



May 10, 2022

RE: Providing Equitable Access to Advanced Coursework

Dear Honorable Members of the New York State Legislature,

In New York State, Black and Latinx students and students from low-income backgrounds are tracked out of rigorous coursework that prepares them for college and careers. These students are disproportionately denied opportunities for rigorous coursework as middle schoolers when they are not enrolled in courses such as Algebra and Earth Science. In high school, they are denied this rigor as students who are not provided with equitable access to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment programs. These racial and ethnic disparities in course access translate into academic and economic gaps in postsecondary opportunities.

According to an [analysis](#) by the New York Equity Coalition, during the 2019-20 school year while 22% of students who were not from low-income backgrounds were enrolled in Algebra 1, just 14% of students from low-income backgrounds were enrolled in this course. These gaps persisted even in high schools as the analysis found that while 91% and 49% of Asian and White students, respectively, were enrolled in AP/IB courses, only 36% of Black students and 35% of Latinx students were enrolled.

Taking rigorous coursework in middle school and high school prepares students for college. According to a 2018 National Association for College Admission Counseling [survey](#), the top two deciding factors for college admissions were overall grade point average and grades in college preparatory courses, followed by admission exam scores and the strength of curricula. Research [suggests](#) that students who take advanced coursework in high school are more likely to graduate, go to college, and earn a degree. Further, advanced courses such as AP courses provide students with an opportunity to earn college credit while in high school saving students time and money.

In a September 2021 New York Equity Coalition [poll](#), 91% of parents reported that it is important that schools improve access to advanced courses in middle and high schools. Further, many families may want their children to enroll in coursework that prepares them for college but are unaware of what is available. Increasing family awareness and understanding of the benefits of enrolling in advanced coursework, starting as early as when their children are in elementary school, may increase enrollment, especially for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds.

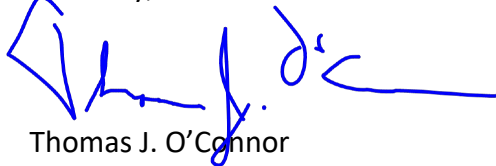
It is also important that information regarding course access is provided in multiple languages so that it is accessible for [multilingual learners](#), who represent over 10% of students in New York State's education system. Given the vast diversity of New York State's school system, we recommend districts be required to make this information available in the top languages spoken in the district and in multiple formats, including digitally.

Research shows that even when students from low-income backgrounds, and Latinx, Black, and American Indian students demonstrate that they are meeting the state’s academic standards they are often not enrolled in advanced coursework. A 2020 [analysis](#) by The New York Equity Coalition found that even when these students scored proficient on 7th grade state math assessments, they were less likely than their non-low-income and White peers to be enrolled in an advanced math class in 9th grade.

States like North Carolina, Colorado, and Washington have adopted automatic enrollment policies and have experienced significant improvement in enrollment. Washington State, for example, enacted an [automatic enrollment](#) policy and experienced a 25% increase of the percentage of students of color taking advanced courses—from 35% in school year 2009-10 to 61% the following school year. Currently, Washington State has one of the highest rates of students taking and passing AP exams and [data](#) released by the College Board estimates the college credits students earned by passing AP exams saved Washington families almost \$58 million in tuition in 2018, as reported by the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. O'Connor
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