

SF 510: Increasing Access to Rigorous Coursework

"If a student earns the spot, they get the spot"

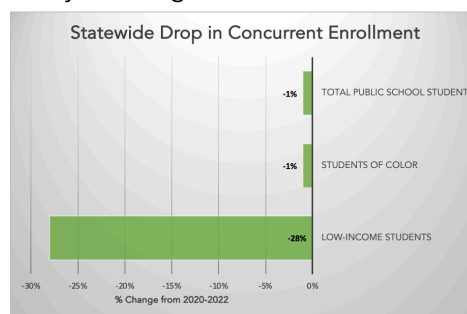
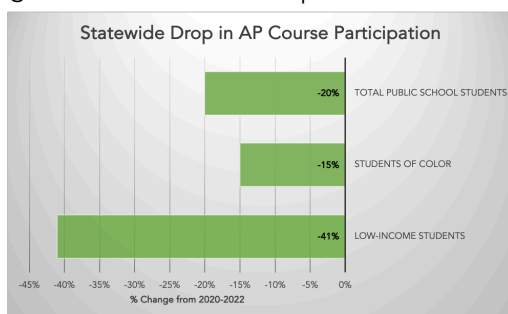
WHAT IS RIGOROUS COURSEWORK?

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.¹

WHY DOES MINNESOTA NEED AN AUTOMATIC ENROLLMENT POLICY?

Students from a variety of backgrounds are often overlooked when it comes to access to advanced coursework—for example, a student with dyslexia being tracked into remedial math instead of an advanced path coursework like College in the Schools. These decisions, often based entirely on subjective recommendations, do not necessarily reflect students' academic potential. To combat this, states are taking bipartisan action to pass "automatic enrollment" legislation to ensure that students who show they are ready for more, have the opportunity for more.

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.² Research has found that educator bias can contribute to opportunity gaps, including lower rates of referral for rigorous courses.³ This "chronic underchallenging"⁴ has long-term implications for students' preparedness for college and career. Students who take rigorous courses outperform their peers across a variety of academic measures, including academic achievement, college entrance exams, high school graduation, college completion,⁵ and advanced degree attainment.⁶ Rigorous coursework also gives students the opportunity to earn college credit while they are still in high school, which can help them save time and money in college.



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

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

³ 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.

⁴ Plucker, J., Berg, B., Kuwayama, H. (2024). "Automatic Enrollment in Advanced Courses: A Bipartisan Approach to Excellence and Equity in K-12 Schools." Johns Hopkins School of Education. Institute for Education Policy.

⁵ Ackerman, P., Kanfer, R., and Calderwood, C. (2013). "High School Advanced Placement and Student Performance in College: STEM Majors, Non-STEM Majors, and Gender Differences." Teachers College Record; Hughes, K., Rodriguez, O., Edwards, L. & Belfield, C. (2012). "Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment. Community College Research Center"; International Baccalaureate. (2011). "Key findings from research on the impact of IB programmes."

International Baccalaureate

⁶ Bleske-Rechek, A., Lubinski, D., & Benbow, C.P. (2004). "Meeting the educational needs of special populations: Advanced placement's role in developing exceptional human capital." Psychological Sciences.



HOW WOULD THIS PILOT PROGRAM WORK IN SCHOOLS?

SF 510 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.

ARE QUALIFIED STUDENTS REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE?

No. SF 510 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 510 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%.⁷

EARLY ADOPTERS SEEING SUCCESS

Seven states—Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, North Carolina, Texas, Washington, and just last week Virginia—have passed bipartisan automatic enrollment policies. The change is helping reduce disparities in access to advanced coursework:

- Building off a 2013 pilot program, Washington state requires districts to adopt an automatic enrollment policy for any student who meets the state standard for language arts, science, or mathematics after 8th grade. Since signing on as a pilot site, Tacoma Public Schools advanced course enrollment more than doubled from 28% to 71% of students—with enrollment tripling for students of color, from 20% to 60%.
- In 2018, North Carolina passed legislation requiring all students who score the highest level on their end-of-grade tests be automatically placed in an advanced math class the following year. In just one year, the Department of Public Instruction estimates that as many as 10,000 students were given access to advanced math courses they would otherwise not have had.

⁷ Stand for Children Illinois, *Advance Equity with Academic Acceleration*. July 2022.