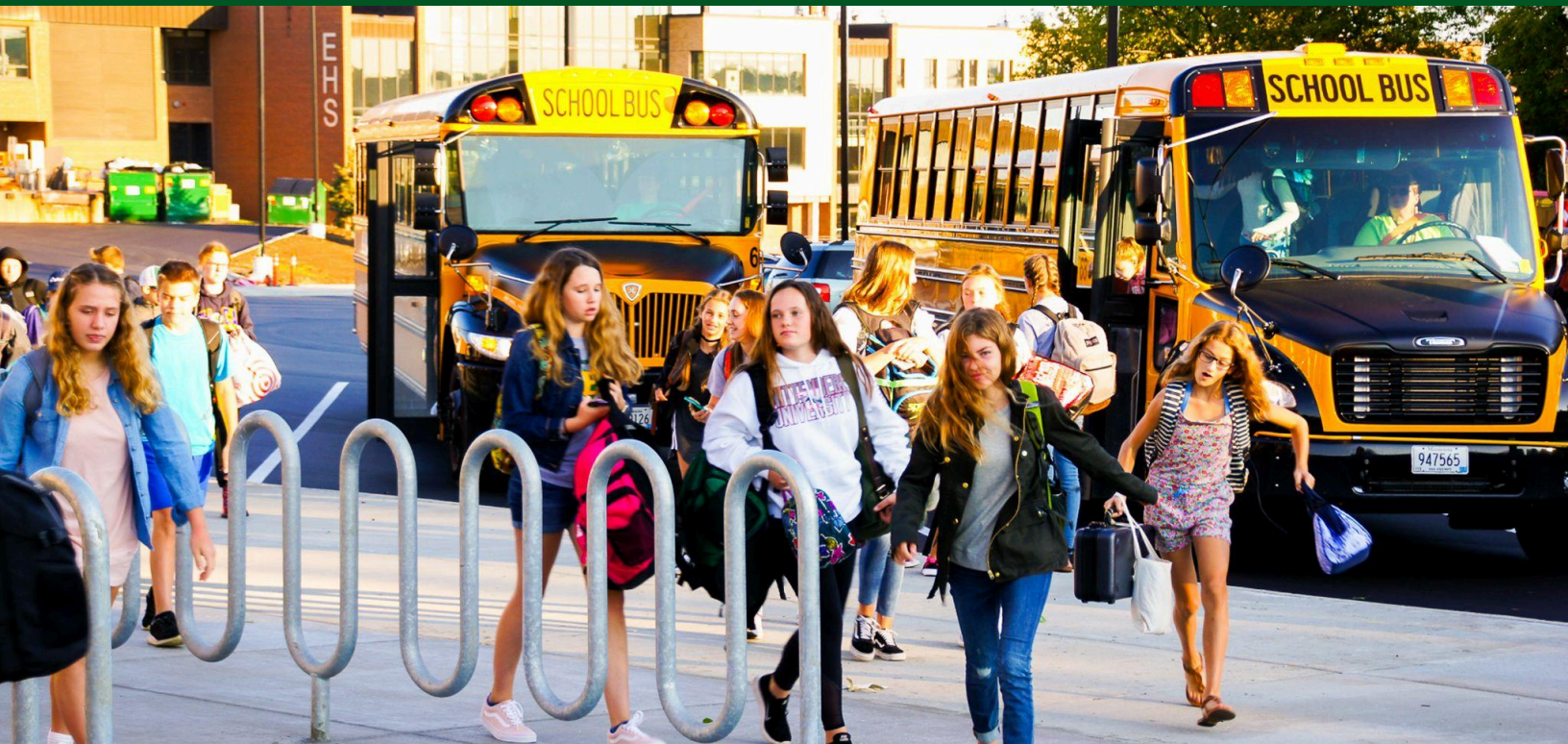


Defining Excellence: Elementary Acceleration

2025-2026



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

End of Year Update - April 2026 - Reconnecting to Our Vision

This report provides an update on the completion of the Elementary Talent Development Acceleration opportunity review. Elementary was selected for the review because the Secondary has more accelerated opportunities to access. The process began in the fall of 2025 and is designed to ensure continued excellence by guiding necessary adjustments and strengthening the program for the future. The Elementary Acceleration Review is an audit of current practices and a commitment to ensuring that each and every child's strengths are recognized early, nurtured intentionally, and connected to opportunities that enhance achievement, as well as social and emotional well-being. The review directly aligns with the 2020-2030 Edina Public School Strategic Plan, strategy A.2, "Articulate a system of flexible pathways that maximizes learner engagement to grow students' strengths and talents."

This review process of Elementary Acceleration was specifically designed to gather and use data for sustaining excellence. The review of Acceleration in Elementary Talent Development is completed and the focused areas for continuous improvement have been identified.

The What: Talent Development- Elementary Acceleration

The Elementary Acceleration learning opportunity is operating in the **full implementation stage** of the Edina Talent Development Framework. Talent Development is an **instructional framework for each and every**. 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 to instructional excellence. *This more inclusive approach of Talent Development does not reduce or eliminate opportunities for advanced learners instead it expands opportunities for all.*

One of the four Talent Development 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 includes compacted and faster-paced learning that happens outside of the homeroom classroom for math in grades 3-5 and reading in grades 4-5. The Curiosity Lab is a tool used to support students who are underrepresented in advanced programming to access possible future opportunities. In this report, the Curiosity Lab was not reviewed as part of accelerated programming.

Timeline: A Five-Phase Approach

The review was structured into five sequential and deliberate phases, of which **ALL have been completed** as of April 2026. This approach ensured that the final recommendations are comprehensive and community-informed. 90% of the Talent Development Elementary Acceleration Lead Team strongly agreed that the five phase approach was comprehensive, inclusive of many perspectives and effective in honoring the survey data.

Phase	Timeline	Status	Key Actions
One: Implementation	2021-2025	Completed	Moved the acceleration opportunity through the four stages of Implementation Science, resulting in the full implementation of the acceleration model for Math (grades 3-5) and Reading (grades 4-5).
Two: Planning for Review of Acceleration	Summer-Fall 2025	Completed	Created a plan for continuous improvement, including presenting a draft plan to the School Board on September 8, 2025.
Three: Engagement & Data Collection Preparation	Fall 2025 (September 18 - December 1, 2025)	Completed	Convened the internal lead team, defined the scope and process, and determined feedback tools for each focus area through multiple stakeholder meetings.
Four: Comprehensive Review	January-February 2026	Completed	Collected data across all four focus areas and stakeholder groups. This included reviewing demographics, growth metrics, and evidence of shared understanding of the program. The survey data was

			analyzed and validated with the Acceleration Lead Team, District MTSS Team, District, Talent Development Team, and the District Parent Advisory Council.
Five: Finalize Recommendations and Implementation Roadmap	March-April 2026 School Board presentation on 5-19-26	Completed	Recommendations were identified that align with the Edina Talent Development's Framework. Feedback was gathered by key stakeholder groups in order to create implementation options and begin creating a multi-year implementation plan. In partnership with the marketing team, elementary TD teachers, and elementary principals, the multi-year implementation plan will be created during the 2026 summer. The implementation will be phased with some action steps beginning during the 2026-2027 school year and others in the 2027-28 school year.

The Four Focus Areas: Our Throughline

All analysis and future design for the Elementary Acceleration Review is centered around four key themes. These themes align the review with the overall Talent Development Instructional Framework philosophy and vision of Edina Public Schools, for each and every student to discover their possibilities and thrive.

- Purpose & Vision for Acceleration:** This focus area seeks to clarify the definition of acceleration within elementary Talent Development for both internal and external audiences. It is currently framed as a learning opportunity that provides a strong instructional match for some students who need additional academic challenges.
- Inclusive & Consistent Approach to Nurturing Potential:** The goal is to determine if the district has broadened access to acceleration opportunities, moving beyond traditional identification methods to reach more students. This area also examines how consistency is ensured across all elementary sites.
- Right Instructional Match for Every Learner for Optimal Growth:** This theme focuses on how the program creates individualized learning experiences that directly respond to students' readiness levels. Metrics for success include placement accuracy, ensuring students meet individual growth targets, and

guaranteeing that acceleration provides meaningful challenge without consistent overwhelm or boredom.

4. **Integration of Social-Emotional Well-being:** This measure focuses on how acceleration influences students' social-emotional outcomes, including their sense of connection and confidence as learners. The review monitors whether students experience a healthy balance between challenge and manageable expectations, ensuring that academic acceleration strengthens, rather than compromises, their long-term well-being. In addition, this component will review how students move into and out of accelerated pathways to ensure that increased access does not unintentionally create stress, isolation, or barriers to belonging, and that students receive the support they need to thrive at each transition point.

Stakeholder Engagement for Data Collection

The Elementary Acceleration Review was grounded in broad stakeholder engagement. The process was designed to draw on formal feedback from a larger and more diverse group of students, families, and staff. 90 % of the Talent Development Elementary Acceleration Lead Team strongly agreed that the Review process was comprehensive in scope, thoroughly examining the existing barriers and opportunities within our elementary acceleration model.

Data was gathered from six distinct stakeholder groups using a variety of confidential methods, including surveys and focus groups, to ensure a comprehensive perspective:

- Students currently participate and participated in the last three years in acceleration opportunities
- Parents/Families of students who have participated in the past three years in accelerated opportunities
- Classroom Teachers (K-2 and 3-5)
- Talent Development Teachers
- Principals/Administrative Deans

Comprehensive Review Process (completed Winter 2026)

The review transitioned into the critical data collection and synthesis phases. Data was collected across all four focus areas and all stakeholder groups. The survey data was then analyzed and validated with the Acceleration Lead Team, District MTSS Team, Talent Development Team and the District Parent Advisory Council. Groups were given the following to analyze: the raw survey data for each stakeholder group,

a summary of the survey comments, a summary of the raw data broken up by focus area with strengths and areas for improvement identified for each focus area.

This is what we learned:

The survey data identified both strengths and areas for improvement in each focus area. Below are the consistent themes within the survey data:

Focus Area	Strength	Area for Improvement
Purpose & Vision for Acceleration	A strong internal understanding of how the district defines acceleration	Gap between district's "internal clarity" and the "external" experience
Inclusive & Consistent Approach to Nurturing Potential	Flexible grouping and student-belonging in Accelerated classes	Site program inconsistencies
Right Instructional Match for Every Learner for Optimal Growth	Over 90% of parents and students believe academic needs are being met in the accelerated course	Underserved grades 1-2 populations
Integration of Social-Emotional Well-being	Peer connections while in accelerated classes	Flexible grouping can produce anxiety

The summarized raw data is available in the appendix.

In addition to grounding our analysis in the survey data, the Elementary Acceleration Review also included a look at our neighboring school districts and their offerings for advanced learners. Districts generally fall into two different broad categories:

- Gifted and Talented (GT) Programs that most often follow an identification-first model. They use standardized testing and IQ scores to find students with high "natural" ability. Once identified, these students are placed in a separate school with an accelerated curriculum. The focus is on providing a specific environment for those who have already met a high performance threshold.
- Talent Development Programs that follow a development-first model. Rather than screening students, these programs provide high-level enrichment to all students. The goal is to nurture potential over time, assuming that with the right instruction and opportunities, more students can reach an advanced

level of learning. Most of the time these programs do not offer, or offer very limited, unique accelerated learning classes.

Edina Public Schools offers both approaches. We focus on cultivating talent through enrichment, extended learning and real-world opportunities. Edina Public Schools also focuses on finding excellence through acceleration opportunities.

The Talent Development program in Edina continues to earn significant acclaim, extending its reputation from local success to national recognition. Notably, Riverside Insights recently showcased the district's innovative application of the CogAT assessment, highlighting our commitment to identifying student reasoning strengths to directly inform and enhance classroom instruction for each and every student. This approach represents a pivotal shift in educational philosophy, moving away from a traditional deficit lens toward a proactive, asset-based framework that celebrates student potential. This momentum is further evidenced by our program coordinator's invitation to present at the annual Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented (MEGT) conference. As school districts across the state increasingly look to Edina as a model for excellence, we remain dedicated to refining and sharing these impactful opportunities for our learners.

The Elementary Acceleration Review uncovered three opportunities that neighboring GT programs offer that Edina does not:

- Opportunities for primary (1st and 2nd grade) aged-students in Math and/or Reading
- Minnetonka's Ready-Start Kindergarten program: a Kindergarten program designed for children who may not be ready - socially or academically - for a traditional classroom. This is **a comprehensive Kindergarten program** that prepares students for first grade the following year. RSK was developed for families struggling over the decision to start Kindergarten or wait another year, a common discussion for children with summer birthdays.
- Wayzata's Rising K's, a **full-day summer pre-kindergarten program** designed for children entering kindergarten in the fall, including those with summer birthdays. This program focuses on kindergarten readiness, featuring play-based, hands-on, and themed weekly activities to support the transition to elementary school.

Based on direct conversations with families we know of eight (8) families who live in Edina that have enrolled in the Navigator Elementary Gifted Education specialized school in Minnetonka.

Recommendations (Spring 2026)

Teams synthesized the analysis of data, with a strong focus placed on areas for improvement. The synthesis guided final recommendations for continued improvement designed to sustain excellence. Recommendations were identified that align with the Edina Talent Development’s Framework. Based on best practices and validated by our student survey data, four recommendations emerged.

Focus Area	Recommendation
Purpose and Vision for Acceleration	Standardize District and Site Communication
The Why: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This was the most frequently cited issue across all adult stakeholder groups. There is a significant gap between the district’s “internal” clarity” and the “external” experience (60% of families and 63.8% of K-2 teachers feel communication is ineffective). 	
Inclusive Approach to Nurturing Potential	Audit Site-to-Site Consistency
The Why: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a major equity concern identified by four groups (Families, Principals, TD Teachers, and MTSS). Stakeholders are concerned about class size limits, direct instruction, service minutes, the varying number of students being served, and the impact of choice programs. 	
Right Instructional Match for Optimal Student Growth	Expand 1-2 rigor and determine the success of the Curiosity Lab
The Why: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data shows an “underserved” population in early elementary and the need for expanded rigor in grades 1-2. 70.2% of K-2 teachers report students needing more challenge, yet only 36% feel “highly able” to manage these needs 	
Social-Emotional Well-being	Establish Flexing and Transition Protocols
The Why: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data shows that flexible grouping can support strong instruction and growth. However, the transition and execution is a primary source of student anxiety. It was identified as a major concern by four groups (Families, 3-5 Teachers, Students, and Principals). The data shows flexible grouping can hinder student confidence. 	

100% of the Talent Development Elementary Acceleration Lead Team strongly agreed that the methods used to conduct the Review (such as data collection and team collaboration) were effective in identifying the most critical areas for improvement. 100% of the team also strongly agreed that the recommendations will have a high impact on the quality and accessibility of elementary acceleration opportunities.

Next Steps: Transition and Readiness

Feedback was gathered by key stakeholder groups in order to create implementation options. This review affirms our commitment that each and every student deserves the right instructional match for optimal growth. By aligning acceleration with the Talent Development Instructional framework, we ensure that challenge and support are not mutually exclusive, but are essential components for enhanced achievement, as well as social and emotional well-being. The findings from this process will shape a stronger, more inclusive, and responsive acceleration program, ensuring students leave elementary school academically prepared, self-aware, and socially confident, in alignment with the Edina 2020-2030 Strategic Plan and the Portrait of a Well-Rounded Edina Graduate.

Next steps for each focus area are identified below, with the understanding that **a multi-year implementation plan will be drafted in the Summer of 2026 to intentionally move the work forward. The multi-year implementation plan will be shared with the Board in the fall of 2026. Success measures will be included in the multi-year implementation plan.**

Immediate actions taking place in the summer of 2026 while the multi-year implementation plan is being drafted are:

- Website revisions will clearly explain the purpose of acceleration, selection criteria, K-12 pathways, and site specific opportunities.
- In partnership with the Early Childhood leadership team, standardized communication regarding Talent Development opportunities will be created and shared with families who have students entering Kindergarten.
- In partnership with the Middle School leadership team, standardized communication regarding Talent Development opportunities will be created and shared with families who have students entering grade 6 for 2026-27.
- Elementary principals will review an audit of site-to-site consistency on June 11th and begin thinking about critical steps to address the inconsistencies.
- Elementary principals will meet on June 11th to review stakeholder feedback and identify the best option for expanding rigor in grade 1 and grade 2.

- Flexible grouping and transition protocols will be created in the summer with a representative group of Talent Development teachers. Flexible grouping begins mid-September in TD 3rd grade Math. A standardized approach will be used to inform families and students of the opportunity. It will include a common message to families and classroom teachers and a possible site meeting with families. An opt-in option is also being evaluated.

Appendix

Appendix A: [Acceleration Raw Survey Data: Math Students](#)

Appendix B: [Acceleration Raw Survey Data: Reading Students](#)

Appendix C: [Acceleration Raw Survey Data: 3-5 Classroom Teachers](#)

Appendix D: [Acceleration Raw Survey Data: K-2 Classroom Teachers](#)

Appendix E: [Acceleration Raw Survey Data: Parents](#)

Appendix F: [Acceleration Raw Survey Data: Administrators: Principals and Deans](#)

Appendix G: [Acceleration Raw Survey Data: Talent Development Teachers](#)

Appendix H: [Talent Development Advisory Council Members](#)

Appendix I: [Talent Development Elementary Acceleration Lead Team Members](#)