

Within Our Reach

An agenda for ensuring all New York students are prepared for college, careers, and active citizenship

Even before the pandemic, students from low-income backgrounds and American Indian, Black, and Latinx students were less likely to be enrolled in key advanced courses such as Physics, Calculus, Computer Science, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, music, and advanced foreign languages than their non-low-income and White peers.

The reasons for this are two-fold. Students from low-income backgrounds and American Indian, Black, and Latinx students are less likely to attend schools that offer these critical courses. And even when they do attend schools that offer the classes, students from historically under-served groups are less likely to be enrolled in them.

In this policy brief, The New York Equity Coalition of civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations reviews data on access to advanced coursework and rigorous learning opportunities in middle and high school during the 2019-2020 school year.

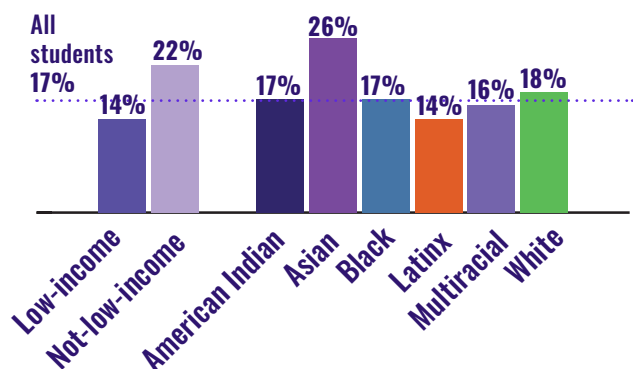
While there are far more courses that make up a rich and robust curriculum, we focus on a small set of important middle and high school classes. We call them “gatekeeper courses” because taking them at certain points in a student’s school experience provides the opportunity to advance to higher-level courses, to develop critical skills, or to explore new passions and abilities.

Although New York has made some progress, the state’s path to recovery will rely upon our education system’s ability to ensure that all students have access to high-quality academic coursework. As the state focuses its efforts on diversity, equity, and inclusion, we must ensure that all students leave high school prepared for college, careers, and active citizenship.

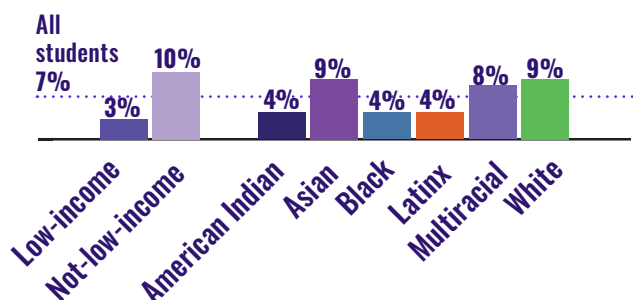
Among the findings from the 2019-2020 school year:

FINDING 1: Students who are from low-income backgrounds and American Indian, Black, and Latinx students are under-represented in a wide range of important gatekeeper and advanced courses.

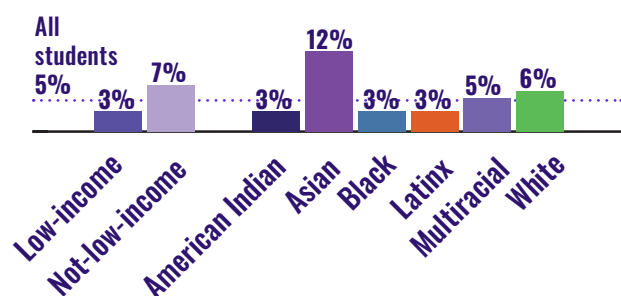
Grades 7-8 **algebra 1** enrollment rate by student demographics



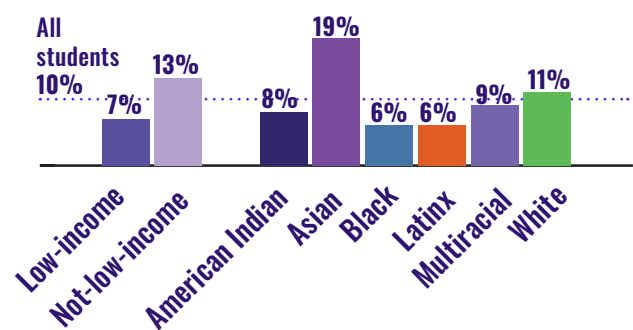
Grades 7-8 **earth science** enrollment rate by student demographics



Grades 9-12 **calculus** enrollment rate by student demographics

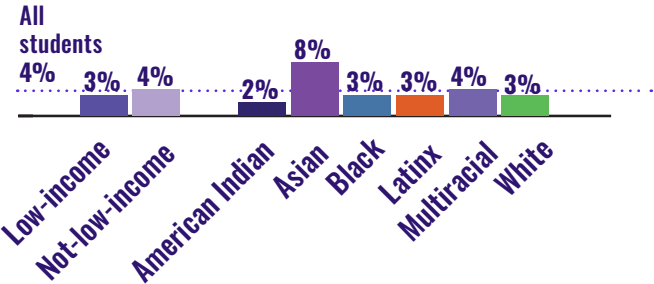


Grades 9-12 **physics** enrollment rate by student demographics

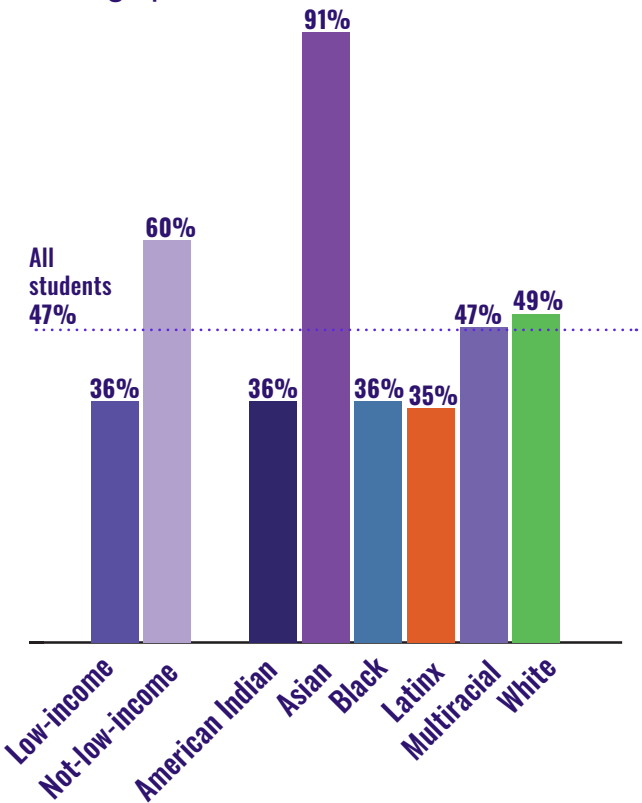


AS THE STATE FOCUSES ITS EFFORTS ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION, WE MUST ENSURE THAT ALL STUDENTS LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL PREPARED FOR COLLEGE, CAREERS, AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP.

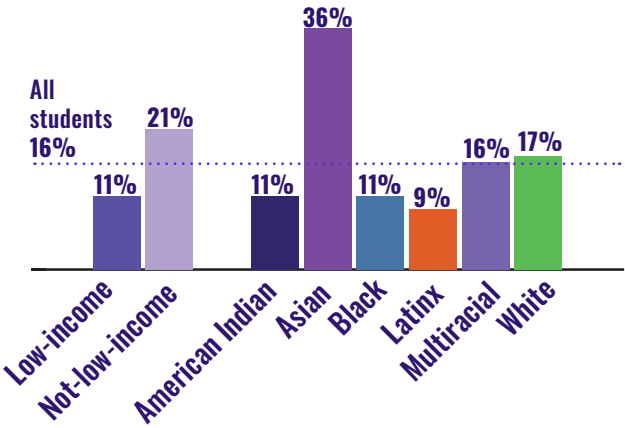
Grades 9-12 **computer science** enrollment rate by student demographics



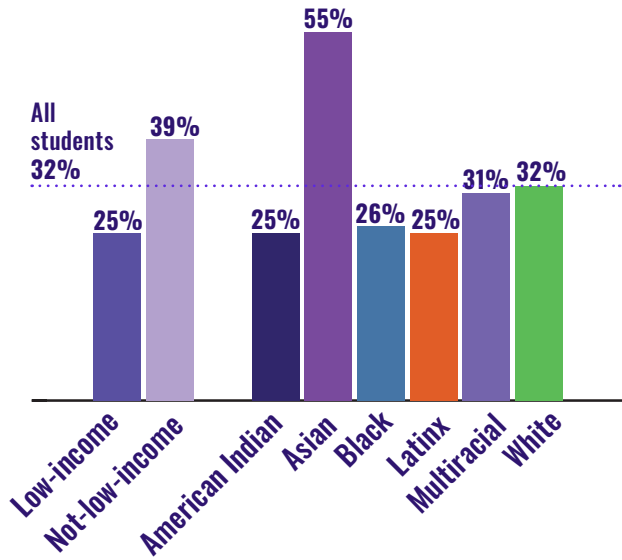
Grades 9-12 **AP/IB** enrollment rate by student demographics



Grades 9-12 **AP/IB math or science** enrollment rate by student demographics



Grades 9-12 **other AP/IB** enrollment rate by student demographics



Source: New York State Education Department. Unpublished 2019-20 data.

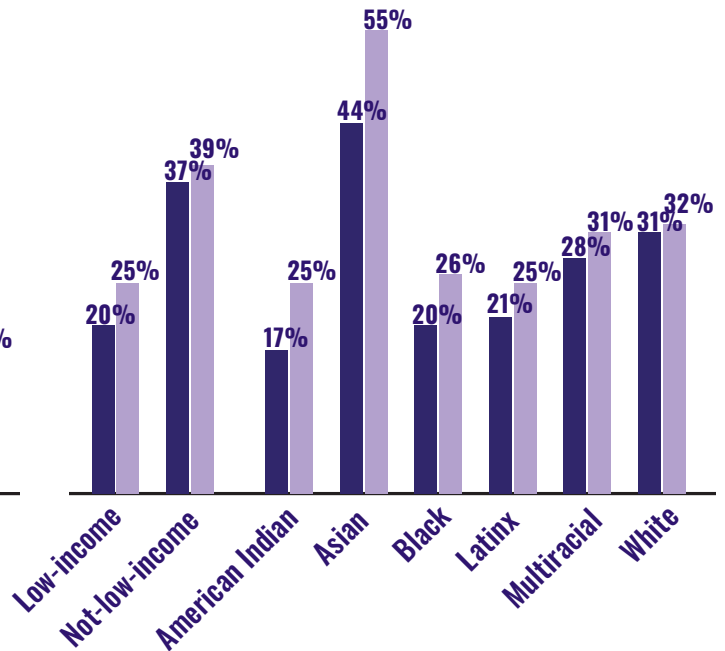
Grades 9-12 **AP/IB math or science** enrollment rate by student demographics

2018-19 2019-20

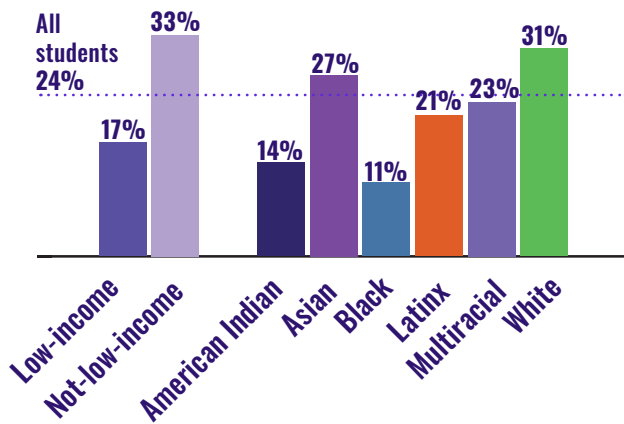


Grades 9-12 **other AP/IB** enrollment rate by student demographics

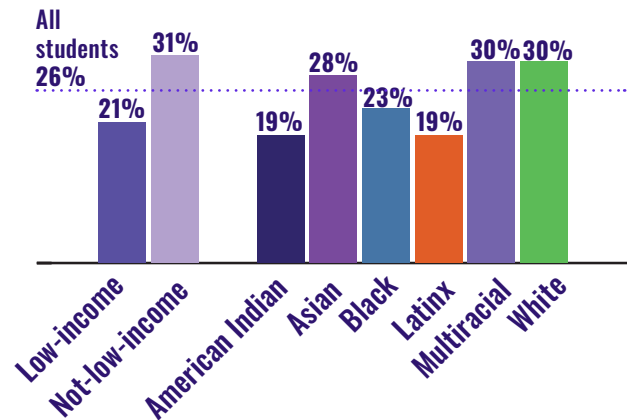
2018-19 2019-20



Grades 9-12 **advanced foreign language** enrollment rate by student demographics



Grades 9-12 **music** enrollment rate by student demographics



FINDING 2: Students who are from low-income backgrounds and Black and Latinx students are more likely than their White peers to attend schools where important gatekeeper and advanced courses are not offered.

	All students	American Indian	Asian	Black	Latinx	Multiracial	White
Algebra 1							
Share of students in schools without course	16%	20%	20%	24%	23%	10%	9%
Number of students in schools without course	61,313	509	7,923	12,663	23,351	1,005	15,862
Earth Science							
Share of students in schools without course	65%	77%	67%	77%	71%	58%	57%
Number of students in schools without course	241,174	1,906	25,988	40,550	72,230	5,568	94,932
Calculus							
Share of students in schools without course	16%	23%	8%	32%	25%	10%	7%
Number of students in schools without course	120,730	1,207	6,193	37,911	50,052	1,585	23,782
Physics							
Share of students in schools without course	14%	20%	9%	30%	23%	8%	5%
Number of students in schools without course	108,780	1,074	6,817	35,408	46,878	1,324	17,279
Computer Science							
Share of students in schools without course	35%	44%	23%	45%	40%	35%	32%
Number of students in schools without course	267,898	2,293	17,749	53,583	78,977	5,538	109,758
AP/IB							
Share of students in schools without course	6%	6%	3%	6%	5%	6%	7%
Number of students in schools without course	45,973	340	2,095	7,061	10,918	967	24,952
AP/IB Math or Science							
Share of students in schools without course	13%	17%	7%	16%	14%	11%	12%
Number of students in schools without course	96,204	886	5,186	19,572	26,983	1,825	41,752
Any other AP/IB							
Share of students in schools without course	7%	9%	3%	6%	6%	7%	9%
Number of students in schools without course	53,354	489	2,403	7,759	12,024	1,172	29,507

Source: New York State Education Department. Unpublished 2019-20 data.

	All students	American Indian	Asian	Black	Latinx	Multiracial	White
Advanced foreign language							
Share of students in schools without course	10%	18%	9%	22%	15%	8%	3%
Number of students in schools without course	77,011	924	7,022	26,652	30,510	1,314	10,589
Music							
Share of students in schools without course	13%	22%	12%	25%	23%	9%	3%
Number of students in schools without course	99,771	1,163	9,617	29,382	46,814	1,501	11,294

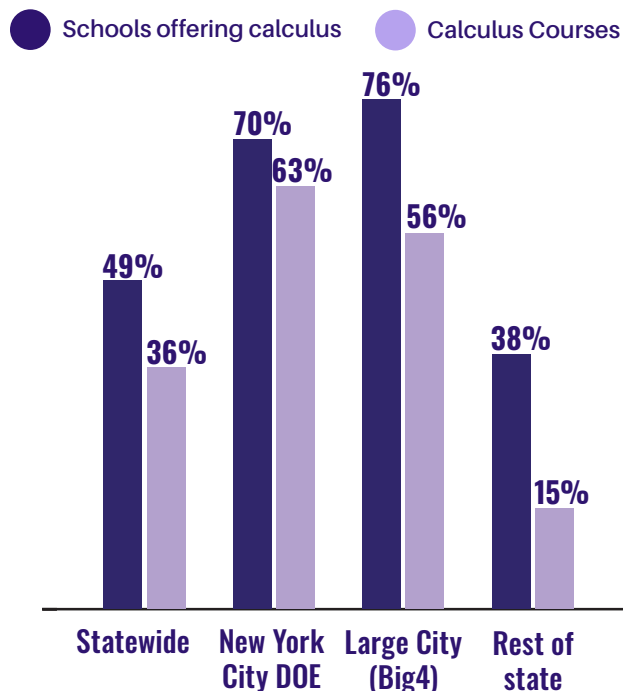
	Low-income	Not low-income
Algebra 1		
Share of students in schools without course	22%	11%
Number of students in schools without course	43,001	16,712
Earth Science		
Share of students in schools without course	73%	56%
Number of students in schools without course	145,316	88,784
Calculus		
Share of students in schools without course	22%	11%
Number of students in schools without course	43,001	16,712
Physics		
Share of students in schools without course	20%	7%
Number of students in schools without course	78,535	23,957
Computer Science		
Share of students in schools without course	41%	29%
Number of students in schools without course	157,787	97,485

	Low-income	Not low-income
AP/IB		
Share of students in schools without course	7%	6%
Number of students in schools without course	25,200	18,958
AP/IB Math or Science		
Share of students in schools without course	14%	10%
Number of students in schools without course	55,304	32,846
Any other AP/IB		
Share of students in schools without course	8%	6%
Number of students in schools without course	29,536	22,003
Advanced foreign language		
Share of students in schools without course	14%	5%
Number of students in schools without course	53,605	18,530
Music		
Share of students in schools without course	19%	6%
Number of students in schools without course	71,815	20,472

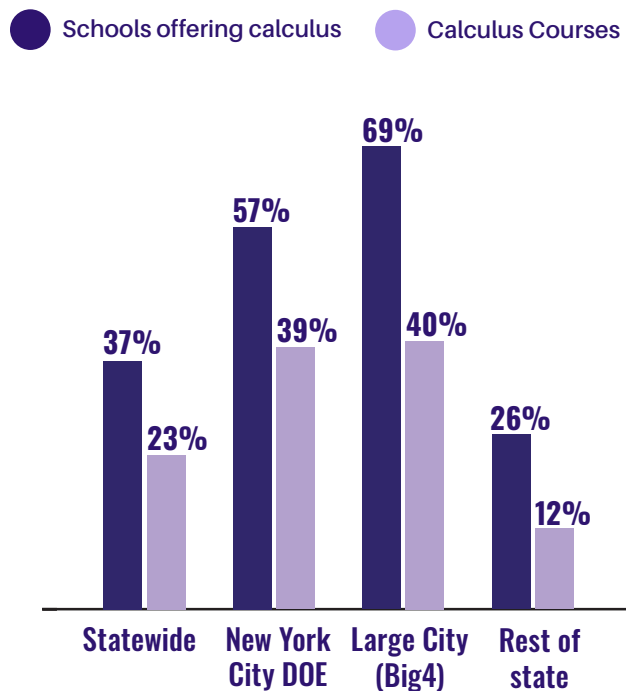
Source: New York State Education Department. Unpublished 2019-20 data.

FINDING 3: Even in schools that offer gatekeeper college- and career-prep courses, students who are from low-income backgrounds and Black and Latinx students are under-enrolled in these courses.

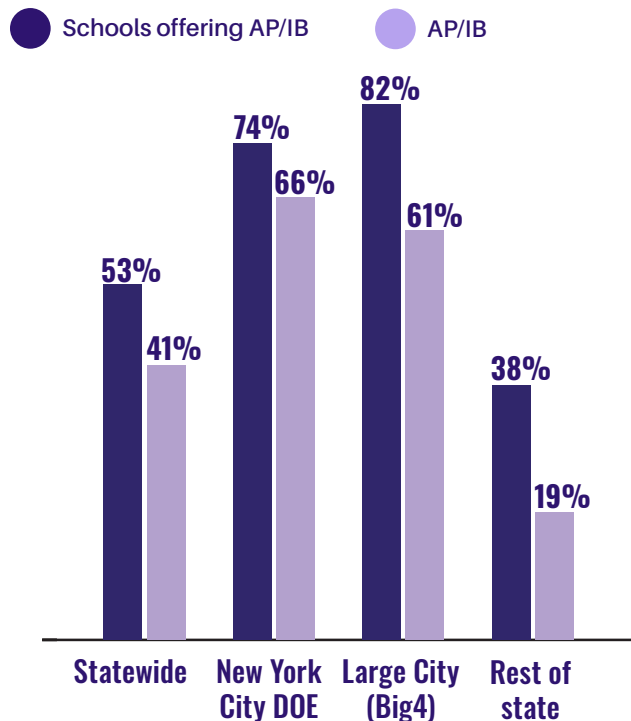
Shares of students who are low-income and enrolled in...



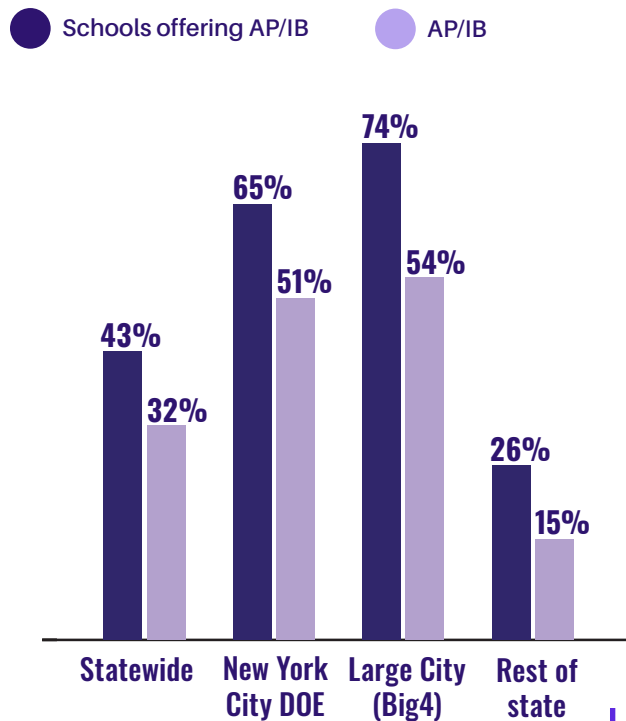
Shares of American Indian, Black, and Latinx students who are enrolled in...



Shares of students who are low-income and enrolled in...

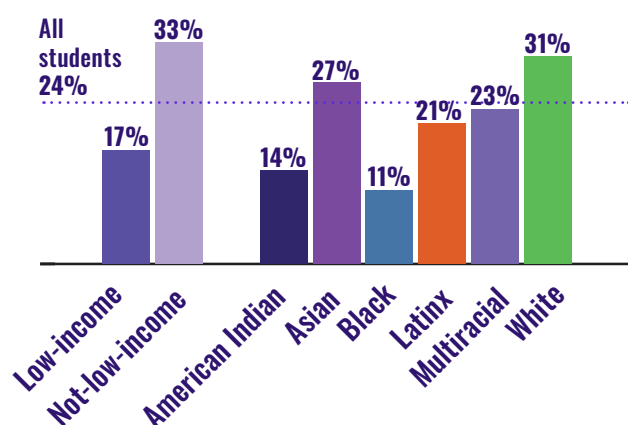


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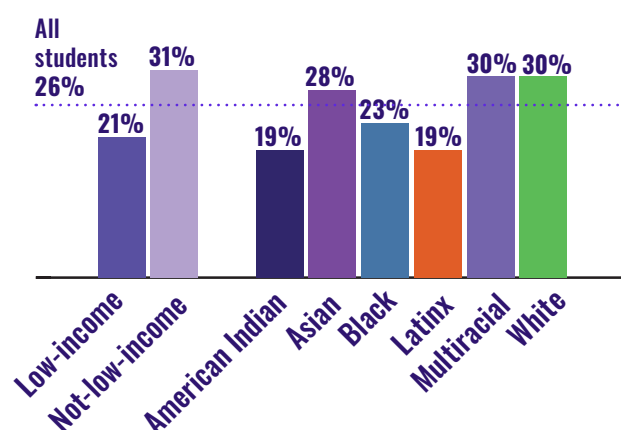


FINDING 4: Many students across the state do not have access to music or foreign language courses.

Grades 9-12 **advanced foreign language** enrollment rate by student demographics



Grades 9-12 **music** enrollment rate by student demographics



In order to achieve equitable outcomes—better graduation rates, college matriculation and completion rates, career placement, family-sustaining wages, and greater civic engagement—New Yorkers must insist on equitable access to rigorous instruction, support from strong educators, and enrollment in the full range of courses that lead to college and career preparedness for all students.

As school districts across New York receive an unprecedented influx of new funding from the state and federal government, it is crucial that school districts direct these resources to ensuring more students have opportunities for academic acceleration including access to courses that will prepare them for postsecondary success.

We call on state leaders to:

- 1 Invest in infrastructure that supports more access to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Dual Enrollment courses in high-need school districts—including high-quality professional learning opportunities for teachers, equity-driven course enrollment policies, and expanding access to school counselors who are culturally responsive and can help students navigate the course selection process.
- 2 Require school districts to provide every family with clear and concise information, in multiple languages, beginning in the late elementary grades about the courses their child can take in middle and high school to prepare for college, careers, and active citizenship—including the benefits of enrolling in advanced courses and the support available.

3

Enable automatic enrollment in the next available advanced course for students who demonstrate readiness using one of multiple measures. Families would always have the right to decline this automatic enrollment if they do not want their child to participate in the course.

4

Ensure that any school or school district that has disparities in advanced course enrollment is implementing an action plan to decrease disproportionality with parent, educator, and student input.

Addressing these challenges is integral to achieving equity in New York’s education system, particularly as schools continue to adapt to the ongoing challenges of the pandemic that have exacerbated inequities that have persisted in our education system. From an economic perspective, as New York seeks to recover from the economic toll of the pandemic, it is critical that all groups of students are prepared for emerging and high-demand industry clusters.

Better, more equitable outcomes—for our society and our economy—are within our reach.



Visit EquityinEdNY.org to Learn More