

THE NEW YORK EQUITY COALITION



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New report shows New York’s education system denies students of color access to courses that prepare them for college, careers, and active citizenship

Coalition of civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations proposes a “5x25” agenda, calling on state leaders to fulfill 5 Commitments to every student entering sixth grade in Fall 2018

NEW YORK – Across New York State, the education system denies students of color access to rigorous instruction in a range of courses that will prepare them for success in college, careers, and civic life, according to a new analysis by The New York Equity Coalition of civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations.

The coalition’s latest policy brief *Within Our Reach: An agenda for ensuring all New York students are prepared for college, careers, and active citizenship* identifies striking gaps in access and opportunity for students of color and proposes solutions to address them.

According to the coalition’s analysis, based on unpublished 2016-2017 enrollment data:

- Students of color are under-represented across the board in gatekeeper courses – including Algebra I and Earth Science in middle school, Calculus, Physics, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB), Computer Science, Advanced Foreign Language, and Music in high school – that prepare students for college and career opportunities.
- Latino and Black students are less likely than their White peers to attend schools where gatekeeper college- and career-prep courses are offered.
- Even in schools that offer gatekeeper college-and career-prep courses, Latino and Black students are under-enrolled in these courses.

- Students of color are disproportionately enrolled in schools with no or an insufficient number of school counselors, who could help them navigate course enrollment to prepare for college and careers.

In fact, if Latino and Black students were enrolled in courses at the same rate as all students in the schools with the greatest enrollment rates statewide, the number of additional Latino and Black middle school students in Algebra I would fill Madison Square Garden 1.5 times.

And the number of additional seats held by Latino and Black students in AP/IB Math and Science courses would fill the Buffalo Bills' New Era Field.

Addressing these challenges is integral to achieving equity in New York's education system. From an educational justice perspective, systemically denying historically under-served students the chance to access and succeed in high-quality coursework across the curriculum is a root cause of achievement and opportunity gaps. Likewise, from an economic perspective, New York's future success as a state depends on better preparing all groups of students for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, Computer Science careers, and other emerging and high-demand industry clusters.

That's why The New York Equity Coalition is calling on state leaders to fulfill **5 Commitments** to every student in the **Graduating Class of 2025** – a **5x25 agenda** for success starting with the cohort of students who are entering sixth grade in Fall 2018.

- **COMMITMENT 1:** All students, families, and educators will have accurate and timely information, support, and help to access a rich and robust course experience in their school.
- **COMMITMENT 2:** All students and families will have the information and support to pursue rigorous college- and career-prep pathways.
- **COMMITMENT 3:** Every student will receive rich and rigorous instruction that prepares them for success after high school graduation.
- **COMMITMENT 4:** Every student will be able to earn college credit and/or participate in work-based learning opportunities before they graduate from high school.
- **COMMITMENT 5:** High school graduation requirements will match modern-day expectations for college, career, and civic readiness.

Visit EquityinEdNY.org to learn more about the campaign.

The coalition includes Better Schools Better Neighborhoods, the Buffalo Urban League, The Business Council of New York State, Business Council of Westchester, Capital Region Chamber, Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Democrats for Education Reform-NY, District-Parent Coordinating Council of Buffalo, The Education Trust–New York, Educators for Excellence, EPIC-Every Person Influences Children, High Achievement New York, Hispanic Federation, National Center for Learning Disabilities, New York Urban League, Otsego County Chamber of Commerce, Public Policy Institute of New York State, UnidosUS, United Way of New York City, the Urban League of Rochester, and the Urban League of Westchester County.

“Buffalo's economic success is dependent on ensuring all students leave high school with the skills they need to be successful in college, careers, and civic life,” **said Samuel L. Radford III, Director of Better Schools Better Neighborhoods and President of the District-Parent Coordinating Council of Buffalo.**

“And that needs to start now, in middle and high schools across the city, where students of color are routinely denied access to the courses that will prepare them for a bright future. We must do better, and we call on local and state leaders to act immediately to ensure all students have access to these critical courses.”

“The Buffalo Public School District has consistently lagged behind in ensuring our students graduate and are ready for college,” **said Brenda McDuffie, President and CEO of the Buffalo Urban League.** “It is imperative that we as a community, do all that we can to provide a high quality education, that prepares students with the skills, knowledge, and credits to enter and succeed in a post-secondary education.”

“This report is alarming in its findings, but hopeful in its conclusions,” **said Heather C. Briccetti, Esq., President and CEO of The Business Council of New York State Inc.** “What it shows more than anything else is that the status quo will not suffice. We are failing our students, particularly those of color. Access to relevant and rigorous coursework is vital to the success of our students and our state’s businesses. We must ensure that all students have the skills necessary to succeed in our rapidly changing economy, which access to advanced coursework often provides. I applaud The New York Equity Coalition for their exemplary work on this project and pledge the full support of our membership to ensure the commitments laid out in this report are met.”

“I would encourage anyone that is interested in improving the outcomes for all students to review this report,” **said Mark Eagan, Chief Executive Officer of the Capital Region Chamber.** “Our Chamber is fully committed to working with our partners to ensure that every student is prepared for college, careers, and active citizenship. To that end, we are proud to support proven programs like P-TECH which will be available to more Capital Region students this September.”

“This report reaffirms the necessity for access to high-quality, advanced coursework for all students, especially for low-income students of color,” **said Ramon Peguero, CEO and President of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families.** “CHCF believes that for increased access to happen effectively, teachers and schools need to be provided the proper resources and supports. If we are to achieve true educational equity and equitable access to opportunity, we must invest in the recognized pathways to college and career readiness and success.”

“Public education is supposed to be the great equalizer, but by denying black and Latinx students access to college and career ready coursework, the system is effectively limiting students’ future potential,” **said Nicole Brisbane, Director of Democrats for Education Reform-NY.** “How can students be expected to succeed post-secondary if they can’t even access the necessary courses in schools? It’s not only unfairly biased, but criminal.”

“New York’s education system routinely denies students of color equitable access to the courses that will prepare them for college, careers, and active citizenship,” **said Ian Rosenblum, Executive Director of The Education Trust–New York.** “Addressing these challenges is both an educational justice and an economic imperative, and we call on state leaders to adopt the solutions that will give all students the high-quality education they deserve.”

“New York’s leaders consistently pledge that all students will have access to and be enrolled in rigorous courses that prepare them for careers and college,” **said Evan Stone, Co-Founder and Co-CEO of Educators for Excellence.** “This report provides a roadmap for their rhetoric to finally align with what

students and teachers experience in their schools. *Within Our Reach* bluntly shows that black and brown students and students from low-income homes attend schools that don't offer courses that are integral to a students' academic growth. Furthermore, in schools that offer rigorous courses, these same students are often left out of those classrooms. Our education leaders must make significant moves to ensure that students attend schools that provide rigorous courseloads and that all students are included in those classes."

"Time and again we see the detrimental effects of low standards and expectations for students of color around New York State," **said Brian Fritsch, Deputy Executive Director of High Achievement New York.** "A lack of access to challenging coursework that prepares students for college and careers is a barrier that we can and must overcome. It is incumbent on school districts around New York to offer high-level courses to all students, regardless of their personal background."

"The report released by The New York Equity Coalition describes in painful detail all of the ways that African American and Latino middle and high school students are losing because of lack of access to advanced coursework. This simply cannot remain the status quo," **said José Calderón, President of the Hispanic Federation.** "Easy and wide access to Advanced Placement classes, dual enrollment and other college credit earning opportunities must become the new standard for all students, including those who are English-Language Learners."

"This report highlights the need for academic outcomes for minority children to change, reforms must alter the caliber and quantity of learning opportunities they encounter," **said Barbara Ann Heegan, President and CEO The Otsego County Chamber of Commerce.** "These efforts must include work-based learning and technical training opportunities, job shadowing and apprenticeship programs. This in turn is readying students to succeed with technical skills which are needed to fill jobs of tomorrow in STEM related fields."

"It is imperative that New York's leaders act quickly to ensure all students have access to the courses that will prepare them for a successful future and help them become actively engaged members of their communities," **said Arva Rice, President and CEO of New York Urban League.** "We must act now and make a commitment that all students entering sixth grade in the Fall 2018 will have access to the rigorous courses that will teach them the skills they need to succeed in college, the workforce and life."

"Highly prepared teachers providing instruction in a high quality curriculum is the pathway forward," **said William Clark, President and CEO of the Urban League of Rochester.** "Access to quality courses and curricula is the conduit that provides access to a quality education and life. To deny students the equitable tools needed to be college and career ready is to deny them the opportunity towards an equitable future."

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