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Growth in Achievement of Advanced Students Indiana Association for the Gifted

*The following is an Indiana adaptation of the official position of the National Association for the Gifted on this topic. NAGC's views on this and other issues can be found at www.nagc.org

Position Statement

The Indiana Association for the Gifted believes that growth models should replace status models so that all students' progress can be measured over time. Further, the IAG believes that on-going assessment is necessary in planning instruction for individual students. While schools should examine a wide range of group differences to determine if students are receiving opportunities to learn such as socioeconomic status, gender, race or ethnicity, disability, or English language status, this position paper pertains to students who perform at the advanced level and the necessity for growth models that take their educational needs into account.

Issues

Several issues with growth models have been identified by the Indiana Association for the Gifted as affecting advanced students. These include:

1. Current state achievement tests do not have enough difficult items to adequately measure advanced students' growth. Growth models will not be effective for advanced students if existing measures are used.
2. States are under pressure to be sure that students meet minimal standards of proficiency and show adequate yearly progress. Given this pressure, schools are more likely to attend to those students just below proficient and to ignore students above proficient.
3. Advanced children from lower income backgrounds who are in the top academic quartiles are particularly vulnerable to assessments that measure only minimum levels of proficiency: only 56% maintain their status as high achievers in reading by fifth



Indiana Association for the Gifted

grade; 25% fall out of the top academic quartile in math in high school; and 8% drop out of high school.

Recommendations

Therefore, CEC-TAG recommends that growth model systems consider advanced students by including these characteristics:

- Growth models need to reflect growth beyond proficiency. Defining growth as beyond "proficiency" takes into account students who score higher than a minimal level of proficient and focus the school's attention on all students. In this way, advanced students are challenged and less likely to underachieve, particularly those from lower income background who tend to lose ground during their K-12 years when compared to other advanced students. For example, states might consider tracking students who are scoring higher than proficient in one year to determine if this level is being attained from one year to the next.
- State assessments should be able to measure beyond minimum skills. Schools need to measure above grade-level achievement in order to document advanced student growth. Since advanced students get all or nearly all of the items correct, more difficult, above grade-level items need to be included in state assessments.
- Models need to expand their focus to take into consideration teacher and program effects on *all* students' performance and determine how best to instruct students who are advanced in a variety of domains (i.e. the arts, sciences, etc.). Collaborations between universities and school systems might examine effective evidence-based practices that could be nationally disseminated.
- The term growth model should be clearly defined as measurement of academic success on the basis of how much student achievement improves and should be based on individual student gains. Growth models always need to be designed in a way that encourages mastery of grade-level content and fosters growth above grade-level. In its simplest form a student's previous scores are used to create predicted scores for a given year. The difference between the actual score and predicted score is their growth score.

Summary

IAG supports an assessment system that measures individual growth beyond proficiency levels. This growth model system would not only enhance the opportunities for more students to learn



Indiana Association
for the Gifted

beyond minimum levels but also focus needed resources in the design of assessments that show above-level performance.

References

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The National Association for Gifted Children and its Board of Directors has reviewed this position and express general support for its views and concepts. November, 2009