Inequities in Advanced Coursework

What can be done to change systemic inequities?
Increasing Access to Advanced Coursework

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What is The Education Trust?

- A national nonprofit that works to close opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

- Through our research and advocacy, Ed Trust supports efforts that expand excellence and equity in education from preschool through college and increase political and public will to act on equity issues.
Session Objectives

1. Why advanced coursework? Why now?

2. National findings
   - Diagnose the problem: Why aren’t Black and Latino students fairly enrolled in advanced coursework?
   - What about the district level?

3. Preview state data tool

4. What can states do to address the problem?
What do we mean by advanced coursework?

Gifted & talented

8th Grade Algebra I

Advanced Placement
Advanced coursework opens doors

Students in advanced courses ...

- Work harder
- Engage more in school
- Are less likely to be absent
- Are less likely to be suspended
- Are more likely to graduate
Why now?

The findings that we will share shine a light on many of the systemic barriers that lock Black and Latino students out of critical opportunities.

BUT this is an opportunity. There are policies and practices that we can pursue now to create real change.
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Ask your neighbor:

• If they were enrolled or knew students who were enrolled in AP, IB, GT, or 8th grade algebra?

• Why did you/they take those courses?

• What did you notice about people in those courses?
What we learned from national data:
No surprise that Black & Latino students are successful in advanced courses when given the opportunity.
Black and Latino students pass eighth grade algebra at a rate proportional to their overall enrollment

- Black students represent 21% of the students enrolled in eighth grade algebra and 20% of the students who pass eighth grade algebra

- Latino students represent 27% of the students enrolled in eighth grade algebra and 26% of students passing
The 8th grade algebra I passing data is a helpful reminder that this is a system problem, not a student problem.
Black and Latino students have shown that they can be successful, so where is the system failing?
Black and Latino students are underrepresented in advanced courses at every critical stage of their education.
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Fair representation in advanced courses

Example:

If 20% of students in a given state are Black, fair representation means that 20% of students enrolled in advanced courses in that state are Black.
Gifted and Talented Courses

If Black and Latino students were actually given a fair chance to participate, we would see an additional:

• **178,919 Black and Latino students** enrolled in gifted and talented courses around the country.

*We would need 2.5 Mercedes-Benz Stadiums to hold the number of students who would need to be enrolled.*
8th Grade Algebra I Courses

• Black students make up 15% of the eighth grade student body in the United States, but only 10% of students enrolled in eighth grade Algebra I.

• 25% of eighth graders are Latino, but only 18% of the students enrolled in eighth grade Algebra I are Latino.
If Black and Latino students had a fair chance to enroll, we would see nearly a quarter million more Black and Latino students enrolled in AP courses.
“The truth is Black and Latino students are not receiving these opportunities for reasons that have everything to do with policies, adult decisions, and practices and little to do with students’ academic abilities”
So where in the system do the problems exist?

1. Is the system failing to offer advanced courses at all?

2. Is the system offering too few courses/seats in certain schools?

3. Is the system problem a within school tracking problem?
Question: Is the system failing to offer advanced courses at all?

#1: No. Nationally, Black and Latino students are fairly represented among schools that offer advanced courses.

But there are still too many schools that don’t offer the courses at all.
8th grade Algebra:

Black students make up 15% of students enrolled in 8th grade, and 14% of the students attending schools that offer 8th grade algebra.

Latino students make up 25% of 8th graders, and 24% of students enrolled in schools that offer 8th grade algebra.
Fair Access isn’t Sufficient Access

Nearly 1 in 10 high school students attend schools that do not offer a single AP course.

1 in 4 high school students attend schools that do not offer a diverse range of AP courses.
Two systemic reasons for these inequities are:
Question: Is the system offering too few courses/ seats in certain schools?

#1: Yes. Schools that serve mostly Black and Latino students are not enrolling as many students in advanced classes as schools that serve fewer of these students.
Imagine two middle schools ...

**School A**
- 100 8th graders
- 75% of students are Black or Latino
- 25 students in 8th grade Algebra

**School B**
- 100 8th graders
- 10% of students are Black or Latino
- 30 students in 8th grade Algebra

Across the country, schools like School A that are majority Black or Latino enroll fewer students in advanced courses.
#2: Yes. Schools that do offer the courses – especially racially diverse schools – are *denying Black and Latino students access.*
OPRF offers 21 different AP courses. Black students are 20% of the student body but only 9% of students enrolled in AP. This could be a result of gaps in prior preparation and/or racialized tracking.
1. Nationally, Black & Latino students are fairly represented among schools that offer advanced courses. But there are still too many schools that don’t offer the courses at all.

2. Schools that serve mostly Black and Latino students are not enrolling as many students in advanced classes as schools that serve fewer of these students.

3. Schools that do offer the courses – especially racially diverse schools – are denying Black and Latino students access.

So why are Black and Latino students underrepresented in advanced courses?
How do systemic problems play out in districts?
District X:

- 100,000 students, about 40% of the students are Black, 20% are Latino, and 30% are White
- More than 1/4 of all 8th grade students are enrolled in Algebra I.
  - White and Asian students are 3X more likely to be enrolled in the course than Black, Latino and Native students
In district X, even if they closed the achievement gap between students of color and peers, the district would still have work to do.

**FIGURE 6:** Drivers of Gap in Enrollment in Eighth Grade Algebra Between Students of Color and Peers

- **32%** Students of color currently enrolled in Algebra I
- **17%** Gap driven by inequities in prior achievement
- **8%** Gap driven by additional within-school assignment differences
- **8%** Gap driven by differences in access across schools
- **48%** Peer students enrolled in Algebra I

**Reading Figure:** Sixteen percent of students of color are enrolled in eighth grade Algebra I, while 48% of peers are enrolled in the course, which represents a gap of 32 percentage points; more than half of that gap — 17 points — is explained by differences in prior achievement (driven by prior opportunities) for students of color; 8 points of the gap is due to differences in within-school assignment, and 8 points is due to differences in availability of the course across schools. Note: Detail may not sum to total due to rounding.
There are underlying differences in prior student performance, which are caused by inequities in prior opportunities and preparation. But those differences in prior achievement only explain about half of the gap between students of color and their peers.
Representation in Advanced Coursework:
Are Black students fairly represented in gifted and talented programs?

In 36 of 37 states, Black students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs.

- Eleven states would need to at least double the enrollment of Black students in gifted and talented programs in order for Black students to be fairly represented.
- The only state that comes close to fair representation is Alaska.

Reading this figure, in Pennsylvania, there are 25 Black students enrolled in gifted and talented programs for every 100 Black students who would need to be enrolled for the state to achieve fair representation.
The state data tool will allow you all to:

• Answer these questions for your state.
• See how your state measures up against other states.
• Give you an idea of which recommendations will solve the identified problem(s) in your state.
Let’s use the data tool to find out more about access to gifted and talented programs in Georgia:
Are Black elementary schoolers fairly represented in gifted and talented programs? Why not?

1. Black students are **not** fairly represented.

2. Black elementary schoolers have access to gifted and talented programs at a similar rate as their peers.
   - 96% of Georgia elementary schoolers attend a school with a gifted program

3. Schools that are majority Black in Georgia do not have enough seats (Georgia is 4th from the bottom).

4. Georgia schools either have gaps in prior preparation, identification, OR are practicing racialized tracking or some combination of all 3.
In Georgia, Black students are NOT fairly represented in gifted and talented programs. There are slightly more than 50 students enrolled in gifted programs for every 100 Black students who should be enrolled.
Courses: Do students overall attend schools that offer the course?

Too many students in too many states attend schools that do not offer gifted and talented programs.

- In four of 37 states included in this analysis, less than half of elementary school students have gifted and talented programs in their schools.

In other states — like Texas, Georgia, and Virginia — the vast majority (95% or more) of elementary school students attend schools that offer the program.

In Georgia, about 96% of students are enrolled in schools that offer gifted and talented courses. That means only 4% of students in Georgia attend a school where the program isn’t offered at all.

Reading this figure: In New York, 16% of students attend elementary schools that offer gifted and talented programs.
Enrollment: Are Black students enrolled in schools that have a fair number of students enrolled in gifted and talented programs?

In Georgia, the schools that enroll the most Black students do not have their fair share of total seats in gifted and talented.

Reading this figure: In Kentucky, schools serving the most Black students have only 53 students enrolled in gifted and talented programs for every 100 students who would need to be enrolled for the state to achieve fair representation.
In Georgia, there are slightly more than 50 Black students enrolled in G&T for every 100 Black students who attend schools that offer the course.

Reading this figure: Across Kentucky schools that have a gifted and talented program, there are only 35 Black students enrolled in it for every 100 Black students who would need to be enrolled for the state to achieve fair representation.
So what is driving the inequities in Georgia’s gifted programs?

Underrepresentation in advanced coursework in Georgia begins early and is especially stark for Black students.

Georgia is among the worst of all states in terms of offering enough seats for Black students in gifted and talented programs (4th worst).

The problem in Georgia is twofold: disparities are driven by less seats in the schools Black students attend and by tracking within schools, where Black students are denied access to advanced courses that exist within their school buildings.
How do we change the system so that Black and Latino students have a fair opportunity?
Systemic Barriers = Opportunity Gaps

- Resource Inequities
- Educator Bias
- Easement & Grading Bias
- Lack of Access to Diverse Educators
- Inequitable Access to Quality Early Childhood Programs
- Lack of Communication with families and students about advanced opportunities
- Financial Barriers
What can states do to solve systemic inequities?

1. Use data to identify the barriers that prevent students of color and students from low-income families from enrolling in advanced courses and take action.

2. Set clear and measurable goals for advancing access to and success in advanced coursework.

3. Invest to expand advanced coursework opportunities – both courses and seats.

4. Require and support districts to expand eligibility for advanced courses.

5. Support Black, Latino, and low-income students' success in advanced courses.
What to do when the schools serving the most Black and Latino students do not offer enough courses, seats, or both:

**STATE SOLUTIONS AT WORK**

**Illinois Provides Competitive Grants to Low-Income Districts to Increase AP Capacity**

The Illinois State Board of Education offers competitive grants to districts with at least one low-income secondary school to build capacity to offer Advanced Placement courses. Schools that receive the grants may use the funds for the development and purchase of necessary course materials and books, tutoring to prepare students for AP courses, and recruitment targeting historically underrepresented students and their families — and they must use at least at least 20% of the funds to provide professional development to educators and administrators.
What to do when Black and Latino students do not have a fair chance to enroll in the courses offered in their schools?

**STATE SOLUTIONS AT WORK**

**Colorado Offsets Costs for Universal Screening for Gifted and Talented**

In 2014, the Colorado legislature passed a bill that allows districts to apply for funds to offset costs of universal screening for gifted and talented programs. When Denver Public Schools then switched from a method that required parents to submit an application to have their children tested for gifted and talented eligibility to a universal screening approach, nearly 1 in 4 students identified as gifted and talented were Latino — twice the proportion as the year before.

**STATE SOLUTIONS AT WORK**

**A Wave of Automatic Enrollment Policies**

To address the underrepresentation of Black and Latino students in advanced courses, advocates in Washington State fought for years to pass HB 1599, which requires that students who meet or exceed grade-level standards on state exams be placed into the next most rigorous level of advanced courses offered in their high school. This state policy was inspired by the success of districts like Federal Way and Tacoma Public Schools, which implemented similar policies and saw a dramatic increase in the percentage of historically underrepresented groups taking advanced courses. For example, since implementing an automatic enrollment policy, Tacoma Public Schools has tripled the percentage of historically underserved students in advanced classes from 19.5% to 60%.

North Carolina and Colorado have passed similar policies in recent years.
Remove the barriers to enroll in all advanced courses and provide underserved students with the same supports that their higher income peers receive.
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Working together for change!
Thank you! Questions?

https://edtrust.org/resource/inequities-in-advanced-coursework/

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