Advance Learning Report for School Committee
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Prepared on Behalf of the Superintendant
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Motion that whereas the Academic Challenge manager position has been in place for two years and whereas the goal of meeting the needs of all learners including advanced learners is important, the School Committee requests a report by the summer meeting on the district's efforts to meet the needs of advanced learners including a summary of accomplishments, a plan for future improvements, how success is measured and specific goals for advanced learners. Further that the district include CALA and other parent input into the report.

Part 1: Introduction

Context of the Position of Academic Challenge and Enrichment Support Program Manager:

The position of Academic Challenge and Enrichment Support Program Manager was created in the transition leading to the implementation of the Innovation Agenda in the Fall of 2012. Starting on September 4, amidst the opening of schools and the welcoming of students, I was directed to focus my attention on the new upper schools and the development of the SAP, the Subject Acceleration Protocol, which had been adopted from a model used in Brookline.

I began by visiting schools, meeting teachers and staff, and listening to what they had to say about their new teaching assignments, the dissolution of the Intensive Studies Program (ISP), the new schedule which included electives and Adademic Challenge blocks twice a week, and the Upper School Academic Challenge policy. Here were the big take aways:

1. The veteran Cambridge grade 6-8 teachers were concerned about the shift from teaching 35-40 students to teaching 80-100 students.
2. They had many transitions to manage in addition to the those associated with the Innovation Agenda including: the shift to the common core standards, mandatory RETELL training, and the introduction of the new state teacher evaluation system.
3. Our staff is very passionate about equity, social justice, and dedicated to closing the achievement gap.
4. In the minds of the majority of the staff I spoke with, advanced learning in general and the ISP in particular were closely associated with elitism and institutionalized racism.
5. The definition of "differentiation" varied widely. To some, the preassessment, grouping strategies and content differentiation defined as best practice in meeting the needs of advanced learning in the heterogenous classroom setting conflicted with their beliefs around equity.
6. Administrators, coaches, and coordinators felt a strong need to support and guide teachers through this first year.
7. The principle of providing consistent programming throughout the schools was taken very seriously and any programming introduced had to be vetted and implemented at all five upper schools.
8. Administrators, coordinators, and coaches weren't clear on how we were supposed to interact and we were missing two key top administrative positions.
9. Everyone was committed to improving educational opportunities for our scholars, doing the best they could every day. Paying attention to learning opportunities and improvement was the theme.
10. The lack of a state mandate to provide Gifted Programming lowered the priority of meeting the needs of advanced learners.

Given this background, I set out to clarify our approach to meeting the needs of advanced learners in Cambridge Public Schools as set out in the Upper Schools Advanced Learning Policy: Standards based, differentiated instruction within heterogenous classrooms, subject acceleration for students significantly above grade level

This model of providing advanced services reflects our dual commitment to academic achievement and social justice because:

- Separate programs for generically identified academically advanced learners raise non-defensible issues
- We want all of our students to be exposed to enriched learning opportunities and leverage advanced learning services to raise the level of rigor for everyone
- We have a lot of "gifted programming" when the range of giftedness is considered
- Academically advanced can mean many things – this model gives us flexibility of response

The success of our model relies on the following:

- Staff knowledge of the model
- Consensus on implementation of the model
- Clear criteria and staff trained in identifying advanced learners
- Including Advanced Learning in beginning stages of district level planning
- Rigorous curriculum instruction with high expectations for each student
- Detailed and frequent data collection to identify students, set goals, and monitor growth
- Recognition of need for academic, behavioral, and social/emotional supports
- Instructors trained in meaningful differentiation of content and supported in instructional strategies necessary to implement enriched curricula
- Planning to support acceleration of students in terms of placement and scheduling
- Personnel qualified in the necessary range of grade level content
- High levels of family engagement.

In the two years I have been in Cambridge Public Schools, we have been working hard to put these measures in place. The goal of this report is to update School Committee Members on the efforts of staff to meet the needs of advanced learners, and our plans to continue strengthening the implementation of the model.

Part 2: Summary of Accomplishments

A Rigorous, Standards Based Curriculum

The most important piece of our approach to advanced learning is to insure that every student feels challenged by a rigorous, standards based curriculum in every subject area. To achieve that goal, the Assistant Superintendant for Curriculum and Instruction has established a Curriculum Review Cycle for each major curriculum area. This has helped us focus our efforts and will also ease resource allocation issues.

The first steps in the process have already begun. This fall, the implementation of the Math in Focus program will significantly impact the experience of advanced learners. Teachers piloting the program last year commented that their understanding of what their students could achieve at their grade level fundamentally shifted as a result of using the curriculum. Teacher expectation is one of the most highly correlated variables to student achievement, and one of the hardest to authentically address. Other components of the program positive for advanced learners include the explicit inclusion of instructional notes and supplemental materials for advanced learners. The program directs teachers to give pretests and regular periodic assessments and offer *alternative work* to those already showing mastery.

Math in Focus has also provided us with a full array of common core aligned assessment materials. One of the necessary components of identifying and differentiating for students with learning needs is agreed upon tools for assessing content knowledge. Only after identifying which standards a student has mastered and what is left to learn can we design an instructional plan that sets meaningful learning targets for every student. Math in Focus assessments map each question to a standard. The switch to the common core standards in the Fall of 2012 left us with no such assessment materials and until now has hampered our efforts to effectively differentiate content.

The implementation of Math in Focus represents a significant pedagogical and philosophical shift for our teachers, as well as presenting them with the daunting task of teaching a new lesson every day. In my observations of the roll out so far, and conversations with teachers, we're observing that the supplemental materials aren't enough for all of the students, and so we're developing a strategy to support teachers with meaningful targeted enrichment.

We have begun UbD training for staff across the district, and are implementing the model at the unit design level in both Science and Literacy. The emphasis on transfer goals and understandings is key to advanced learners, as they have often mastered many of the content standards before beginning instruction. Grant Wiggins points out that the writers of a unit are like architects building a house. Though the architect has to make sure to follow the long list of building codes, the ultimate goal is to create a beautiful structure, full of light and pleasant to use. Likewise, educators must make sure to teach all of the content standards, but our goal goes beyond that to preparing our students to lead a happy and productive life through lifelong education, career, and responsible citizenry. This emphasis on

understandings and transfer goals prompts us to plan beyond the content standards to engage advanced learners in high order learning tasks and cross curricular projects.
In my role as Academic Challenge and Enrichment Support Program Manager, I am serving on all of the curriculum writing committees and focusing on the inclusion of teaching strategies and materials that support the instruction of advanced learners. Here again, the UbD model serves advanced learners well by emphasizing the critical role of planning assessment before learning strategies. When curriculum writers have agreed in advance on assessments that prove mastery of the content, they are ready to be used as meaningful tools in the process of goal setting and curriculum compacting for advanced learners.

In advance of the curriculum committees reaching UbD Stage 3, where we design the learning plan, the Instructional Council took on the task of designing a Lesson Plan Template for the district (see Appendix 1). We worked hard to include in the template prompts for all expected components in a lesson including formative assessment, grouping strategies, support for ELL students, differentiated instruction for Special Education Students and advanced learners, as well as technology integration. A key component of this lesson plan is the prompt to plan meaningful differentiated homework and to include family communication and support as part of that plan. This is part of our response to the amazing attendance and subsequent communications we've received to our joint workshop on Homework last year. This is clearly a big issue for many of our families.

In September we began implementation of the Accelerated Math Pathway in the upper schools (see Appendix 2). This is the next step toward our district Strategic Goal of making it the norm for CPS 8th graders to learn Algebra 1 and enter CRLS ready for Geometry. While we did improve access to Algebra 1 instruction for eighth graders in School Year 2013-2014 by offering a before school class at each upper campus in the spring and online curriculum support through EdGenuity, that model cannot be scaled and cannot be implemented equitably. The Accelerated Math Pathway offers 3 years of instruction in 7th and 8th grade, allowing students to master Algebra 1 in the course of their school day with a group of peers and a dedicated instructor.

Identification through Data Collection

You cannot identify advanced learners without asking the question: For what am I identifying them?

Identification is determined by the program. In districts where they have separate schools or classrooms for identified Gifted and Talented students, they usually use various tests that measure general intelligence to determine inclusion in the program. Unfortunately this type of identification often leads to programming that is inconsistent with Cambridge's dual commitment to academic excellence and

social justice. Rather, to build a program that recognizes and supports all types of advanced learners, we need to identify students authentically through their work products and then provide them with meaningful advanced learning opportunities through differentiation in the general education classroom.

This identification generally happens in one of two ways. Advanced students are often identified by their teachers or by our building based curriculum coaches. For example, our elementary math coaches can perform a reasoning inventory for students they see showing signs of advanced work. This inventory gives them in depth knowledge of the student's problem solving abilities, communication skills, and conceptual understanding, allowing the coach to effectively support teachers in differentiating instruction.

In some cases, the strategies employed in the classroom are not enough to fully engage the student in which case the Enriched Learning Plan (ELP) process can be triggered by either staff or parents. The ELP is guided by a collaborative process that includes student input, parents, teachers, coaches, and administrators. It is an iterative process of design, reflection and improvement (see ELP flowchart). An ELP can result in a range of recommendations. One example of supports that have been put in place is a joint effort between the Office of Advanced Learning and the Math Department to design math enrichment at the unit level. The idea of enrichment at the unit level is being carried through the other curriculum areas through the UbD process.

The ELP process can also result in subject acceleration, if it is determined that a student is achieving far above grade level. Acceleration is one of the best researched methods of meeting the needs of advanced learning, and the findings are overwhelmingly positive. As we develop better and better assessment protocols through the curriculum design process, it will be easier and easier to determine if students have achieved mastery of an entire grade level of work. We have been implementing two types of subject acceleration.

The first type is placing students in the classes of higher grade levels. This type of acceleration has happened in math at the middle school. For example, a seventh grade math student would attend an 8th grade math class. This brings with it many placement and scheduling challenges, but follow up with teachers and families has been positive and students have been successful in their new classes.

There are significant challenges to this aspect of our model, however. As enrollment grows at our schools, there is less and less room available for students in grade level classes. For example, the seventh grade this year is close to capacity in three upper schools. When an advanced sixth grader is recommended for placement in the seventh grade classroom, we have to offer it on a "space available" basis. If there is no space available, the accelerated student cannot attend the class. Since the cap on class size has been put in place, this situation is occurring at the high school as well, where despite the best efforts of our CRLS administrators, students who were

accelerated in their middle school studies find that there may be no room for them in advanced classes.

In addition, there is increased reticence at the Elementary level to accelerate younger students. The restructuring of the schools challenges the notion of acceleration because we haven't answered the question of what happens when the accelerated child reaches fifth grade.

The second type of acceleration brings higher level curriculum to students in their classroom. An example of this was our EdGenuity pilot at the Cambridge Street and Rindge Avenue upper schools where we had four students place out of 8th grade math last September and study Algebra 1 online at their home school. They did so well that they finished in January and moved on to Geometry. In both courses, the students were given the same midterms and finals as the students in honors classes at the high school and received scores in the 90s on all assessments. This method also has it's limitations, however, as teachers require training to use the online curriculum model and it is also possible for students to sometimes move beyond the proficiency level of their teachers to teach them! In addition, our small schools and scheduling practices can isolate advanced students. There are also issues of time and materials to consider if we are to implement this model on a wider scale.

For us to consider acceleration as a functional part of our plan to address advanced learning needs, higher level planning needs to be applied to this area. In consultation with the teaching and learning team, we will be conducting a capacity study of the district's ability to meet the needs of our advanced learners and to identify where gaps exist so that we can begin to address them systematically. Planning has already begun with the administrators at CRLS to put a prediction model in place to avoid overcrowding in advanced classes.

Training and Support in Meaningful Differentiation of Content

It is not easy to meet the needs of all of the students in a classroom. And yet our model of advanced learning assumes that, somehow, all teachers know how to address the needs of advanced learners and have acquired the skills to provide those services. Some think that it is easy to teach advanced learners. This could not be farther from the truth. Creating meaningful learning goals with advanced learners and providing them with the guidance, materials, and the time required to support their productivity is complicated and exhausting! Our teachers need training and support in meaningful differentiation of content.

In the spring, our Assistant Superintendant for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Huizenga, was charged by the superintendant to develop a coherent strategy for professional development and teacher training. A joint effort between the district and the Cambridge Education Association, led by Chris Colbath-Hess, took on the task of providing a vision and pathway to consistent, high quality, instruction in all

of our schools. As part of the 5 year planning subcommittee, I witnessed amazing progress in this area in just a few short months. This prioritization and coherent approach to Professional Development has been an unmet desire of teachers and administrators, and while there is some healthy caution, we are re-energized with the results so far and continuing to refine and improve our program.

As a result of these joint efforts, I am currently co-teaching 2 professional development courses that truly reach the goal of enriching learning for all students. Lucy Wittenberg, the Haggerty School Math Coach, and I are teaching a class that follows up on a summer online course taught by Jo Boaler. Professor Boaler researches math education at Stanford and has collaborated with Carol Dweck to create an online course called "How to Teach Math". In addition to addressing skill development, the course demonstrates how to teach students a growth mindset about mathematics that helps them become more robust and confident learners. This strong self concept is important to every child, but ironically it is advanced learners who often have a fixed mindset, characteristic of someone who is afraid to risk failure. After all, if they can't solve a problem, they won't look smart any more. This can lead them to refuse novel problems and refuse to produce written work.

In the second class, called "Dare to Differentiate" with Karyn Grace and Kate Jacobs, two of our OSS Inclusion Instructional Specialists, we demonstrate how to manage the issues of diverse classrooms by using time management, grouping, and content modification strategies such as compaction to address the needs of students. The Spring course will cover how to effectively use all types of blended learning opportunities: using engaging curriculum sources through implementation of a rotation model, flipping the classroom to individualize instruction, and supporting our children in acquisition of 21st century skills.

The Response to Intervention (RtI) model we are rolling out supports students before they need an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS), the State blueprint for RtI, also calls for the program to serve the needs of advanced learners? (See Appendix 5) This model has been implemented successfully in districts across the country. The big picture makes a lot of sense. Our schools are creating time for small group tiered interventions. While some students are receiving structured support to bring them to grade level, we can also meet the needs of our advanced learners. The idea is to develop the exact same process for goal setting and progress monitoring for ALL students receiving instruction in this way. (See appendix 6) Teachers only need to learn one system, and the use of pretesting and frequent formative assessment to inform instruction in real time becomes part of the cultural shift we are addressing district wide, not just as it applies to advanced learning. In this way, we can achieve our goal of assuring every student at least one year of growth per grade level.

Finally, as we move toward a paradigm of skillful differentiation of content through compaction and other advanced learning strategies, I have been modeling project based enrichment through Electives at the Upper Schools. With guidance from Susan

Moynihan, the Librarian at PAUS, Barbara Weaver, a history teacher at CRLS, and support from our librarians, tech integration specialists and the Media Arts lab, last year we had a group of very successful competitors at the regional and state National History Day Competitions. We even had one student reach the National level. Working all year on a history project involving a personal passion can easily transfer from an elective to an enrichment project setting. In addition to developing expertise in creating history projects, I also worked with the staff at CSUS to bring Generation Citizen to the school, and experimented with National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) as an online offering for advanced writers undertaking the challenge of writing a 50,000 word novel in just one month.

Family Engagement

Cambridge's commitment to family engagement takes many forms, and our cohort of parents of advanced learners is nothing less than legendary.

The energy of our parents is motivating, and their activism is inspirational. Through monthly meetings of the Advance Learning Parent Advisory group, parents always have access to meaningful dialogue with each other, the opportunity to ask questions about policies, and to participate in district discussions. While many who come to these meetings also belong to the Cambridge Advanced Learning Association (CALA), the two groups are distinct because it is important for parents to maintain an independent group where they can discuss matters on their own. This group has brought up many important issues, and also guided programming to support advanced learning and families of advanced learners. Some issues that have been raised through these meetings are how to better meet the needs of twice exceptional learners, how to manage the end of year transition more effectively, and how to better address the social/emotional needs of advanced learners.

We must always be aware, however, that there are many parents who don't come to meetings. To best reach out and bring in families that aren't as connected with our schools, starting last year the Advanced Learning Parent Advisory Group, the Special Education Parent Advisory Group, and the Cambridge School Advisory Group joined forces to prepare and present a workshop series to increase family engagement. We tried many strategies, and in coordination with the district's efforts to collaborate with the Community Engagement Team, we conducted a large phone campaign, began translating our handouts, making our presentations more culturally proficient, and the results were enlightening.

Through this effort we learned that personal contact makes a meaningful difference to families, and how challenging true cultural competency can be. As an example, we identified homework as an issue that engages every family, but in so many different ways. Some have language barriers that make it difficult to sort through and understand the multitude of papers that come home, some cultures see discussing

learning issues with teachers as interference and a sign of disrespect, while it's a core expectation of our dominant culture and practice.

This work is a good beginning and we look forward to working with the Family Engagement Planning team to move to deeper levels of parent involvement in our schools and programming.

Social Emotional Lives of Advanced Learners

Consider the following phenomenon:

- Students who work hard in school and then also volunteer to cook meals in a homeless shelter every week
- Students who "do it all" Receive top grades, participate in sports, hold offices in student government, play an instrument, etc.
- Students who, despite setbacks, build strategies and alliances that lead to success
- Highly competent and conscientious students who turn in little homework
- Students with high ability whose attention wanders, and my have trouble organizing their work, time, and materials
- Highly competent students who refuse challenge, preferring to do easy tasks
- Highly competent students who become behavior issues in class
- Students who, despite high achievement, struggle with anxiety, depression, and other emotional issues

There is a debate among researchers and theorists as to whether there are traits, behaviors, or characteristics particular to advanced learners, and how those characteristics interact with contextual influences. Understanding the above phenomenon often relies on considering the social emotional lives of the students, and how that affects their experience at school.
While every student has unique characteristics, we're beginning to recognize approaches that are more successful and less successful with advanced learners in general.

1) Recognizing Fixed vs Growth Mindset – There is a lot of evidence that backs Carol Dweck's Mindset Theory. Fixed Mindset is the belief that we are given a certain amount of ability and that we cannot become more intelligent through effort. Growth mindset is the opposite belief: that by welcoming mistakes as learning opportunities and applying effective effort, we can grow smarter. Fixed mindset affects advanced learners by making them risk averse – they don't want to fail because they believe they will lose their status and won't be seen as smart. This is the reason that many advanced learners refuse challenge, or give up when they can no longer do their work quickly and easily.
   We have been doing a lot of work around the district to increase awareness around Mindset, how to recognize it, and how to implement teaching strategies that support development of the Growth Mindset.

2) Address learning issues and strengths at the same time – in some cases, advanced learners attract attention through behaviors such as decreased work production, difficulty with social situations, challenging their teachers, or disrupting class. It may seem logical that we would want to solve the work production, relationship building, or discipline problem first, and then investigate developing a more challenging educational plan. But recognizing that the behavior is related to the strength, or that the two need to be addressed concurrently, could be the key to the solution.
3) Dispel the myth that "Those kids are fine" – There is a common, but very wrong, perception that advanced learners are "fine", either because their cognitive abilities somehow shield them from mishaps, or because their parents will make sure that their needs are met. Students who have met the standards need new learning targets to remain intellectually engaged, they require educational resources, they need guidance from well trained teachers, and even those with advanced abilities in some areas may require special education or counseling services.

Measures of Success and Next Steps

Part 1: Qualitative

These are the previously listed elements necessary for the success of our model and where we are in meeting them.

- Staff knowledge of the model – For the first time we have developed and published an explanation of our model (see Appemdix 5). It has been posted on the Academic Challenge and Enrichment Website and distributed to new teachers. Next steps include distributing it more widely to staff and the community.
- Consensus on implementation of the model – As noted in district reports, the lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities in CPS also affects implementation of Advanced Learning Services. The recent move of the Academic Challenge and Enrichment Manager position to the Office of Student Services, demonstrates the district's definition of Advanced Learning services as part of the effort to meet the spectrum of student learning needs. This lens will provide more clarity and provide increased opportunity to plan and coordinate services for advanced learning.
- Clear criteria and staff trained in identifying advanced learners – Identification criteria are developed once there is a model in place. There are more and more areas of our curriculum where we have consensus on our approach and identification criteria are being developed.
  This area holds high potential to achieve greater diversity in the demographics of advanced learners.
- Including Advanced Learning in beginning stages of district level planning – When meeting the needs of advanced learners is not included at the planning level, advocacy for support later in the process occurs when staff already feel overwhelmed. It is correctly viewed as one more thing that's being added to the plate. Rolling out new curriculum is a monumental task, but we cannot implement first and then think about advanced learning when we have more experience. As our consultant MAK Mitchell said: "What's there at the beginning influences what's there at the end."
  The decision to have Advanced Learning represented on each curriculum writing committee is a bold step in the right direction. The Science committee is the farthest along in this process where we have begun to develop a unit model for providing enrichment resources and opportunities for all students.
- Rigorous curriculum instruction with high expectations for each student – Last year's implementation of the Curriculum Review Cycle has put us on an ambitious schedule for achieving this goal, and the training in UbD is assuring that we reach beyond the standards to provide our students the 21st Century Skills they'll need to succeed.
- Detailed and frequent data collection to identify students, set goals, and monitor growth – Often we engage in conversations that polarize authentic instruction and data driven instruction without defining what we mean by

"Data". Data Driven instruction, where we teach to the test and focus on a narrow range of high stakes standards, must be distinguished from data informed instruction where we collect information on what each student has mastered and has not yet mastered in order to effectively differentiate instruction. While Data Driven instruction does not lead to genuine learning, Data Informed is essential to authentic instruction.
The implementation of Math in Focus this year has supplied us with common core aligned assessments that allow us to approach this process in a meaningful new way.
A next step in this area is to raise awareness about the achievement gap and the potential gap. While we all agree that the narrowing the achievement gap must be our instructional priority, we cannot lose sight of the need to identify students who may be performing in the Needs Improvement, or Proficient categories, who, with support and attention, could be boosted into the Advanced. There is less enthusiasm for this work, which is another key to increasing the diversity of advanced learners.
The success of the Math Move Up program at CRLS demonstrates the success of this model.

- <u>Recognition of need for academic, behavioral, and social/emotional supports</u> –
  The recent move of the Academic Challenge and Enrichment Manager position to the Office of Student Services, will provide increased opportunity to plan and coordinate coherent services for advanced learning to meet wellness as well as academic needs.
  In addition, we are increasing our Mindset training by designing a course for our more experienced new teachers, a school based PD program, and a series of student lessons on how the brain learns. There is a lot of data showing that this is effective in improving student achievement across the learning spectrum.
- <u>Instructors trained in meaningful differentiation of content and supported in instructional strategies necessary to implement enriched curricula</u> – While our new system improves the provision of meaningful professional development, there are many competing demands on our educators' valuable time. The PD committee has been tasked by the Superintendant to determine the priority "tool kit" for every CPS instructor, and to make sure that we can provide instruction in those tools within the first three years of instructors' arrival in the district.
- <u>Planning to support acceleration of students in terms of placement and scheduling</u> – Acceleration is our tool of choice for students learning significantly above grade level, it is threatened by the number of seats available in certain classes and is currently recommended on a "space available" basis. While the number of students who could not be accommodated in accelerated classes was very small this year, we can anticipate that with improved identification systems the number will grow.

We have discussed taking measures this year that will improve our prediction model in years to come.

- Personnel qualified in the necessary range of grade level content – at the elementary level acceleration at all grades is complicated by the question: What will happen when the student reaches 5th grade? When the students are significantly ahead of their grade level, it is unreasonable to expect a general educator to stretch his or her instructional repertoire that far and "acceleration in place" – where we provide advanced curriculum within the grade level classroom – becomes impossible to deliver.
- High levels of family engagement – Our efforts to reach a wider representation of our district met with great success last year. We are working with the Family Engagement Planning Team to deepen the level of engagement and increase our cultural competency.

Part II: Quantitative

In our model we have an inherent inability to accurately count how many students are receiving advanced learning support. This is because Tier one and Tier two differentiation mostly happen in classrooms and is carried out by teachers with the support of school based coaches. In my observations in the district, I've seen a lot of situations in which students performing at an advanced level have been identified and are successfully receiving differentiated materials and benefitting from flexible grouping strategies. In addition, in a model where our goal is to create the opportunity for every child to produce advanced behaviors, we will always have some students who exhibit those behaviors under some circumstances or in some subjects, but not in others. Because our definition is flexible and allows movement, counting is complicated.

Nevertheless, striving to meet goals does inspire us to reach higher and provides us with a range of data to consider when making decisions. Here are some of the measures that have been requested with notes to aid in their interpretation.

1) Percentage of Students Completing Algebra 1 in 8th Grade
   In the 2012-2013 School Year, students in heterogenous classrooms were given access to Algebra 1 materials, but there was no direct instruction offered. That year we had 10% of our students pass the Algebra 1 test in June. In 2013-2014, we offered before school instruction at every upper school 3 times a week for 50 minutes and 13% of our 8th graders successfully passed the Algebra 1 exam. With the roll out of the Accelerated Math Program that incorporates Algebra 1 instruction into the school day, we expect the number to rise again for this school year.

2) National History Day Competition
   In the first year of bringing this program to the Upper Schools, Susan Moynihan, the librarian at the Putnam Avenue Upper School and I guided 12 students to participate in the regional competition, with three continuing to the state level. One student went on to compete at the National competition

in Washington, DC. This year we have nine students participating in the program.

3) Enriched Learning Plans (ELPs)
Some seek to interpret the number of ELPs as the sole indicator of the success of our advanced learning support services. The situation is more complicated than that for the following reasons:
    - Individual Plans are not always the best solution to providing higher levels of rigor – We know that we need to raise the level of rigor in our district. The correct approach to do this is the one we are taking, to systematically review and improve our curriculum and instruction. The ELP is a short term tool for individual students and can't systematically address that longer term issue.
    - Individual Plans are not always the best solution for students – because ELPs are not part of our overall planning, implementation is complicated. For example, to balance grade level classes, advanced learners are often separated from each other. Students are much happier and more successful when they have a partner or small group to work with. In general, advanced learners can struggle with social isolation, so an ELP must balance this consideration with academic support.
    - Implementing ELPs requires support and training – The pedagogy of offering significantly different content is difficult to orchestrate, and in some cases teachers don't have the support, training, or instructional range to accommodate the need.
    - Implementing ELPs can conflict with belief systems – Our staff are deeply committed to equity, and some feel that the grouping strategies and significant content differentiation that accompany advanced learning conflict with their beliefs.
    - Teacher referrals are most effective, but not always provided as ELPs – The most effective strategies are implemented when teachers reach out for support. This is usually done because they have a group of students they want to challenge more. Building these relationships with educators takes time and trust. Sometimes implementation of ELPs can get in the way of building those relationships.

The details of Enriched Learning Plans are being provided in a confidential memo to assure that individual students are not identified. Below is a table summarizing the data.

K-5	18
6-8	20

Male Female	30 8
Subjects	Math (70%), Reading/Writing, Spanish, Science, Behavior, French, Social Studies
Demographics	74% Caucasian
Referral	58% Parent

Specific Goals for Advanced Learners and Plans for Future Improvements–

Because the Office of Academic Challenge and Enrichment just moved to the Office for Student Services, we have not yet aligned the specific goals for advanced learners with the overall structure for meeting the needs of students with learning differences. In general, we will be working toward:

- Increasing our capacity to offer more advanced learning opportunities.
- Addressing cultural shifts regarding data informed instruction and our beliefs about advanced learning
- Develop consistent identification criteria using aligned formative assessment tools.
- Improve content differentiation, homework, and grouping practices
- Increase Social/Emotional supports

Parent Input – See appendix 7 and 8

The details of Parent Input are being provided in a confidential memo to assure that individual families are not identified. Below is a table summarizing the data.

What went well	**Improvement Opportunities**	**Other Comments**
Students felt academically supported	Process too Lengthy	Needs to be a clear mandate with vision and goals

Student received advanced content	Before school Algebra 1 "stinks"	Office of Academic Challenge needs additional staff
ELP provided thoughtful planning and testing	Need to increase staff identification	Need to assure acceleration opportunities continue
Whole child was considered in planning	Need to increase awareness of services	Family left CPS
Felt "heard" by CPS	Need more staff support	No staff buy in
After school support a plus	Smoother integration with other services	Need to address student motivation
Fostered student's self identification as a "strong student"	Implementation not consistent	Improve communications
Helpful Workshops	Program not supported by school	Bored students become behavior issues
Access to increased opportunity at high school	Need more before/after school clubs	
Building a peer group		

Conclusion

Have we achieved full implementation of our model for advanced learning? No

Are we making progress? Yes.

1) We are moving from separate pieces to a vision of advanced learning services that coordinates with other departments and advances the strategic mission of the district.
2) We are identifying the gaps and obstacles and creating plans to overcome them.
3) We are creating specific programs and the mechanisms to evaluate and improve them.
4) We are raising awareness and training our staff to meet the needs of our advanced learners in meaningful ways.
5) We are empowering parents to recognize their children's strengths and advocate for them in the schools.
6) We increasingly offer advanced learning opportunities to more students, and are raising the level of rigor for everyone.

Attachments:
Appendix 1: Lesson Plan Template
Appendix 3: ELP Process Flow Chart

Appendix 4: Math Investigation Center for Addition Unit
Appendix 5: Tiered Model handout
Appendix 6: RtI form
Appendix 7: CALA Letter
Appendix 8: Input gathered through parent survey