

SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS: Access to Acceleration and Enrichment

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IL Opportunity and Excellence Gaps

Illinois' "opportunity gaps" have grown in the NCLB era

- In 2003, 85% of IL school districts offered programs for gifted and advanced students in elementary grades, and 78.9% of districts offered programs in middle school (ISBE). In 2016, only 27% of districts reported providing such programs (Dwyer & Welch, 2016).
 - Districts serving predominately low income students were least likely to provide programming. Families least able to provide enrichment outside of school are currently least likely to have access to enrichment in school.

As a result, Illinois' "excellence gaps" are among the widest in the nation

- 15% of 4th graders and 12% of 8th graders who did not qualify for free or reduced price lunch in Illinois scored at the advanced levels on the 2013 NAEP math test, while only 2% of students who qualified for free or reduced price lunch scored at advanced levels (Plucker, 2016).
- White students are 9X more likely to score at this level than Black students, 3X more likely than Hispanic students.

One-third of Illinois students are already at or above "proficiency" thresholds and need further challenge.

Key Points

- A continuum of advanced coursework and support at K-8 is needed to align with the advanced coursework component of the 9-12 college and career readiness indicator. (College and career readiness begins in kindergarten, not high school.)
- An access to acceleration and enrichment indicator is needed to encourage equitable access to opportunities and begin narrowing economic and racial excellence gaps. Quality indicators should reward less resourced schools that seek to close excellence gaps, not just proficiency gaps.
- More focus on inputs is needed to allow schools to tell their stories and help the state to connect effective practices to student outcomes, especially at K-8
- School quality indicators will set priorities as to what resources and supports are provided through IL-EMPOWER.
- Data collection on access to acceleration and advanced learning opportunities will begin in the 2018-19 school year. An acceleration and enrichment metric would meet ESSA criteria for disaggregation by student subgroup.

Evidence: Acceleration Works

- A meta-analysis synthesizing 100 years of research, covering 172 empirical studies, found that, when high-ability students were accelerated, they exceeded the academic achievement of their non-accelerated, but similar high-ability peers by nearly one-year on a grade-equivalent scale (Steenbergen-Hu, Makel, & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2016)
- Despite popular beliefs, acceleration has not been found to be detrimental to students social and emotional well-being or growth and, in fact, has small to moderate benefits (Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011)
- Acceleration is an intervention shown to work in schools of all sizes and populations (Southern & Jones, 2007) and that aids teachers in differentiating more effectively.

Evidence: Quality Enrichment Opportunities Work

Meta-analysis findings on the impact of enrichment programming (Kim, 2016):

- Effect sizes of positive impact on academic achievement:
 - middle school (1.37)
 - elementary school (0.57)
- Effect sizes of positive impact on social emotional development:
 - middle school (0.93)
 - elementary school gifted students (0.44)

Excellence Gaps Can't be Closed by Focusing on High School Alone

- **“Waiting until [students] are in high school for college readiness is as crazy as starting parenting when a kid is 13. You miss the opportunity. For kids who live in poverty, it will take a childhood to break down myths about college and get the child to a place where they can see college in their future.” (Hanover, 2017)**
- **Grant-funded research has shown that access to advanced curriculum and participation in talent development (non-remedial) enrichment can:**
 - Dramatically increase readiness of minority students to successfully participate in college prep-level curriculum in high school (Project Excite)
 - Be a catalyst for schoolwide gains in achievement in low income elementary schools (Project Athena)

Proposal Overview

- **Recognize districts for providing access to quality opportunities for academic acceleration and enrichment**
 - Support *acceleration* options to ensure appropriate challenge and maintain student engagement for advanced learners
 - Support quality *enrichment* options to better ensure access to a broad, appropriate curriculum and incentivize the creations of opportunities, especially for students with *emerging* ability. (Reduce opportunity gaps now to reduce excellence gaps tomorrow.)
- **Create infrastructure to help identify effective models**
 - Better achievement and growth measures can only help effective local models spread when *outcomes* can be connected to *inputs*
- **Option: Raise expectations for % of students participating in acceleration and enrichment gradually over time (phase-in)**

Proposed Indicator

Student Participation in Acceleration and/or Enrichment	K-8: Initially, at least 5% of students per grade level are participating in one or more of the following:
Acceleration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A documented accelerated placement (e.g., early admission to kindergarten/first grade, single subject acceleration, or whole grade acceleration) in a setting with older students• A course to which students are assigned based on advanced cognitive ability or advanced achievement compared to local age peers and in which curriculum is substantially differentiated from the general curriculum to provide appropriate challenge and pace (e.g., an accelerated math class)
Enrichment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An enrichment program featuring advanced academic content for a minimum of 90 minutes per week during the regular school day (on average across the school year) taught by a teacher who holds a gifted education endorsement, master's degree in gifted education, or who has received at least 15 documented clock hours in professional development in gifted education

Goals are Achievable

- Accelerative options can be provided at low cost
 - Effective evaluation processes used to determine accelerated placements can leverage assessment data most districts already collect
 - Over the course of a K-12 education, acceleration can actually save money vs. moving students through school in lockstep based on birthdate.
- Proposed enrichment options support quality but are minimally prescriptive regarding structure to allow for district customization to meet local priorities
- Recommendations include broadly achievable thresholds for reaching benchmarks and can incorporate realistic ramps that promote excellence while recognizing current conditions

Support is Available to Build Capacity

- Illinois higher education institutions and the Illinois Association for Gifted Children already offer a wide array of research-based professional development, resources, and models. Scalable capacity exists to support teachers and districts if incentives are in place.
- ISBE has previously supported creating professional development materials related to advanced students. These can be updated for the ESSA era and provided through IL-EMPOWER as a low-cost path for all districts to meet proposed indicator criteria
- ESSA presents an opportunity to address opportunity gaps in access to adequately trained educators for gifted and talented students:
 - Title II reforms in ESSA *require* states to address gifted education professional development in implementation plans
 - Title II funds may be used to support gifted education professional development

Including Enrichment and Acceleration in Accountability Leads to Change

- Ohio includes identification and services for gifted students in its school accountability framework (beginning prior to ESSA)
 - Since gifted education indicators became a factor in overall school ratings:
 - The number of minority and low income students identified as gifted has increased
 - A multi-year trend toward fewer students receiving services has been reversed
 - These improvements can be attributed to changes in the school accountability framework. There have been no funding model changes and no changes in how data is collected.

Questions?

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