

Summary of recommendations of the National Working Group on Advanced Education

We believe that all children deserve an education that facilitates their growth toward their full potential and that fostering learning of students at advanced levels of achievement benefits both individual students and our society at large. We acknowledge that students' likelihood of excelling academically is a function not only of their promise and ability but also of their background, past experiences, and opportunities and that, as a result, today we observe many excellence gaps and disparities in the proportions of students from various racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds who participate and excel in advanced levels of academic learning.

Our schools have both an opportunity and a responsibility to create learning experiences that meet the needs of all students, part of which is creating and supporting advanced learning. Equity, done right, means opening up advanced education to all students who could benefit from it. And excellence, done right, means doing the hard work to help all students achieve at high levels—not just the students who come to school with great advantages.

To achieve these goals, we recommend that all school districts and charter networks build a continuum of advanced learning opportunities, customized to individual students' needs and abilities, that spans the K–12 spectrum.

Recommended district and charter network policies and practices

Accessible front-loading (grades pre-K–5)

1. Provide accessible front-loading programming—either to all students or to those from historically underrepresented groups—starting in pre-K or Kindergarten
2. Offer accessible after-school, weekend, and/or summer enrichment opportunities

Identification (grades K–11)

3. Adopt universal screening to identify students with potential for high achievement
4. Use data from universally available assessments
5. Use assessment data to identify additional students for advanced education services in every grade
6. Use local (i.e., school-based) norms

Acceleration (grades K–12)

7. Allow early entry to Kindergarten
8. Allow children who are ready for advanced material in all subjects to skip entire grade levels
9. Allow children to skip grade levels in particular subjects
10. Offer “grade-compressed” pathways for students
11. Embrace “concurrent enrollment”
12. Offer advanced courses in as many subjects as possible in grades 6–12
13. Automatically enroll students participating in elementary school advanced education programs in subsequent advanced learning opportunities in middle and/or high school
14. Intentionally recruit underrepresented and underserved students for external advanced learning opportunities, such as college for dual enrollment and/or online courses

Equitable achievement grouping (grades K–5)

15. Frequently and equitably evaluate all students
16. Ensure that teachers alter the complexity and pace of the curriculum
17. Err on the side of inclusion

Selective enrollment schools (grades 6–12)

18. Expand the supply of seats in such schools
19. Base admission on multiple indicators, including but not limited to exam score
20. Marry culturally responsive advanced instruction and prior preparation of students who are admitted

Social and emotional learning (SEL) and mental health supports for advanced learners (grades K–12)

21. Make programs culturally relevant to all students
22. Foster a positive school culture
23. Implement a plan for supporting advanced students' mental health comprising triage, trauma-informed practices, targeted intervention, and faculty support

Well-prepared educators

24. Provide high-quality professional-learning opportunities about evidence-based advanced-learning strategies
25. Inform feeder teacher-preparation programs
26. Empower teachers with actionable data on students' abilities

High-quality instructional materials

27. Supplement high-quality instructional materials

Recommended state policies and practices

28. In school and district accountability systems, place significant weight on student-level progress over time
29. Eliminate any policies that bar early entrance to Kindergarten, middle school, or high school
30. Mandate the identification of students with advanced-learning needs, providing services for said students, and the use of local, school-based norms for identifying students for advanced programs, particularly at the elementary level
31. Implement specific requirements about the services provided to advanced learners
32. Mandate that districts and charter networks allow for acceleration (including grade skipping) for students who could benefit from it
33. Publicly report on the students participating in advanced education, including their achievement and growth over time, as well as their demographic characteristics
34. Ensure that preparation and in-service professional-development programs offer evidence-based instruction in advanced education, both for district-level coordinators and for teachers
35. Enforce the federal requirement that states explain how teacher-preparation programs are addressing education of special populations, including advanced learners
36. Expand funding and other incentives to encourage schools to frequently and equitably evaluate all students and provide a continuum of services to every student who could benefit