acceleration is consistently framed as a learning opportunity for the **right instructional match,** and that this doesn't diminish other opportunities for advanced learners?
- **Integration with Framework:** To what extent are staff integrating flexible acceleration practices with the framework's broader goal of **nurturing potential** in every student?

2. Inclusive Approach to Nurturing Potential

- **Broadened Access:** What enrollment in enrichment and acceleration data do we have to show that we have broadened access to acceleration, moving beyond traditional identification methods to reach a more diverse group of students?
- **Proactive Opportunities:** How are we proactively providing support for each and every student to be successful in K-5 acceleration learning opportunities?
- **Equitable Learning:** How are we ensuring that Accelerated programming is consistent across all elementary sites?
- **Expanded Opportunities:** Have we successfully maintained and expanded opportunities for advanced learners while simultaneously broadening access for others?

3. Right Instructional Match for Every Learner for Optimal Growth

- **Personalized Learning:** How are we creating acceleration learning experiences that directly complement and respond to students' **readiness levels**?
- **Meaningful Growth:** What metrics do we use to ensure **meaningful challenges** for every student, and how do we recognize and respond to signs of either overwhelm or boredom?

- **Effective Identification Tools:** Do staff and families understand our current portfolio components effectively to support student placement with a focus on optimal growth and meaningful challenge?

4. Integration of Social-Emotional Well-being

- **Appropriate Challenge & Well-being:** How do we monitor whether our acceleration practices support students' mental health and social-emotional well-being, including but not limited to a sense of belonging?
- **Confidence & Motivation:** What supports are in place to build and/or maintain student confidence when moving in and out of an accelerated opportunity?
- **Healthy Pacing:** How do we balance rigorous academic challenge with a **healthy, sustainable pace** to prevent stress and anxiety?
- **Affirming Strengths**: Are students across all elementary grade levels, K-5, experiencing their strengths being nurtured with acceleration defined by compacted and faster-paced learning?
- **Advocating for Life Long Learning**: By 5th grade, are students able to identify and feel confident in their instructional match for meaningful growth and advocate when needed?

Elementary Acceleration Review – One-Year Timeline

Goal: Complete review of the accelerated elementary program, aligned with the Talent Development framework, and present focus areas for continuous improvement in the 2026–2027 school year.

Phase 1 – Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, Implementation (2021-2025)

- Move the acceleration learning opportunity of Talent Development in the elementary through the 4 stages of Implementation Science.
- Fully implement a Talent Development acceleration model in 3rd-5th grade in math (3-5) and english language arts (4-5).

Phase 2 – Planning for Review of Implementation (Summer–Fall 2025)

- Create a plan to review elementary acceleration for continuous improvement.
- Present the draft plan to the School Board for feedback and refinement.

Phase 3 – Engagement & Data Collection Preparation (Fall 2025)

- Stakeholder Engagement

- ○ Convene an internal lead team.
- ○ Gather initial perceptions about acceleration's purpose, access, instructional match, and SEL impact in alignment with focus areas 1-4.
- Set Review Scope & Process with internal lead team
  - ○ Define data sources, metrics, and feedback tools for each focus area.
  - ○ Map alignment between acceleration practices and right instructional match, inclusion, and SEL support.
- Finalize Tools & Schedule with internal lead team
  - ○ Create surveys, interview protocols, and classroom observation tools.
  - ○ Schedule classroom visits, data pulls, and feedback sessions.

Phase 4 - Comprehensive Review (Winter 2025-26)

- Collect Data Across All Focus Areas
  - ○ **Purpose & Vision:** Gather evidence of shared understanding and consistent messaging.
  - ○ **Inclusive Approach:** Review participation demographics, access pathways, and opportunity expansion.
  - ○ **Right Instructional Match:** Examine portfolio components, growth metrics, and student progress data.
  - ○ **Social-Emotional Well-being:** Monitor student confidence, pacing, and sense of belonging.
- Analyze & Validate Findings
  - ○ The lead team reviews results, identifying both strengths and growth areas.
  - ○ Share preliminary findings with students, staff, and families for input.

Phase 5 - Synthesis and Recommendations (Spring 2026)

- Draft Recommendations
  - ○ Align proposed improvements with the Edina Talent Development's Framework and the commitment to nurturing each and every learner's potential.
  - ○ Highlight strategies to strengthen purpose, broaden access, refine instructional match, and support SEL.
- Present Focus Areas for Implementation
  - ○ Share final recommendations with the School Board and school community.
  - ○ Set action steps for implementation beginning in the 2026–2027 school year.

Metrics for Success – Elementary Acceleration Review

1. Purpose & Vision for Acceleration

- **Increased stakeholder understanding:** Staff, families, and students can accurately describe acceleration and its purpose within the Talent Development framework.
- **Staff Empowerment:** Staff report feeling confident in guiding families/students through acceleration decisions.
- **Consistent Messaging:** All school and district communications clearly articulate acceleration as a tool for the *right instructional match* and *meaningful challenge with optimal growth*, without diminishing other advanced learning opportunities.

2. Inclusive Approach to Nurturing Potential

- **Culturally Proficient Access:** Demographic data shows proportional representation of students who have not typically accessed acceleration opportunities in the past.
- **Proactive Identification:** Evidence of multiple entry points for acceleration decisions (teacher recommendations, performance data, family requests, student self-advocacy).
- **Opportunity Expansion:** Documentation of expanded advanced learning opportunities that support both traditionally identified and newly engaged students.

3. Right Instructional Match for Every Learner

- **Placement Accuracy:** Students in acceleration pathways meet or exceed personalized growth targets on relevant academic measures.
- **Student Experience:** Students report that acceleration provides challenge without consistent overwhelm or boredom.
- **Tool Effectiveness:** All relevant staff demonstrate effective use of portfolio components for matching students with an acceleration opportunity.

4. Integration of Social-Emotional Well-being

- **Well-being Indicators:** Reduction in reported acceleration-related stress/anxiety incidents compared to prior year.
- **Confidence & Belonging:** Accelerated students report feeling confident in their abilities and their learning opportunities.
- **Advocacy Skills:** By 5th grade, at least 80% of students can accurately identify their own instructional match and advocate for needed challenge or support. 5th grades are specifically able to identify and select 6th grade courses that are a strong instructional match.

Closing Statement

This review is an audit of our acceleration practices and it is a commitment to ensuring that every child's strengths are recognized early, nurtured intentionally, and connected to opportunities that enhance achievement. It is a commitment to our Edina vision and mission. By aligning acceleration with the Talent Development framework, we affirm that each and every student deserves the right instructional match for optimal growth. We acknowledge that challenge and support are not mutually exclusive, but essential for enhanced achievement. The findings from this process will shape a stronger, more inclusive and responsive acceleration program, one that ensures students leave elementary school academically prepared, socially confident, and ready to embrace the challenges and possibilities of their future learning in alignment with the Portrait of a Well-Rounded Edina Graduate.