



POLICY #42 - SOP

Grade Advancement for Academically Advanced Students

Purpose

This policy is made in order to discover factors that may influence classroom performance or test scores of Academically Advanced students. It does not weigh for or against qualification but aids the Student Assessment Team in making good judgments about how to proceed with helping the student(s) towards learning excellence.

Details

Giftedness is often confused with high achievement. High-achieving students are noticed for their on-time, neat, well-developed, and correct learning products. Some adults assume these students are gifted because their school-appropriate behaviors and products surface above the typical responses of grade-level students. Salam Academy has these procedures in place to correctly identify giftedness and to implement educational decisions to promote gifted students' success.

Grade advancement is a legitimate and valuable method of meeting the needs of some intellectually or academically gifted students. Grade advancement is a way of bringing some gifted and talented children up to a level of instruction closer to their levels of achievement and pace. This method of acceleration is available at Salam Academy following the guidelines outlined in this document.

Eligibility for Grade Advancement

Grade advancement may be considered for students who demonstrate exceptional academic ability, advanced intellectual functioning, and readiness for curriculum beyond their current grade level. Eligibility is determined through a combination of academic evidence, developmental readiness, and assessment team review.

New Student Eligibility

- All new students must complete a 30-day probation period before becoming eligible for grade advancement consideration.
- No grade advancement requests will be accepted during this probation period.

Grade Restrictions

- 1st grade and 8th grade may not be challenged for advancement under any circumstances.

Pre-Referral Consideration

Classroom teachers and parents may find the following list of characteristics useful in their initial identification of potentially gifted students. This is only one consideration in assessing their students' abilities.

Request Process

A parent, guardian, or authorized educational representative may submit a Grade Advancement Request Form to initiate the process.

Required Documentation

A complete portfolio must be submitted, including:

- Academic work samples
- Standardized test scores
- Teacher evaluations
- Any additional assessment materials requested by the school

Acknowledgment of Policy

The requestor must acknowledge:

- Understanding of the grade advancement policy
- Agreement to cover all costs associated with the assessment process
- Agreement to honor the final decision of the Assessment Team

Assessment & Review

All grade advancement requests will be evaluated by the Assessment Team, which may include:

- Classroom teachers
- Gifted education specialists
- School administrators
- Psychologists or assessment professionals (as needed)

Assessment Components

The team may consider:

- Academic performance and mastery
- Cognitive ability indicators
- Social and emotional readiness
- Classroom behavior and adaptability
- Teacher observations and recommendations

Trial Period

All approved grade advancements will begin with a **six-week trial period**.

Trial Expectations

- The student must demonstrate academic success, emotional stability, and social adjustment in the advanced grade.
- The student and family must understand that advancement is **conditional** during this period.

Possible Outcomes

- **Successful Advancement:** The student remains in the advanced grade.
- **Return to Original Grade:** If the trial does not go well, the student may be returned to the previous grade without penalty or stigma.

Managing Expectations

The school emphasizes the importance of balanced expectations:

- Grade advancement should not create pressure or feelings of failure for the student.
- Families should understand that advancement may not resolve all academic or behavioral concerns.
- Some highly precocious students may require more than one year of advancement; however, such cases are rare and will be evaluated individually.

Final Decision

The Assessment Team's decision is final and based on the best interest of the student. The school reserves the right to:

- Approve advancement
- Deny advancement
- Recommend alternative enrichment or gifted programming

Responsibilities of Families

Families requesting grade advancement agree to:

- Provide accurate and complete documentation
- Support the student during the trial period
- Communicate openly with teachers and administrators
- Respect and honor the final decision of the Assessment Team

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the school administration and gifted education committee to ensure alignment with best practices and student needs.

Bertie Kingore's Characteristics List

A High Achiever...	A Gifted Learner...	A Creative Thinker...
Remembers the answers.	Poses unforeseen questions.	Sees exceptions.
Is interested.	Is curious.	Wonders.
Is attentive.	Is selectively mentally engaged.	Daydreams; may seem off task.
Generates advanced ideas.	Generates complex, abstract ideas.	Overflows with ideas, many of which will never be developed.
Works hard to achieve.	Knows without working hard.	Plays with ideas and concepts.
Answer the questions in detail.	Ponders with depth and multiple perspectives.	Injects new possibilities.
Performs at the top of the group.	Is beyond the group.	Is in own group.
Responds with interest and opinions.	Exhibits feelings and opinions from multiple perspectives.	Shares bizarre, sometimes conflicting opinions.
Learns with ease.	Already knows.	Questions: What if...
Needs 6 to 8 repetitions to master.	Needs 1 to 3 repetitions to master.	Questions the need for mastery.
Comprehends at a high level.	Comprehends in-depth, complex ideas.	Overflows with ideas, many of which will never be developed.
Enjoys the company of age peers.	Prefers the company of intellectual peers.	Prefers the company of creative peers but often works alone.
Understands complex, abstract humor.	Creates complex, abstract humor.	Relishes wild, off-the-wall humor.
Grasps the meaning.	Infers and connects concepts	Makes mental leaps: Aha!
Completes assignments on time.	Initiates projects and extensions of assignments.	Initiates more projects that will ever be completed.
Is receptive.	Is intense.	Is independent and unconventional.
Is accurate and complete.	Is original and continually developing.	Is original and continually developing.
Enjoys school often.	Enjoys self-directed learning.	Enjoys creating.
Absorbs information.	Manipulates information.	Improvises.
Is a technician with expertise in a field.	Is an expert who abstracts beyond the field.	Is an inventor and idea generator.
Memorizes well	Guesses and infers well	Creates and brainstorms well
Is highly alert and observant	Anticipates and relates observations	Is intuitive
Is pleased with own learning	Is self-critical	Is never finished with possibilities
Gets A's	May not be motivated by grades	May not be motivated by grades
Is able	Is intellectual	Is idiosyncratic

General Guidelines

1. All cases of grade advancement should be arranged on a trial basis. A trial period of six weeks should be sufficient. The child should be aware that if it does not go well he or she may be requested to return to the original grade.
2. All new students in the school shall go through a 30-day probation period and hence shall not be eligible for grade advancement request during this period.
3. No one shall challenge the 1st and 8th grade.
4. Care should be exercised not to build up excessive expectations from grade advancement. The child should not be made to feel he or she is a failure if it does not go well.
5. Alternatively, some precocious children are so advanced in their intellectual and academic skills that one year of advancement may still leave them bored in school. For a very few precocious children additional advancements may be necessary.

Criteria

Salam Academy's Criteria is based on the following belief: "Educators, community leaders, and parents can generate much higher levels of student achievement- can virtually eliminate school failure- by connecting with students and coordinating the resources they need to succeed. It is a partnership of like minded people moving in a single direction." ~Kansa TA Manual

The minimum scores requirements in the four assessment areas are:

- a) **Mental Ability** – a score greater than or equal to the 96th percentile on a standardized test of mental ability. Approved outside psychological evaluations may be considered. The child should have an IQ of 125 or higher or have a level of mental development above the mean grade he or she desires to enter. The psychologist should determine that the child does not feel unduly pressured by the parents to advance. The parents must be in favor of grade advancement but the child should express the desire to move ahead.
- b) **Achievement** - a score greater than or equal to the 90th percentile in reading or math on a Salam Academy standardized achievement test **or** a score of at least 90 on a student generated product or performance as judged by an approved, juried panel of experts. The child should demonstrate skill levels above the mean of the grade desired. If the child is high in several skill levels but low in only one, the child may be advanced to the appropriate grade if private tutoring is provided in the area of weakness. Conversely, some children's academic skill levels vary considerably. That is, they may be very far advanced in mathematics but just moderately above in language arts or reading. For such children, it may be best to keep them in grade but allow them to work with a higher grade only for the subject in which they are precocious.
- c) **Creativity** – a score greater than or equal to the 90th percentile on a standardized creativity instrument **or** a superior rating on a student generated product or performance as judged by an approved juried panel of experts.
- d) **Motivation** – a score of at least 90 on a scale of 1-100 on an approved jury rated product or performance. The child should be free of any serious adjustment problems. The child should demonstrate a high degree of persistence and motivation for learning.

Assessment Team

The assessment team shall consist of the *Principal, Teacher(s), Parents, Person(s) knowledgeable about areas of need (these are not permanent members of the team, but those invited depending on the students to be reviewed)*

Screening Process

1. Nomination shall be taken all year long.
2. Teacher or Parent shall submit a completed **Grade Advancement Request Form**.
3. Each student's information will be reviewed on an individual basis.
4. There will be a **\$200** processing fee (non-refundable).
5. Any additional costs related to student testing, and assessment will be covered by the parents/guardians (they may consider finding a sponsor to help with the cost. The school will not assist in this matter).
6. Once parental permission is obtained, all students nominated will be assessed using the most appropriate assessment tools from the assessment tools list. The assessment materials will be both qualitative and quantitative. This is to ensure that all students get a fair assessment. By using a variety of assessment tools, we are able to incorporate children from under-represented groups such as non-English speaking students, special-education students, and children from underserved backgrounds. Students will be assessed using the following tools:
 - a. **Star Reading/Math:** This achievement test is taken on the computer. It will give grade level performance scores in reading and math.
 - b. **DRA Test scores:** This will give grade level performance score in reading and comprehension.
 - c. The student will be given one of the following tests: **Slossons Verbal IQ test**, the **Naglieri Nonverbal IQ Test**, or the **Reynolds Intellectual Assessment**, depending on the age level of the child. The age must be pre-defined as per APS standard for grade appropriate age.
 - d. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (**DIBELS**)-fluency test.
 - e. **The teacher who is in direct contact with the student may fill out characteristic Checklist-questionnaire.** The person **MUST** not be a relative to the student.
 - f. **Portfolio:** The portfolio will be a combination of the student's best work. The work in the portfolio should correlate with the area(s) of giftedness.
 - i. Classroom achievement (all classroom assignments/ test scores/ attendance/ behaviors)
 - ii. Special Awards [E.g. High Honor roll awards, first place in Spelling Bee, Speech contest, Science Fair, etc]
 - iii. Students Published work (where applicable)
 - iv. Portfolio pieces must show an outstanding talent in a given area.
7. Based on the decision made by the Assessment team, the parents/ guardian of the nominated student(s) will be notified in writing.

References:

<http://www.bertiekingore.com>

<http://www.aps.edu/aps/gifted/mainpage.html>

Dr. Laura Allen, Educational Diagnostician/Nationally Certified School Psychologist: fisherlb@yahoo.com

<http://www.aps.edu/aps/gifted/handbook.htm>

SALAM ACADEMY Student Characteristic Checklist

Student's Name: _____

Today's Date: _____

Filled out by: _____

Relationship to student: _____

Please circle where applicable.

CHARACTERISTICS	DOCUMENTED BY WHO:	GIFTED STRAND
I. Sensitivity and Perceptiveness - Student is concerned with right and wrong. - He/She is empathetic, and concerned with social issues.	- Parents - Teachers - Student work - Standardized Testing - Psychologist	Self-Understanding- Self-Acceptance Sense of personal responsibility.
II. Leadership - Student is assertive, likes to organize and structure to people and situations. - He/She is dependable, influential, persuasive, and a risk taker.	- Parents - Teachers - Student work - Standardized Testing - Psychologist	Interpersonal Skills Leadership Conflict Resolution (i.e. negotiation, compromise) Cooperation and Teamwork, Presentation of Self.
III. Advanced Conceptualization Student has high cognitive and problem solving abilities including convergent and divergent thinking skills.	- Parents - Teachers - Student work - Standardized Testing - Psychologist	Thinking Skills Critical thinking, Decision making, Problem Solving, Logic
IV. Creativity Student has a keen sense of humor, is inventive, and a risk taker. He/She is one who uses originality, divergent thinking.	- Parents - Teachers - Student work - Standardized Testing - Psychologist	Creativity Problem solving, Creative Thinking, Abstract Expressiveness
V. Wide Range of Interests The student is curious and has a storehouse of information in varied areas.	- Parents - Teachers - Student work - Standardized Testing - Psychologist	Interest Development Wide range of interest, Career Exploration, Arts Experience, Community/Global Awareness
VI. Communications The student uses a richness of elaboration and fluency in verbal and non-verbal areas. He/She needs the opportunity to communicate ideas.	- Parents - Teachers - Student work - Standardized Testing - Psychologist	Communication Listening skills, Oral and written skills, Non-verbal communication skills, Discussion skills
VII. Independence The student has strong self-management skills, is goal oriented and requires minimal teacher direction.	- Parents - Teachers - Student work - Standardized Testing - Psychologist	Skills of the Independent Learner Independent study skills, Evaluation skills, Accessing community, Mentorship/Internship
VIII. Advanced Knowledge Student has quick mastery and recall of information and needs little teacher explanation of routine tasks.	- Parents - Teachers - Student work - Standardized Testing - Psychologist	Achievement Accessing appropriate alternative educational opportunities

GRADE ADVANCEMENT REQUEST FORM

(Fillable Layout)

Student Information:

Student's Name & Age in Years:	Today's Date:
Current Grade:	Proposed Grade:

Requestor Information:

Name of the Requester:	Relationship with Student: [Teacher/ Parent/ Guardian]
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Acknowledgment (Check Each Box):

	I have read and understand the SA Policy on Grade Advancement for Gifted Students .
	I agree to cover <u>all costs</u> associated with this process.
	I agree to honor the decision of the Assessment Team.
	I understand ALL the General Guidelines listed below.

General Guidelines

1. All cases of grade advancement should be arranged on a **six-week trial basis**. The child should be aware that if it does not go well, he or she may be asked to return to the original grade.
2. All new students must complete a **30-day probation period** and are **not eligible** for grade advancement during this time.
3. **1st and 8th grade may not be challenged.**
4. Care should be taken not to create **excessive expectations**. The child should not feel like a failure if the advancement does not go well.
5. Some precocious children may be so advanced that **one year of advancement is not enough**. In rare cases, **additional advancement** may be necessary.

Signature Section:

Signature of the Applicant:	Date:
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Assessment Materials to be Considered

(Provided in portfolio — fill in each item)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

f. _____

g. _____

FOR OFFICE USE:

Assessment Team members: [Names, Credentials & Position]

Decision made with reasons: (add documents when needed)

Signatures & date:
