

Right for Your Child?

Potential explores two perspectives related to acceleration—one for elementary students and one for adolescents. Is acceleration right for your child? It's not a decision to be taken lightly, but hopefully these articles provide food for thought and insights as you navigate the process.

For Adolescents

Early College Entrance: How Will My Child Do?

By Rachel U. Chung, M.Ed. and Nancy B. Hertzog, Ph.D.

Your precocious adolescent devours books, solves tricky math problems for fun, and easily makes friends with older classmates due to maturity that makes her “wise beyond her years.” She is in the most accelerated classes of her school and yet is still not adequately challenged. At 16, she tells you that she wants to go to college. What should you do? There's no need to panic: Although unconventional, early college entrance is one possible option for self-motivated, high-achieving students.

Early College Entrance

Early college entrance is a form of acceleration, or the process of advancing students in academic programs faster than their same-aged peers.¹ Many early entrants have demonstrated academic ability to achieve at high levels but they exhibit tremendous variety in their age, specific abilities, social and emotional maturity, family support, and personality traits.² There is no “one size fits all” program for them.

Today there are a variety of options for acceleration depending on each student's unique needs. Students may opt to take university courses while in high school, choose dual enrollment, or skip or drop out of high school entirely and enter college as fully matriculated freshmen, as in the case of the University of Washington's early entrance programs.

The Robinson Center for Young Scholars at the University of Washington

The University of Washington (UW) Robinson Center for Young Scholars has two early college entrance programs for highly capable adolescents: the Early Entrance Program (EEP), created in 1977, and the UW Academy for Young Scholars, created in 2001.

EEP is a two-step program that admits a small cohort of students after 7th or 8th grade into the Transition School (TS), an intensive college preparatory program that condenses

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es most of high school into three academic quarters. After successfully graduating from TS, students officially enter the EEP program and are considered freshmen at the University of Washington.

The UW Academy program admits up to 35 students who drop out of high school after 10th grade and enroll into the university as college freshmen.

To ease their transition into college, the academy provides programming that includes cohort building activities, academic advising, and classes to introduce them to university writing, as well as to the wide variety of university majors, clubs, and resources.

Social, emotional and academic support, along with parent involvement, are important aspects of both programs. Parents participate in orientations, scheduled “check-ins,” and parent conferences. Discussion groups offer parents ways to support their early entrants through college and adolescence.

Parents most often want to know the long-term outcomes of students who graduated from early entrance programs. The Robinson Center has a long history of scholarly inquiry and a comprehensive summary of previous research.³ In addition, in 2013, the Robinson Center research team embarked on an alumni follow-up study spanning 35 years of the early entrance programs that explored how participation in the Robinson Center Ear-



ly Entrance Program or the UW Academy impacted alumni’s personal, academic, and professional lives. The full results of that study are described in “Outcomes for Students on a Fast Track for College,”⁴ with a brief summary below.

35-Year Alumni Study

In 2013, nearly 200 alumni (119 EEP and 73 Academy students) participated in an electronic survey about participant characteristics, program impact, academic and career outcomes, and interpersonal relationships. Of these alumni, 41 were interviewed in-depth by phone or internet video.

Overall, the findings were very positive for academic and career outcomes, and mostly positive for social relationships—although there was some variance in the area of romantic relationships. A majority

of alumni reported that they were generally happy and that the program had positively impacted their happiness. *Nearly 90% of alumni said they would make the same choices if they had to do it all over again.*

Academic and Career Outcomes

Graduates of the early entrance programs have remained academically successful. As college students, they majored in a wide variety of fields from the natural sciences to the social sciences, business, humanities, and the arts. As a group, they had an average GPA of 3.7, which is considerably higher than the GPA average of all undergraduates at the University of Washington. More than half attained graduate or professional level degrees, with more than 20% in progress toward attaining graduate or professional degrees. Alumni were also the recipients of prestigious scholarships, fellowships, and awards, including Rhodes and Fulbright scholarships.

According to the study, the top three most important things the alumni looked for in a job were high levels of intellectual challenge, passion for the field, and meaningfulness (in that order). Earning a high salary was not in their top priority list; however, for those employed, 31.1% indicated earning \$100,000 or more.

Need for Challenge

Students came to the early entrance programs to find challenge, even though the

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majority of them had participated in gifted programs. One student commented, "It was a relief to finally find an academically challenging environment that fostered an excitement for learning rather than pouring cold water on it. Having teachers who

were dedicated to, and excited about, seeing each student challenged was fantastic."

Interpersonal Outcomes

In the area of social relationships, the results were more varied. The alumni spoke

of numerous social and academic benefits of having a like-minded peer group. One student said, "Academically, what was most beneficial was being in the presence of so many people pursuing diverse interests in novel and unique ways." However,

Early Entrance Programs

Following are a list of early entrance programs compiled by Alexander Pagnani in his just-released book, *Early Entrance to College as an Option for Highly Gifted Adolescents*. This NAGC Select is available now in both print and Kindle formats at www.amazon.com.

Program Name	Host University	Typical Student Age Ranges
<i>Commuter Programs</i>		
The Early Entrance Program	University of Washington	12-15
UW Academy for Young Scholars	University of Washington	16-17
Early Entrance Program	California State University of Los Angeles	11-17
Boston University Academy	Boston University	13-17
Early College at Guilford	Guilford College	14-17
Bard High School Early College	Bard College	14-17
Early Honors Program	Alaska Pacific University	17-18
<i>Residential Programs</i>		
Advanced Academy of Georgia	University of West Georgia	16-18
Georgia Academy of Math, Engineering, and Science	Middle Georgia College	16-18
Texas Academy of Math and Science	University of North Texas	16-18
Texas Academy of Leadership in the Humanities	Lamar University	16-18
Missouri Academy of Science, Math, and Computing	Northwest Missouri State University	16-18
Clarkson School Bridging Year Program	Clarkson University	17-18
Program for the Exceptionally Gifted	Mary Baldwin College	14-17 (females only)
Simon's Rock College	Bard College	16-20
Resident Honors Program	University of Southern California	17-18
The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science	Western Kentucky University	16-18
National Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering	The University of Iowa	17-18
Kansas Academy of Math and Science	Fort Hayes State University	16-18

there were some unexpected drawbacks of having such an insular peer group—such as difficulty integrating into the broader university community and limitations with dating.

Implications for Parents

Long-term outcomes indicate that early entrance program graduates perform well academically, find satisfying careers, and appear socially and emotionally well-adjusted. If your child is interested in this option, it's important to remain open-minded. Children who take initiative, desire greater challenge, and show exceptional academic potential, may thrive in an early college entrance program.

One area that parents should consider is that early entrance graduates often experience different perspectives in developing friendships and romantic relationships. Some students may not integrate fully into the college lifestyle and may need support in developing relationships beyond their peer cohorts. However, the positives seem to outweigh the negatives for many adolescents, and knowing the complexities of these issues will help you and your child make the most appropriate decision. ☺

Resources

Websites

Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration

Policy guidelines, acceleration stories, and various resources

<http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/>

Johns Hopkins CTY

List of various early college entrance programs with related links

http://cty.jhu.edu/imagine/resources/college_entrance.html

Robinson Center for Young Scholars Early Entrance Program (EEP) and UW Academy for Young Scholars (ACAD)

Details on early entrance programs at the Robinson Center for Young Scholars, University of Washington
<https://robinsoncenter.uw.edu/>

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FRIENDSHIPS AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS.

Book

Muratori, M. C. (2007). *Early entrance to college: A guide to success*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Authors' Note

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Nancy B. Hertzog is a Professor of Educational Psychology and the Director of the Robinson Center for Young Scholars at the University of Washington. In addition to studying the outcomes of Robinson Center alumni, her research focuses on teaching strategies designed to differentiate instruction and challenge children with diverse abilities. Specifically, she has studied teachers' implementation of the Project Approach in classrooms with both high-achieving and low-achieving children. She has published two books on early childhood education and numerous articles in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *Journal of Advanced Academics*,

Roeper Review, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *Young Exceptional Children*, and *Parenting for High Potential*.

Endnotes

¹ Pressey, S. (1949). *Educational acceleration: Appraisals and basic problems*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

² Brody, L. E., Muratori, M. C., & Stanley, J. C. (2004). Early entrance to college: Academic, social, and emotional considerations. In N. Colangelo, S. G. Assouline, & M. U. M. Gross (Eds.), *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students* (Vol. 2, pp. 87–96). Iowa City, IA: The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development.

³ Noble, K. D., & Childers, S. A. (2009). Swimming in deep waters: 20 years of research about early university entrance at the University of Washington. In L. Shavinina (Ed.), *The international handbook on giftedness* (pp. 1345–1364). New York: Springer Science+Business Media.

⁴ Hertzog, N. B. & Chung, R. U. (in press). Outcomes for students on a fast track to college: Early college entrance programs at University of Washington. *Roeper Review*.