



EXPANDING COURSE ACCESS AND OPTIONS

A Guide for Policy and Advocacy Leaders



**EQUITY IN EDUCATION
PLAYBOOK 4 OF 5**

INTRODUCTION

In every industry and business sector, securing a skilled, diverse, ready-to-work-and-lead talent pipeline is vital for short-term success and long-term sustainability. That challenge cannot be solved without transforming our education system to truly prepare all students to succeed. America Succeeds' Equity in Education platform pursues five systemic changes to ensure every student has equitable access to quality education and businesses have diverse talent and leadership pipelines for generations to come. Our work is focused on five pillars:

- Advancing equity in STEM
- Strengthening equity through social-emotional learning
- Recruiting and retaining educators of color
- Expanding equity in course access and options
- Achieving funding equity

We gathered BIPOC leaders, advocacy partners, policy experts, and businesses to develop a set of promising policies and practices emerging from across the country to improve equitable outcomes for students. Tapping into our partnership ecosystem's wide breadth of expertise allowed us to amplify leading voices in the conversation, build consensus, and identify impactful solutions to accelerate change and address these challenges.

At America Succeeds, we believe business is a powerful voice in crafting solutions that will dramatically improve the future talent pipeline. Our goal is to ensure business leaders have a seat at the table and can thoughtfully contribute to systemic change alongside other key stakeholders. There are multiple levers businesses can engage in to improve equity and this guide will focus specifically on expanding course access and options.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



The Problem

The lack of choice – being stuck with the limited opportunities available – is often at the root of educational inequity. It makes sense then that providing more options, like access to rigorous courses and additional schools that may better fit a child’s needs, can be an incredible lever for change.

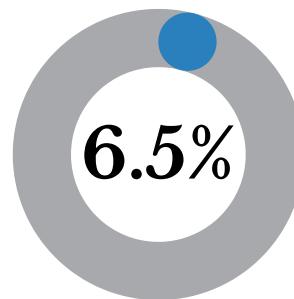
Too many students, particularly students of color, are tracked away from challenging coursework that will prepare them for postsecondary education. Likewise, most families are constrained to their neighborhood school, even if that school is underperforming or a poor fit for the child, and lack additional public options from which to choose.

Having well-prepared students ready to succeed in college is vital for the success of our economy. For this to occur, however, students need to be academically challenged in their courses in a high-quality learning environment that is supportive of their growth. Students who enter college ready to excel, without remediation, are more likely to persist and complete a degree. On the flipside, without access to rigorous courses and a quality school, many low-income students of color face difficulties entering and staying in college to completion. States need to do more to ensure that all students have access to challenging coursework in a school setting that suits their needs.

FACTS & FIGURES



Did you know that, among high school students, only 9 percent of Black students and 21 percent of Latino students are enrolled in an AP course?



Charter schools make up only 6.5 percent of all public schools.



Research suggests that students who take advanced and college-level courses are more likely to graduate high school, attend college, and graduate with a degree.

SPOTLIGHTS

North Carolina: National Leader in Advanced Math Course Access

North Carolina is a national leader in ensuring all students have access to academically rigorous math coursework regardless of background. Since 2018, the state requires all students who score high on end-of-year testing to be automatically enrolled in an advanced math class the following year. In 2019, the state expanded the policy to apply to coursework in more grade levels. These policies have placed over 10,000 students who were previously systematically denied access in advanced classes.

Colorado: The Charter-Friendly State

Colorado's charter-friendly laws support a wealth of additional public school options for families. The state does not cap public charter school growth, provides multiple authorizers for performance and monitoring, and provides autonomy and accountability to charter schools. The state also requires districts to share local levy dollars with charter schools, making Colorado one of the few states to attempt to fund charter school students fairly. As a result, the state has a robust charter ecosystem with more than 132,000 students enrolled across more than 250 schools.

WHAT YOU CAN DO



Use data to identify and address barriers that have historically kept students of color from enrolling in advanced courses.



Implement student-centered funding that follows the student, regardless of where they choose to attend school.

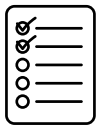


Support underrepresented students in preparing for and achieving success in advanced courses by:

- Investing in early childhood learning opportunities
- Recruiting and developing qualified subject-matter teachers
- Providing ongoing tutoring supports



Incentivize districts to offer more advanced courses so that every eligible student has the opportunity to enroll in rigorous classes



Require districts to adopt open enrollment policies that ensure families are able to access the best schools for their children's needs, and include provisions for enrollment priorities, transportation, and allowing for full district funding to follow the student.



Expand access for all students to existing high-quality, in-demand schools through enrollment preferences and lottery systems.



LEARN MORE

The following organizations are leading the charge on advancing course access and options:



BEST NC: BEST NC works to improve North Carolina's education system through policy and advocacy efforts while recognizing access and equity as the key components to ensuring every student reaches their full potential.



The Education Trust: The Education Trust works to close opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students of color and students from low-income families through research and advocacy efforts.



The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (National Alliance): National Alliance is the leading national nonprofit organization committed to advancing the public charter school movement.

Leading research and resources on course access and options:

- National knowledge database of charter school facts and figures, "[The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Knowledge Base](#)"
- Brookings research paper on untapped talent, "[The Missing 'One-Offs': The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low-Income Students](#)"
- Fordham Institute's report, "[Still Rising: Charter School Enrollment and Student Achievement at the Metropolitan Level](#)"
- The Education Trust's state advanced coursework data tool, "[Advanced Coursework in Your State](#)"

ABOUT US

America Succeeds is a 501(c)(3) non-profit education advocacy organization committed to improving educational opportunities, outcomes, and equity by harnessing the influence and acumen of the business community in accelerating systems change.

