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| ESE Logo | **Students Performing Above Grade Level Academically: Summary of Survey Findings**July 2017 |

**Survey design and responses**

* All Massachusetts superintendents and charter school leaders (N=404) were surveyed in June 2017 about their practices for serving students performing above grade level academically. We received 117 responses, for a response rate of 29 percent.
* The modest response rate, along with some overrepresentation of large districts in the responses (25 percent of respondents, vs. 16 percent statewide), means that the survey findings are not likely to be representative of the state as a whole. However, they are a useful first attempt at understanding how districts serve academically advanced students.

**Findings: Service strategies**

* At the elementary level, enrichment during the school day was most frequently cited as the strategy districts used for serving their students performing above grade level. Of districts serving this grade span, 25 percent reported using this approach with many or all eligible students and 31 percent with a few or some eligible students. Personalized learning approaches and enrichment activities after school were also used commonly at this grade span.
* At the middle and high school levels, districts’ strategies appear to shift towards acceleration in particular subjects. Among districts serving middle school grades, 38 percent use this approach with many or all of their advanced students in middle grades. A full two-thirds of those serving high school grades (67 percent) use this approach with many or all of their advanced high school students.
* High schools also commonly reported using separate classes for students above grade level, with about half (52 percent) using this strategy with most or all eligible students.
* At all grade spans, many districts reported using technology (e.g., online courses or supplementary materials) to serve academically advanced students. The share of districts reporting using this strategy for many or all of these students is 30 percent in elementary grades, 28 percent in middle grades, and 45 percent in high school grades.
* See tables on the next page for more details about strategies used by grade span.
* At the elementary and middle grade levels, most responding districts do not offer programs or supports for students who are advanced in other areas, such as arts, music, or athletics. Just over half (57 percent) offer these programs at the high school level.

**Findings: Screening**

* Teacher recommendations and course grades were the most commonly cited major factors in selecting students for services. Seventy-five percent of respondents cited teacher recommendations as a major factor; almost 70 percent cited course grades.
* Less commonly used were assessments of academic knowledge, previous identification for similar programs, parent recommendations, and local benchmark assessments, all of which were used by about one-quarter to one-third of responding districts. Almost no districts used assessments of cognitive skills or non-verbal assessments to determine eligibility.
* About half (45 percent) of respondents formally screen students for potential eligibility for programs and supports for academically advanced students. Twenty-six percent screen many or all students; 19 percent screen some or a few. The remaining 55 percent of districts do not conduct screenings.

**Details on service strategies**

* Note: The tables listed below use the number of responding districts that serve the relevant grade span, rather than the total number of responding districts, as the denominator for the percentages.

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| **Elementary grades: Generally grades K–5****(n=91)** | Many or all eligible students | A few or some eligible students | Practice not used | Don’t know if practice is used |
| Acceleration in particular subjects | 23 / 25% | 31 / 34% | 33 / 36% | 0 / 0% |
| Between-class grouping at the same grade level | 25 / 27% | 22 / 24% | 36 / 40% | 3 / 3% |
| Separate classes for students above grade level | 6 / 7% | 11 / 12% | 68 / 75% | 1 / 1% |
| Enrichment activities during the school day | 41 / 45% | 25 / 28% | 21 / 23% | 1 / 1% |
| Enrichment activities after school | 29 / 32% | 21 / 23% | 34 / 33% | 1 / 1% |
| Personalized learning opportunities | 30 / 33% | 37 / 41% | 18 / 19% | 1 / 1% |
| Technology (e.g., online courses, supplementary materials) | 27 / 30% | 34 / 37% | 21 / 23% | 3 / 3% |

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| **Middle grades: Generally grades 6–8****(n=93)** | Many or all eligible students | A few or some eligible students | Practice not used | Don’t know if practice is used |
| Acceleration in particular subjects | 35 / 38% | 38 / 41% | 15 / 16% | 0 / 0% |
| Between-class grouping at the same grade level | 19 / 20% | 23 / 25% | 39 / 42% | 6 / 7% |
| Separate classes for students above grade level | 23 / 25% | 26 / 28% | 37 / 40% | 3 / 3% |
| Enrichment activities during the school day | 29 / 31% | 24 / 26% | 27 / 29% | 3 / 3% |
| Enrichment activities after school | 23 / 25% | 32 / 34% | 25 / 27% | 3 / 3% |
| Personalized learning opportunities | 23 / 25% | 37 / 40% | 22 / 24% | 3 / 3% |
| Technology (e.g., online courses, supplementary materials) | 26 / 28% | 38 / 41% | 18 / 19% | 4 / 4% |

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| **High school grades: Generally grades 9–12****(n=91)** | Many or all eligible students | A few or some eligible students | Practice not used | Don’t know if practice is used |
| Acceleration in particular subjects | 61 / 67% | 21 / 23% | 5 / 5% | 2 / 2% |
| Between-class grouping at the same grade level | 29 / 32% | 15 / 17% | 33 / 36% | 8 / 9% |
| Separate classes for students above grade level | 47 / 52% | 19 / 21% | 14 / 15% | 5 / 5% |
| Enrichment activities during the school day | 18 / 20% | 24 / 26% | 34 / 37% | 6 / 7% |
| Enrichment activities after school | 32 / 35% | 23 / 25% | 24 / 26% | 4 / 4% |
| Personalized learning opportunities | 32 / 35% | 33 / 36% | 17 / 19% | 5 / 5% |
| Technology (e.g., online courses, supplementary materials) | 41 / 45% | 32 / 35% | 5 / 5% | 5 / 5% |