

# RIVERSIDE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT 96

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**To:** Dr. Martha Ryan-Toye, Superintendent  
**From:** Angela Dolezal, Director of Teaching and Learning  
**Date:** May 21, 2025  
**Re:** Advanced Learning Program Review Update

## **Background**

Riverside School District 96 engaged Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development (CTD) to conduct a comprehensive review of its advanced learning services. The review focused on program strengths, areas for growth, and alignment with current research and best practices.

## **Review Process**

The review consisted of five key components:

### **1. Stakeholder Surveys**

In fall 2024, CTD administered surveys to students, parents, and educators to gather insights into experiences, perceptions, and areas for improvement.

- **Respondents:**

- Students: 913
- Parents: 205 (representing 320+ students; 34% with children in advanced learning services)
  - 80% had elementary students, 38% had junior high students
- Educators: 72

### **2. Focus Groups**

CTD facilitated focus groups with 119 students, 34 parents, and 23 staff and administrators. These sessions explored themes that emerged from surveys and student data.

### **3. Data Analysis**

Achievement and growth data from the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years were analyzed to assess performance and demographics of students in and out of advanced learning services.

- Assessments included:
  - Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
  - NWEA MAP (achievement and growth)
  - Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR)

#### 4. Classroom Observations

Observers visited 35 classrooms (11 at Hauser Junior High and 24 across elementary schools) to assess instructional strategies and student engagement.

#### 5. Document Review

CTD reviewed district policies, handbooks, webpages, State Report Card data, and demographic information.

### Key Findings

- District 96 is a high-achieving district with average growth in reading and math.
- The current service model blends enrichment and acceleration, with strong stakeholder support.
- Students in advanced learning programs show faster growth than their similar peers.
- Assessment tools at Hauser may not fully capture growth among advanced learners.
- Some student groups remain underrepresented in advanced learning services.
- Needs in ELA and math are comparably diverse.

### Recommendations for Future Action

- **Improve communication** around identification processes and the continuum of services.
- **Refine K–8 service alignment**, particularly Tier 1 instruction and enrichment opportunities.
- **Update identification and acceleration criteria** to ensure equitable access.
- **Expand professional development** to support staff in meeting advanced learner needs.

### Next Steps

- Develop a communication plan to share findings and the timeline for action.
- Create a roadmap for updating service pathways, identification procedures, and resource allocation.
- Integrate advanced learner profiles into the district's MTSS framework.
- Provide ongoing professional learning focused on instructional strategies and tiered support for advanced learners.