



## SF 2618: Increasing Access to Rigorous Coursework

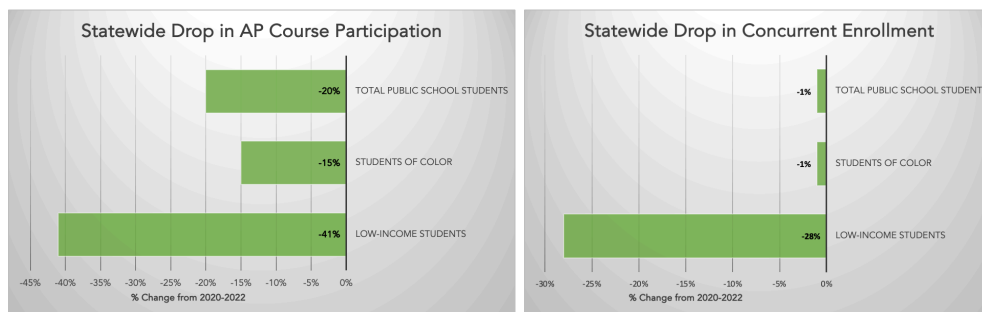
In the wake of COVID-19, fewer students are taking rigorous classes in Minnesota.

### WHAT IS RIGOROUS COURSEWORK?

Rigorous coursework offers students in high school a chance to prepare for post-secondary pathways and, in many cases, earn college credit for free. Programs like Advanced Placement (AP), honors, and concurrent enrollment (PSEO or College in the Schools) are rigorous coursework options offered in Minnesota high schools. Research shows participation in these programs improves academic outcomes in high school and increases college attendance rates.<sup>1</sup>

### WHY DOES MINNESOTA NEED AN AUTOMATIC ENROLLMENT POLICY?

Access to rigorous coursework is not equal. Students of color and low-income students are placed in advanced coursework at rates far lower than their peers.<sup>2</sup> Research has found that teachers often have implicit biases that can contribute to opportunity gaps, including lower rates of referral for rigorous courses.<sup>3</sup> The most recent statewide data show a significant drop in rigorous course taking among Minnesota students:<sup>4</sup>



### HOW WOULD THIS PILOT PROGRAM WORK IN SCHOOLS?

SF 2618 is a voluntary pilot program. Districts or charter schools will apply to participate and up to six will be chosen. Participating schools will develop a policy to automatically enroll qualified students in applicable advanced coursework. Students qualify by meeting or exceeding standards on the applicable statewide assessment, or by earning the highest possible grade in an applicable class in the preceding year.

<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Department of Education, *Rigorous Course Taking Report to the Legislature*, February 2024.

<sup>2</sup> The Education Trust, *Inequities in Advanced Coursework: What's Driving Them and What Leaders Can Do*. January 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Gershenson, S., Holt, S., Papageorge, N., *Who Believes in Me? The Effect of Student-Teacher Demographic Match on Expectations*. July 2015; Upjohn Institute for Employment Research; Center for Great Public Schools, *Confronting Implicit Biases Through Exemplary Educator Preparation*. 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Minnesota Department of Education, *Rigorous Course Taking Report to the Legislature*, February 2024.



#### ARE QUALIFIED STUDENTS REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE?

No. SF 2618 requires parent notification of auto-enrollment, and families can opt out of any advanced class their student is placed into.

#### WOULD THIS REPLACE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF ENROLLING IN RIGOROUS CLASSES?

No. This policy is designed to supplement, not replace, practices like teacher recommendation. Participating schools can retain other methods of enrollment in advanced coursework in addition to creating the new automatic enrollment policy.

#### IS PARTICIPATION LIMITED TO JUST SOME STUDENT GROUPS?

No. The goal of the pilot program is to increase access to rigorous coursework for traditionally underrepresented students, however, at pilot sites, all students who demonstrate subject matter proficiency can be auto-enrolled into the next most rigorous course.

#### HOW WILL STUDENTS BE SUPPORTED TO SUCCEED IN RIGOROUS CLASSES?

SF 2618 requires that participating schools identify tutoring and academic support resources for students struggling in advanced classes. Furthermore, research shows that when qualified students are given access to rigorous coursework, they do well. In Federal Way Public Schools in Washington, one of the earliest adopters of an automatic enrollment policy, 92% of students pass their rigorous classes, and every racial cohort has a pass rate of at least 87%.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stand for Children Illinois, *Advance Equity with Academic Acceleration*. July 2022.