

# **ADVANCED STUDENTS IN SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS**

**ERIC CALVERT, ED.D.**

**NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR TALENT  
DEVELOPMENT**

**CAROLYN WELCH, J.D.**

**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED CHILDREN**

# REVIEW:

## OPPORTUNITY GAPS IN ILLINOIS

- *Excellence gaps are products of opportunity gaps.*
- 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 with *highest* percentages of minority and low-income students were *least likely* to provide programming. As a result, many low-income gifted students lack access to challenging coursework and appropriately trained teachers throughout their academic careers.
- *Guiding question: How can school quality indicator help narrow opportunity gaps across our state?*

# Proposal Overview

- **Recognize districts for providing access to quality opportunities for academic enrichment and acceleration**
  - Support quality *enrichment* options to better ensure access to a broad (and more personalized) curriculum and incentivize the creations of opportunities, especially for students with *emerging* ability. (Reduce opportunity gaps now to reduce excellence gaps tomorrow.)
  - Support *acceleration* options to ensure appropriate challenge and maintain student engagement for advanced learners
- **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*
- **Raise expectations gradually over time**
  - Expectations that districts do not believe they can meet with effort are unlikely to incentivize change, especially in districts where enrichment and acceleration opportunities are most limited or non-existent today
    - Avoid unintentionally widening opportunity and excellence gaps through six year phase-in

<b>Phase 1: 2019-2020 School Years</b>	<b>K-8: At least 5% of students are participating in one or more of the following:</b>	<b>9-12: At least 10% of students are participating in one or more of the following:</b>
<b>Enrichment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 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 <b>15</b> documented clock hours in professional development in gifted education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 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 <b>15</b> documented clock hours in professional development in gifted education</li> </ul>
<b>Acceleration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A course to which students are assigned based on advanced cognitive ability or advanced achievement compared to local <b>age peers</b> and in which curriculum is substantially differentiated from the general curriculum to provide appropriate challenge and pace</li> <li>● A documented accelerated course placement (e.g. early admission to kindergarten, single subject acceleration) in a setting with <b>older students</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At least one IB or College Board-approved Advanced Placement (AP) course</li> <li>● At least one non-remedial college-level course for dual high school and college credit from an accredited college, university, or community college.</li> </ul>

Phase 2: 2021-2022 School Years	K-8: At least <b>5%</b> of students are participating in one or more of the following:	9-12: At least <b>10%</b> of students are participating in one or more of the following:
Enrichment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 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 <b>30</b> documented clock hours in professional development in gifted education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 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 <b>15</b> documented clock hours in professional development in gifted education; or,</li> </ul>
Acceleration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A course to which students are assigned based on advanced cognitive ability or advanced achievement compared to local <b>age peers</b> and in which curriculum is substantially differentiated from the general curriculum to provide appropriate challenge and pace</li> <li>● A documented accelerated course placement (e.g. early admission to kindergarten, single subject acceleration) in a setting with <b>older students</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At least one IB or College Board-approved Advanced Placement (AP) course</li> <li>● At least one non-remedial college-level course for dual high school and college credit from an accredited college, university, or community college.</li> </ul>

<b>Phase 3: 2023-2024 School Years</b>	<p>K-8: At least <b>10%</b> of students are participating in one or more of the following:</p>	<p>9-12: At least <b>15%</b> of students are participating in one or more of the following:</p>
<p>Enrichment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 <b>30</b> documented clock hours in professional development in gifted education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 <b>30</b> documented clock hours in professional development in gifted education; or,</li> </ul>
<p>Acceleration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A course to which students are assigned based on advanced cognitive ability or advanced achievement compared to local <b>age peers</b> and in which curriculum is substantially differentiated from the general curriculum to provide appropriate challenge and pace</li> <li>• A documented accelerated course placement (e.g. early admission to kindergarten, single subject acceleration) in a setting with <b>older students</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one IB or College Board-approved Advanced Placement (AP) course</li> <li>• At least one non-remedial college-level course for dual high school and college credit from an accredited college, university, or community college.</li> </ul>

# Evidence: Acceleration Works

- A recent study that comprehensively reviewed almost 100 years of acceleration research, covering nearly 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.
- Some forms of acceleration can enhance challenge for advanced students without narrowing economic and cultural diversity in the classroom

# Evidence: *Quality* Enrichment Opportunities Work

## Recent Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Enrichment Programs on Gifted Students (Kim, 2016)

- Enrichment programs had a positive effect on both gifted students' academic achievement and social emotional development
- Effect sizes of positive impact on academic achievement are large:
  - high school (2.02)
  - 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)
  - high school (0.29)

Flexible cluster grouping of students by academic readiness (Pierce et al., 2011) benefits *all* students in math achievement

# Caveat: Quality Counts

- **What do we know about enrichment programs that produce measurable benefits?:**
  - Curriculum is differentiated from general curriculum
    - Challenging content
    - Conceptually rich
  - Dose matters
    - Little evidence that enrichment opportunities for only a few minutes per week enhance academic growth or raise academic trajectories
  - Intentional grouping catalyzes impact
  - Programs are designed and delivered by educators with content expertise and specific training in gifted education pedagogy

# 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
  - Acceleration can actually save money vs. doing nothing
    - Early entrance and whole grade acceleration can reduce the number of years students spend in school
    - Advanced Placement and dual enrollment programs can reduce college tuition costs while increasing likelihood of college graduation
- Enrichment options support quality but are minimally prescriptive regarding structure to allow for district customization to meet local priorities
- Recommendations include low initial thresholds for reaching indicators and realistic ramps that promote excellence while recognizing current conditions

# Support is Available to Build Capacity

- IAGC and Illinois higher education institutions already offer a wide array of research-based professional development in flexible formats. Scalable capacity exists to support teachers and districts if incentives are in place.
- Illinois has already established a gifted education endorsement based on National Association for Gifted Children standards
  - But, there are currently few incentives for educators to pursue endorsement
- 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

# Access to Enrichment/Acceleration Narrows Excellence Gaps

- Zip code and socioeconomic status should not be the determining factors for receiving a challenging education. Illinois has among the largest excellence gaps in the country.
- Illinois can be a leader in identifying and supporting successful program models and interventions that work with low-income, high-ability students from different geographical, cultural, and racial backgrounds (Unlocking Emergent Talent, Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012)
- Excellence gaps can be addressed if schools view their closure as a priority worthy of investment. Examples of successful programs for low-income, high potential students:
  - Young Scholars Program - Fairfax County Schools
  - Miami-Dade School District - 10 year transformation
  - Paradise Valley Unified School District

# Access to Broad Curriculum Indicator Needed for Balanced Accountability

- There are only two K-8 school quality indicators in the state accountability plan currently: chronic absenteeism and climate surveys
- 9-12 has significantly more school quality indicators than K-8, with Career and College Readiness and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade On Track in addition to chronic absenteeism and climate surveys
- 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
- Advanced coursework is only one way for a school to satisfy the Career and College Readiness indicator, and a K-8 corollary is lacking

Next steps: Work group (Plan Draft 3) to determine how components of indicator fit together

# Questions?

Eric Calvert: [eric.calvert@northwestern.edu](mailto:eric.calvert@northwestern.edu)

Carolyn Welch: [carolynewelch@comcast.net](mailto:carolynewelch@comcast.net)