

**Fast Fact Sheet:
Illinois Association for Gifted Children Growth Model Recommendations**

Illinois has large “opportunity gaps” and, therefore, large “excellence gaps” between economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

- Opportunity gaps: In 2003 (prior to No Child Left Behind), 85% of districts offered programs for advanced elementary students and 78.9% offered programs and courses for advanced middle school students (ISBE). By 2016, only 27% of districts offered such programs. Districts serving predominately low-income students were least likely to provide programing (Dwyer & Welch, 2016).
- Excellence gaps: 14% of 4th graders and 12% of 8th graders who did not qualify for free or reduce 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).

A “growth-to-proficiency” accountability model would put all focus on students below proficiency.

- 1/3 of Illinois students are *already* performing at the proficient level or higher. Every student deserves to be challenged and supported, but thousands of students would be ignored in a growth-to-proficiency system.
- A “growth-to-proficiency” approach would perpetuate racial and economic “excellence gaps.” This is because low-income high achievers are likely to attend high-poverty schools, which, as under No Child Left Behind, would experience pressure to raise scores for their lowest performing students (Fordham Institute, 2016) but lack incentives to serve students across the achievement continuum.

Solution: A Growth Model that Supports Growth for All students

- Adopt a “true” growth model based on individual student growth, and do not diminish weight for students moving to achievement levels beyond proficient.
- Prioritize and incentive closing “opportunity” and “excellence gaps” between economic and racial subgroups. Take advantage of ESSA reforms in Title I, Title II, and Title IV to provide incentives and resources to help low income schools provide enrichment and advanced academic programs.
- Test students at the grade level of instruction they receive so that test ceiling effects don’t mask real growth among advanced students. Create an adjustment for above-level testing to remove a disincentive to acceleration. (See Ohio’s Model).
- Similar to the approach of making former ELL students a monitored subgroup, make students who have scored within the top 10% in one or more years a disaggregated subgroup for reporting. Create a dedicated page in the Illinois Report Card to display the achievement and growth of this group. Spotlight the participation in enrichment and advanced academic programs by disadvantaged students.
- If a growth to proficiency” model is still favored, add a “growth-to-advanced academic achievement standard” to the model for those students already at or above proficiency (See Iowa’s Model.)

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