

A 'HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS INDEX' FOR NEW YORK

The Opportunities and Risks for Educational Equity in New York State Under ESSA

The new federal education law known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an opportunity for states to focus attention, urgency, and resources on preparing all students for success after graduation.

If New York takes advantage of the levers in ESSA, the law can help demonstrate whether schools are adequately preparing students for college and the workforce. If students do not have access to strong teachers and rigorous coursework, they will not be able to succeed after they complete high school.

Our coalition of civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations recently conducted a scientific survey of New York public school parents. When asked about strategies to measure and improve school performance, 61 percent of parents assigned the highest levels of importance to expanding access to courses that prepare students for college, such as Advanced Placement courses and advanced math and science. Even more notably, 78 percent of African American parents, 74 percent of Latino parents and 64 percent of parents with incomes under \$50,000 rated expanding college-prep course access as highly important.

To advance this goal, **the coalition recommended** that the state include college and career readiness as an indicator of “school quality or student success” in New York’s new accountability system, and the State Education Department has expressed interest in this proposal through the “High Concept Ideas” that it released for public discussion.

We encourage the state to develop this accountability indicator in the following manner:

- **Enable students to demonstrate college and career readiness in multiple ways.** Everything included in this accountability measure should have a clear, research-based relationship to student success after high school. Schools would receive credit for demonstrating that students are college- and career-ready through one or more of these pathways:
 - o Both participation and performance in college-prep and advanced coursework/assessments, including Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment courses that lead to

The bottom line: ESSA can help demonstrate whether schools are preparing students for college and the workforce and encourage them to implement pathways with a clear relationship to student success after high school.



college credit, and completion of a college-prep course sequence;

- o Attainment of industry-recognized certifications that have value in the workforce as recognized by statewide or regional employers and that pay a family-sustaining wage;
- o Attainment of an advanced diploma, including a Regents Diploma with Honors, a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation or a Seal of Biliteracy;
- o Attainment of college-ready scores on a postsecondary readiness assessment, such as the SAT or ACT, or career-ready scores on the WorkKeys assessment; and
- o Partial credit for successful completion of the TASC high school equivalency exam, reflecting the importance of helping all students and providing an incentive for schools to support those who are unlikely to earn a traditional diploma. Continued inclusion of this measure should be based on whether ongoing research demonstrates that TASC attainment has a positive relationship to postsecondary success.

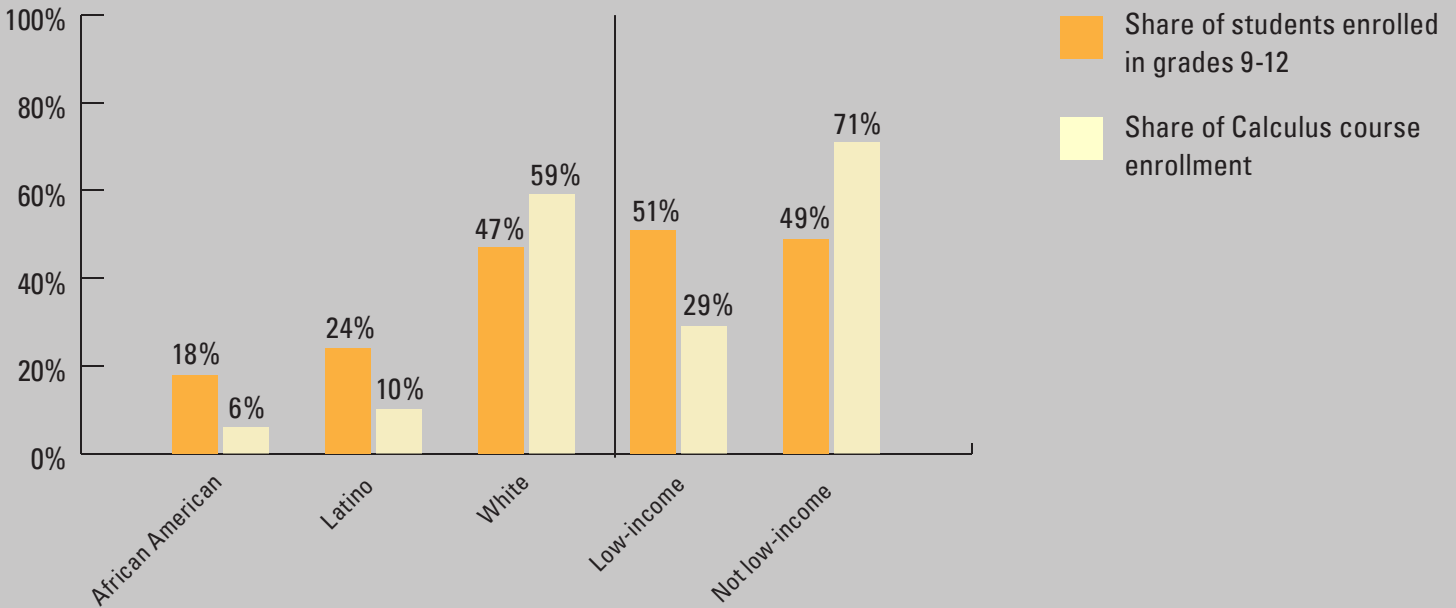
To ensure equity, the coalition has recommended that New York State provide fee waivers so financial circumstances never stand in the way of a student pursuing these pathways to college and career readiness. The state can begin this year, as described in our

fact sheet on “Four Ways to Advance Equity in This Year’s State Budget.”

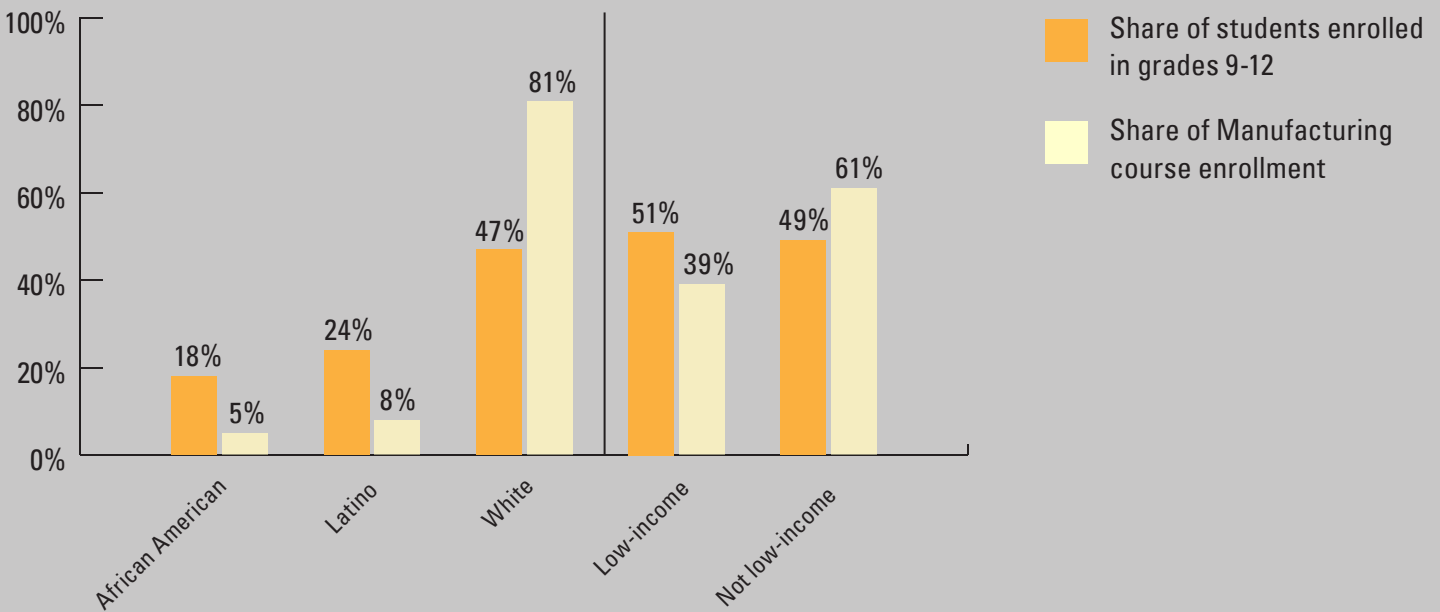
- **Count all students.** The best way to determine whether all students have access to college- and career-prep opportunities is by comparing the above measures to the total number of students in the adjusted grade 9 cohort — i.e., the number of students who enrolled in grade 9, minus the students who *transferred out* to other schools by grade 12, plus the students who *transferred in* from other schools by grade 12. This is consistent with how each school’s graduation rate is calculated. This methodology provides a disincentive for schools to “force students out” and accurately reflects access to postsecondary preparation.
- **Create an index for accountability and transparency.** For the college- and career-ready accountability indicator, the state should create a single index by dividing the number of students who demonstrate college and career readiness by the adjusted grade 9 cohort — and the data must be disaggregated to spotlight how schools are performing for low-income students, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities. For school report cards and to support struggling schools, this data should be further broken out by each type of college- and career-readiness pathway listed earlier. That will promote transparency and ensure that certain groups of students are not being systematically tracked into certain pathways.

What groups of students have access to courses that prepare them for college and careers?

African American, Latino, and Low-Income Students are Underrepresented in High School **Calculus** Courses



African American, Latino, and Low-Income Students are Underrepresented in High School **Manufacturing** Courses



Source: Calculus enrollment is defined as total enrollment in these courses: AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, Calculus, Differential Calculus, Multivariate Calculus, and Particular Topics in Calculus. Data source for analysis: unpublished (2015-16) course enrollment data provided by the New York State Education Department.

Manufacturing enrollment defined as total enrollment in courses coded "Manufacturing" as subject area and "Secondary" as course level, as defined by the New York State Comprehensive Course Catalog Workbook, retrieved from: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/courseCatalog/>. Data source for analysis: unpublished (2015-16) course enrollment data provided by the New York State Education Department.

Grade 9-12 enrollment data (2015-16) retrieved from: <http://data.nysed.gov>.