

Student Learning Committee
August 22, 2005
Advanced Learning

Topic: Underrepresentation of Student Groups in Advanced Learning Programs

Goal: To present information that clarifies the issues of underrepresentation of student groups in Advanced Learning programs

Objectives:

- (a) To differentiate between programs serving students with special needs and those open to the students at program sites
- (b) To identify potential contributors to underrepresentation in programs serving students with special needs
- (c) To articulate on-going and new initiatives for addressing each of these potential contributors
- (d) To seek feedback and suggestions concerning other actions that could be considered for addressing underrepresentation in Advanced Learning programs serving students with special needs

Agenda Items

1. Programs, identification students with special needs, and eligibility requirements,
2. Student enrollment in Advanced Learning programs
3. Potential contributors to underrepresentation of students in the Accelerated Progress Program (APP) and the Spectrum program
4. Summary

Understanding the Issue of Underrepresentation in Advanced Learning Programs

Our Programs

Advanced Learning offers four programs and coordinates the examinations for Advanced Placement. The table below outlines the programs under the auspices of Advanced Learning. Programs that are *building specific* do not require formal testing, do not identify students as having special needs, nor do they typically experience issues of underrepresentation because student participation in programs reflect the building’s student population. Participation in Advanced Placement courses may be the one exception to this rule.

Program	Entry Requirements	Grades Served	Delivery System	Underrepresentation
International Baccalaureate	No eligibility testing; participation based on student motivation and commitment	9-12	<i>Building specific program</i> that draws from students enrolled at the building for program participation. Students are <u>not</u> identified as special needs through a district testing process	Student participation reflects the school’s population; do not have issues of underrepresentation in the active program
Advanced Placement Courses	No formal eligibility testing, with some courses requiring prerequisites classes	Typically 10-12	<i>Building specific programs</i> that draws from students enrolled at the buildings for program participation. Students are <u>not</u> identified as special needs through a district testing process	Student participation reflects the school’s population; issues of underrepresentation are building specific
Advanced Learning Opportunities	No formal eligibility testing required; typically available to all students enrolled in a building offering the program	1-8	<i>Building specific programs</i> that draw from students enrolled at the building for program participation. Students are <u>not</u> identified as special needs through a district testing process	Student participation reflects the school’s population; do not have issues of underrepresentation in these programs
Spectrum	Formal testing required, with set criterion in cognitive ability and academic achievement	1-8	<i>Cluster specific programs</i> that draw from students within the cluster/region for program participation. Students are <u>are</u> identified as special needs through a district testing process.	Student participation reflects the school’s/cluster’s population, but the significantly smaller numbers of students participating in the program in certain clusters results in the program overall having issues with underrepresentation for students who are Black and Hispanic/Latino
Accelerated Progress Program	Formal testing required, with set criterion in cognitive ability and academic achievement	1-12	<i>All-city draw program</i> that draws students from all over the city for program participation. Students are <u>are</u> identified as special needs through a district testing process.	There is a significant issue with underrepresentation of students who are Black and Hispanic/Latino when compared to district enrollment numbers but not when compared to the city’s population distribution. This issue is similar to the overrepresentation of student groups in special education.

Special needs.

Students identified in Seattle Public Schools as students with special needs are students who have been found eligible for specialized program services through a diagnostic process. Students are referred, students are tested, and teams of professionals review assessment information to determine whether students meet eligibility requirements for receiving services. Students found eligible present learning needs that cannot solely be met through participation in the general education curriculum provided in the general education classroom.

Locally and nationally, programs that serve students with special needs experience difficulties with underrepresentation and/or overrepresentation. Nationally, gifted education programs requiring students to meet eligibility requirements for participation have issues of underrepresentation. Nationally, special education programs, especially those serving students with emotionally/behavioral disabilities, have issues of overrepresentation.

The International Baccalaureate program, Advanced Placement courses, and Advanced Learning Opportunities programs do NOT identify students as having special needs. Students may elect to participate in these programs; there is no formal eligibility testing process for program participation. We do not typically experience underrepresentation issues within these programs.

The APP and Spectrum programs do identify students as special needs students through a diagnostic process. Students are referred, tested, and an Eligibility Review Committee reviews student test data and the teacher input form to determine if students meet the eligibility criterion as special needs in one of two categories: 1) academically highly gifted or 2) academically gifted.

Students served in APP and Spectrum are identified as academically highly gifted and academically gifted and in need of an accelerated, rigorous curriculum and opportunities to learn alongside intellectual peers for at least a portion of the school day. To be served in these programs, students must demonstrate cognitive ability *and* academic achievement in the high average to superior range (i.e., at least 1.5 standard deviations above the mean). It is those qualities that make them students with special needs who require a program different from that provided in a general education classroom.

Underrepresentation: When the percentage of a student group (e.g., racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender groups) in a program is lower in comparison to the percentage of the student group represented in the overall district student population

Program Enrollment for Programs Serving Students with Special Needs: Spectrum

Enrollment numbers for elementary Spectrum programs are provided for each school, followed by a summary of these numbers from the district-wide perspective of comparing the racial/ethnic distribution in the Spectrum classroom to the student population of the building in which the Spectrum program is placed. Note that when reviewed on a cluster basis (i.e., comparing student enrollment of the program to the building that provides the program for the cluster), student participation is reflective of the building in which the programs are offered and the cluster/region of the school, but when numbers are aggregated, they are not aligned with the district population, with underrepresentation most pronounced for students Hispanic/Latino and Black. However, enrollment in Spectrum is aligned with the city's census, presented in the final column of the table.

<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/documents/spectrumenrollem.pdf>

<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/documents/spectrumenrollmiddle.pdf>

Program Enrollment for Programs Serving Students with Special Needs: Accelerated Progress Program

Enrollment numbers for the Accelerated Progress Program (APP) are provided for each of the buildings. The groups of students served are not aligned with the district population, with underrepresentation most pronounced for students who are Hispanic/Latino and Black. However, enrollment in APP is aligned with the city's census, presented in the final column of the table.

<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/documents/appenrollment.pdf>

Program Enrollment: Advanced Placement

Enrollment numbers for Advanced Learning courses are provided for each of the buildings. These numbers can be compared to the racial/ethnic distribution for each building. Click on the link below for a PowerPoint of the data.

<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/documents/appenroll.ppt>

Referral

Participation in programs serving students with special needs always starts with a referral. Students are general education students first. It is up to the teachers and administrators, as well as parents and community members, to identify students as having specialized needs and for referring them for program evaluation. Students must be referred in order to be considered for eligibility for program participation.

In the case of Advanced Learning, the majority of referrals are for students who are white, and the majority of referrals are being made in the northern-most part of the city. If referrals continue to consist mostly of white students, program enrollment will continue to be mostly white students. Without a referral, we cannot test students nor find them eligible for program participation.

Click on these links for:

[Total Number of Students Taking AP Courses](#)

[Referrals by Elementary School 2004-2005 Testing Cycle](#)

[Referrals by Middle School 2004-2005 Testing Cycle](#)

Potential Contributors to Underrepresentation

Click this link to view a PDF document, Actions related to Potential Contributors.

<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/documents/actionspotentialcontributors.pdf>