Road Map Project

pscccn

INEQUITY BY DESIGN

How College Placement Policies Perpetuate Institutional Racism

JUNE 2021

Courtesy of Highline College

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is the result of the expertise and labor of many individuals and organizations working together with and for students in South King County and South Seattle. The report explores how community and technical college enrollment and placement policies are working for high school graduates. Research findings and recommendations are products of a three-study series led in partnership among the Puget Sound College & Career Network (PSCCN), Highline College, and the Community Center for Education Results (CCER). Funding for this project was provided by College Spark Washington. This partnership formed an advisory group of staff from community and technical colleges, one high school district, and an education access organization in South King County, as well as three representatives from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). The role of this advisory group was to inform and contextualize the findings of the research team. The perspectives and positions stated in this report do not necessarily reflect those of each advisory board member.

Advisory Group

Janet Blanford, Highline Public Schools
Vanessa Calonzo, Seattle Colleges
Anthony Covington, Renton Technical College
Darby Kaikkonen, SBCTC
Victor Kuo*, Seattle Colleges
David Larsen, Green River College
Danika Martinez, Northwest Education Access
Bill Moore, SBCTC
Laura Schueller, SBCTC

* Victor Kuo passed away on June 18, 2020. He was a valuable member of our advisory committee and the local education community, and his presence is dearly missed. Victor is survived by his wife Annie and his daughter Vivian. More on Victor's life and legacy available *here*.

Project Team

Brian Chu, CCER
Emily Coates, Highline College
Shelby Cooley, CCER
Mercy Daramola, PSCCN
Christian Granlund, PSCCN
Brock Grubb, Brock Grubb Consulting, LLC
Kanza Hamidani, Northwest Education Access
Jose Hernandez, UW eScience Institute
Kyla Lackie, PSCCN
Monali Patel, CCER
Natasha Rosenblatt, CCER
Shannon Waits, Highline College
Annia Yoshizumi, CCER

Puget Sound College & Career Network (PSCCN) is Puget Sound Educational Service District's postsecondary team, driving equitable access to and success in postsecondary education for students across the King and Pierce Counties by leading with racial equity. PSCCN builds regional capacity, engages leaders at all levels, and facilitates continuous improvement within and across educational systems to implement policies and programming to close opportunity gaps so that first generation, low-income, and students of color have the opportunity to obtain postsecondary credentials. Learn more at *www.psccn.org*. PSCCN contributed to this project by providing overall project and grant management, presenting to and engaging with the Advisory Group, and participating in the collaborative writing process.

Highline College is a nationally and internationally recognized community college based in Des Moines, WA. The college has earned its reputation through the development of an institutional culture that values innovation, globalization of curriculum and community participation. As a public institution of higher education serving a diverse community in a multicultural world and global economy, Highline College promotes student engagement, learning, and achievement, integrates diversity and globalism throughout the college, sustains relationships within its communities, and practices sustainability in human resources, operations, and teaching and learning. In the 2019-20 academic year, the college served over 15,000 credit and non-credit students. Highline serves 40 percent low-income students and 77 percent of students identify as students of color (Highline College 2021; SBCTC 2021). *Learn more at www.highline.edu.* Highline College contributed to this project by leading one of the three studies, facilitating the Advisory Group, and participating in the collaborative writing process.

Community Center for Education Results (CCER) is a nonprofit created to serve as the Road Map Project's backbone organization. The CCER team provides data, research, communications, program, logistical, and other support in service to the Road Map Project, a collective impact initiative to boost success from early learning to college and career for students who attend K-12 in the seven-district area of South King County and South Seattle. *Learn more at www.roadmapproject.org/about-ccer/.* CCER contributed to this report by designing and leading two of the three studies, presenting to and engaging with the Advisory Group, and participating in the collaborative writing process.

We would like to extend a special thanks to the students who shared their K-12 and college experiences with us through surveys and interviews. Their lived experiences and feedback were pivotal to understanding the impact of current community and technical college placement.

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DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Researchers surveyed 295 students and interviewed eight students from Road Map Project region CTCs (Bellevue College, Highline College, Green River College, Renton Technical College, South Seattle College, and Seattle Central College). Student surveys and interviews supplement a quantitative analysis of CCER's longitudinal education data warehouse, which includes academic data for more than 40,000 students who graduated from Road Map Project region high schools between 2010-2017, and an analysis of Highline College administrative data into the long-term effects of recent changes to assessment and placement policies at that college.

STUDY ***01***
Highline College Data

- Highline College's administrative data
- Entering first time enrollees from 2012 to 2017
- Students age 20 and under with self-declared intent to transfer or earn a credential
- N = 5,074
- Road Map Project regional CTC: Highline

STUDY ***02***
Regional K12 and CTC Data

CCER longitudinal education data warehouse: Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data provided by the Washington Education Research and Data Center (ERDC).

Policy and placement analyses:

- N = 22,931
- High school graduates of 2014-2017
- Includes all Road Map Project school K-12 school districts*
- Includes all Road Map Project regional CTCs** except Renton Technical College

Coursetaking outcome analyses

- N = 8,634
- High school graduates of 2011-2016

* Road Map Project K-12 school districts: Auburn, Federal Way, Highline, Kent, Renton, South Seattle & Tukwila

** Road Map Project regional CTCs: Highline, Green River, Bellevue, Renton Technical, South Seattle, Seattle Central & North Seattle

STUDY ***03***
CTC Student Survey and Interviews

- Multiple Measures Regional Survey and interviews developed by CCER
- Collected May – July 2020
- N = 295; and interview N = 8
- Road Map Project regional CTCs: Highline, Green River, Bellevue, Renton Technical, South Seattle, and Seattle Central.

For more information about the data sources and individual studies summarized in this report, view the technical report *rdmap.org/inequity-by-design.*

DEFINITIONS

Antiracist policy
"Any measure that produces or sustains racial equity among racial groups" (Kendi 2019).

Award-seeking
College enrollees who have noted their intent to earn a credential and/or transfer to a four-year college (additional details in technical report (still in development). Students enrolled in professional/ technical certification programs are not included in this definition for the purpose of these studies (additional details in technical report).

Assessment and placement policies
The policies that guide the process and practices by which community and technical colleges determine student "readiness" for college-level math and English courses.

Direct enrollee
A student who enrolls at a postsecondary institution within 12 months of high school graduation.

Directed self-placement
A process for assessing student readiness for college-level math and English courses that, "provides students with agency and choice, knowing that with the right guidance and information on the program and course options, most students will make good placement choices" (UW Tacoma 2021 citing Royer & Gilles, 2003).

Disparate impact
An unnecessary discriminatory effect on a protected class caused by a practice or policy (as in employment or housing) that appears to be nondiscriminatory (Merriam-Webster).

High school transcript
The record of a student's academic experience in high school which includes (among other things) information on high school coursetaking, course grades, and a cumulative grade point average.

Placement test
A standardized test administered by colleges to determine student readiness for college-level math and English courses.

Precollege courses
A course or set of courses that students must pay to take that do not yield credits that count toward degree completion. These courses are required for students who assess as "not college ready" in math and/or English at the time of enrollment. Also called "remedial" or "developmental" education courses.

Race
"A power construct of blended human difference that lives socially" (Kendi 2019).

Racial equity gap
The percentage point distance between racial/ethnicity groups at the highest level and lowest levels on a given outcome.

Racial inequity
"When two or more racial groups are not on approximately equal footing" (Kendi 2019).

Racist policy
"Any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity among racial groups" (Kendi 2019).

Recent high school graduates
Students who graduated high school within the past five years.

Running Start
A dual credit high school program that enables students to take courses at a local community college and receive dual credit for these courses.

Transcript-based placement
The process of using information on a high school transcript to assess student readiness for college-level math and English courses.

Underplacement
The practice of assigning students who are eligible to place into college-level English or math based on (a) high school transcript information and (b) the transcript-based placement policy at their CTC, but ended up enrolling in one or more precollege course.

HONORING STUDENT RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITIES

Throughout the report, the authors use the following racial/ethnic categories: Asian, Black/African American, Latinx, Multiracial, Native American, Pacific Islander, and White. When authors use the term "students of color," they are referring to students who identify as Asian, Black/ African American, Latinx, Multiracial, Native American, and/or Pacific Islander. In consideration of current data collection standards and student privacy, this study was limited to these racial/ethnic categories. It is important to note that these categories often minimize and erase the dramatically different realities that students experience across ethnicities within these broad race groupings. For example, throughout this report, there are findings where the results for Asian students are similar to white students. These aggregated results mask disparities that exist, and hide barriers that confront different ethnicities of Asian students. We encourage districts and colleges to further disaggregate these results in order to more deeply understand the experiences of students within their specific campus communities.

CALL TO ACTION

For many young people in our region, Community and Technical Colleges (CTCs) are an essential gateway to meaningful, living-wage, career opportunities. This is especially true in the era of COVID-19 recovery, where those without postsecondary credentials have experienced the most severe economic impacts (Daly, Buckman, and Seitelman 2020). Yet, less than half of the region's direct enrollees complete a two-year degree, short-term credential, or transfer within their first four years of CTC enrollment (Road Map Project 2020).

CTC assessment and placement processes are meant to predict the appropriate levels of math and English classes for entering students. **Yet, all too often, the approach to placement can systematically and substantially underestimate student capacity, particularly among students of color.** The design of current CTC assessment and placement policies, and the inconsistent implementation of policies from college to college sort a disproportionate number of students of color into precollege courses. The impact of these courses on students is twofold: their path to credential completion is lengthened, costing more money, and the psychological toll is lasting — students who successfully complete high school only to have their college tell them that they are "not college-ready" can feel like they do not belong, doubt their capabilities, and question if they should continue their college journey.

Racial equity is a principle to which K-12 districts and CTCs in the Road Map Project region are publicly committed. A compact signed by all superintendents and CTC presidents in the region makes clear that leaders are committed to using "a racial equity lens to craft and implement policies and programs to remove barriers to student success" (Puget Sound Coalition for College and Career Readiness 2016). Despite over a decade of efforts to address these issues, assessment and placement policies continue to harm students of color in the Road Map Project region today.

When held to this standard, it becomes clear that current CTC assessment and placement policies and the implementation of those policies are racist in that they produce and sustain inequity between racial groups (Kendi 2019).

The authors call on institutional leaders at Road Map Project region CTCs and K-12 districts, along with system leaders at the SBCTC and OSPI, to make necessary and immediate changes to rectify the damaging impacts to students. Leaders must act collectively, in partnership with students, and use antiracist approaches to correct the injustices across our education system. The recommendations outlined in this report stress the urgent need for changes to CTC assessment and placement policies to center the experiences of students of color, improve student support in the transition from high school to college, and abolish the gatekeeping mindset that has for too long excluded students of color from college-level courses that they are capable of completing.

> *"A racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups. An antiracist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups. By policy, I mean written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people. There is no such thing as a nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups."*
>
> **Ibram Kendi,** *How To Be An Antiracist (2019)*

Courtesy of Highline College

ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT AT COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Equitable assessment and placement policies are crucial to student success. Such policies can help students quickly enroll in and complete college-level English and math courses to build "academic momentum" toward a postsecondary credential that can help them access living wage jobs (Goldrick-Rab 2007).

CTC assessment and placement policies were established to sort students into courses with content and instruction at differing levels of difficulty (Hughes and Scott-Clayton 2011). When students enter a CTC in the Road Map Project region, they are assessed using either a standardized placement test, their high school transcript, and/or some kind of self-assessment protocol (often called "directed self-placement"). Standardized tests are well documented to be poor predictors of college success and they have been criticized and faced legal challenges for their racial bias (Barnett and Reddy 2017). A 2012 study by the Community College Research Center found that standardized placement tests are twice as likely to severely misassign students and suggest that it might be "justifiable to waive college placement tests — and so waive developmental education — for students who have high school GPAs above [a C+ average]" (Bellfield and Crosta 2012).

Given the limitations of placement tests, transcript-based placement policies offer an important alternative for course placement. Florida passed **legislation in 2013** that exempted high school graduates from taking placement tests and developmental coursework. North Carolina Community College's **Multiple Measures** policy makes placement with transcripts the default before taking a placement test. California recently moved to sharply reduce the use of standardized tests in course placement in a statewide shift to transcript-based placement (Cuellar Mejia, Rodriguez and Johnson 2020). This is a transformative step, and — as later sections of this report will explore — transcript-based placement approaches have their own limitations and can widen inequities if not implemented in a way that centers students of color and the principle of racial equity.

Beyond assessment and placement policies, national research also suggests precollege courses as currently structured may be ineffective as an intervention to help students build skills needed to succeed in college-level courses (Bailey, Jeong and Cho 2010; Smith Jaggars and West Stacey, 2014). Using a large national data set, Bailey et al. (2010) examined outcomes for a group of students who were assessed as "not college ready" by their college, but ultimately overlooked their assignment into precollege courses and instead enrolled directly in college-level courses. Seventy-two percent of those students completed the college-level course compared to 27 percent of students who complied with their assignment and enrolled first in precollege courses. A similar pattern was found in a metastudy of precollege coursetaking, leading the researchers to conclude that "the traditional system of developmental education is not achieving its intended purpose: to improve outcomes for underprepared students" and call for a restructuring of these courses (Smith Jaggars, and West Stacey, 2014).

IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS IN WASHINGTON STATE

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and individual CTCs in the state understand these issues and have been working to improve access to college-level courses and reduce racial inequities in placement outcomes for over a decade. System-wide efforts like the Student Achievement Initiative (2009), Rethinking Precollege Math (2009), placement reciprocity policies (2013), Bridge to College (2014), and Placement 360 (2017) demonstrate an acknowledgement of problems with current policies and a willingness to invest time and resources to address those issues. Over this same period, individual colleges in the state have made improvements to their own assessment and placement policies by increasing the number of placement options available to students, allowing students to retake placement tests if needed and developing directed self-placement tools. Despite these important efforts, more than one-third of 2018 high school graduates across the state who enrolled directly in a CTC were required to take one or more precollege courses, with Black, Latinx, Native American, and other students of color placing into those courses at disproportionately higher rates than white students (ERDC 2021).

DOES A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA SIGNAL COLLEGE READINESS?

The revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.230.090 states that **"the purpose of a high school diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education,** gainful employment, and citizenship and is equipped with the skill to be a lifelong learner." However, CTCs in Washington State are not required to accept a high school diploma as evidence of college readiness. Colleges set their own assessment and placement policies and they currently administer a wide range of assessment measures to understand readiness in math and English with the primary goal of matching students with courses at their current level of "readiness."

[1]*The practice of directed self-placement is relatively new in the state and, at the time of writing this report, not widely used in the Road Map Project region.*

FINDINGS ON CTC ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT

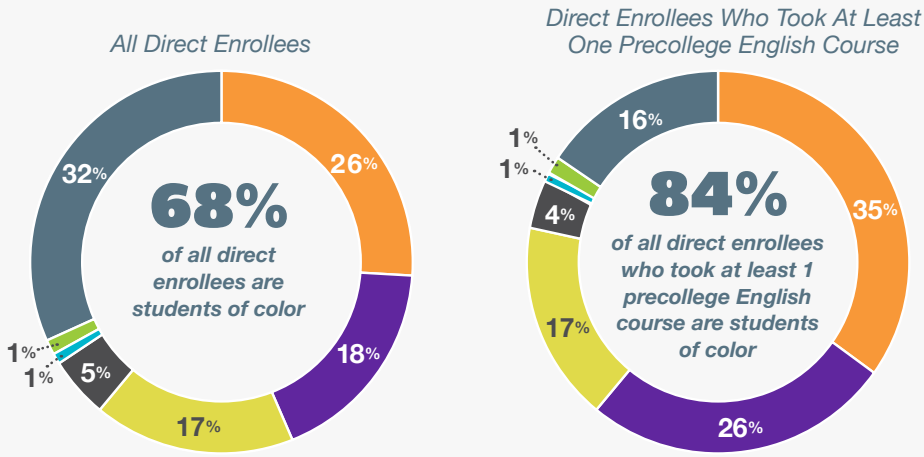
The research and findings that follow take into account the role of placement policies, processes and ongoing implementation as distinct components of the student placement process. They also acknowledge, identify, and address the common factors at play within college-level math and college-level English placement. These factors are wide ranging and not all directly addressed in this report however, what surfaces in the findings are **that the CTC placement process has perpetuated racial inequities by creating and implementing policies that provide privileges to white students not available to students of color**. These policies and practices are racist because they perpetuate inequity between racial groups. Students have shared about their placement experience and the barriers they face in getting to and through college, and what we are hearing from them is corroborated in the quantitative data gathered, further revealing how these policies as designed, deepen inequities.

1 Students of color are overrepresented in precollege courses

Improvement efforts often begin with attempts to see the whole system and acknowledge that "every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets" (Conway and Bataldan, 2015). In the context of CTC assessment and placement in the Road Map Project region, the results are clear: the system which is purportedly designed to support students in course placement and degree attainment, produces racial inequity in precollege coursetaking for high school graduates who enroll at local CTCs. Students of color make up two-thirds of all direct enrollees, but they comprise 84 percent of direct enrollees who take at least one precollege English course. Native American, Latinx, and Black students are also more likely than white or Asian students to take longer precollege course sequences, lengthening their path to completion and imposing additional financial burden. Approximately 50 percent of Native American, Latinx, and Black students take multiple precollege math courses compared to only about 39 percent of white students, and 29 percent of Asian students.

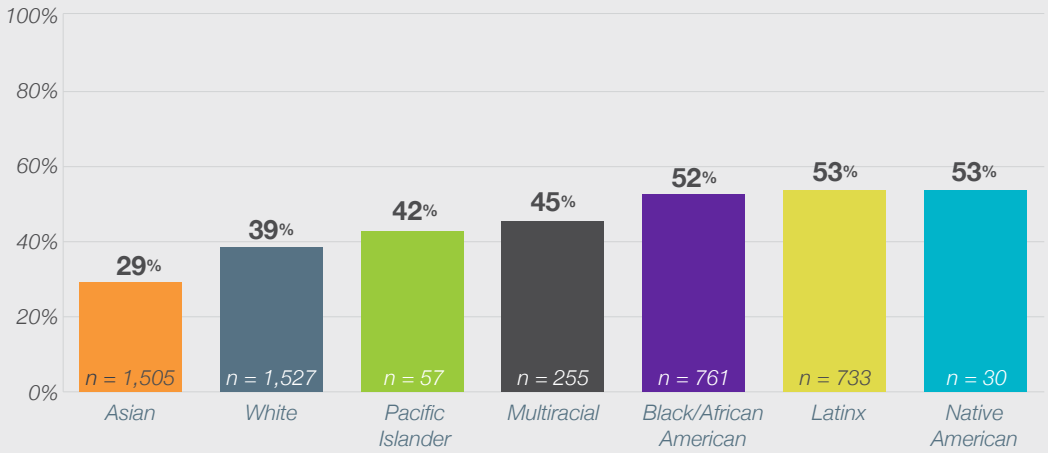
Figure 1.
Disproportionality in* ENGLISH *Precollege Coursetaking
Award-seeking direct enrollees who took one or more precollege courses

- *Asian*
- *Black/African American*
- *Latinx*
- *Multiracial*
- *Native American*
- *Pacific Islander*
- *White*



2012-2017 award-seeking direct enrollees who took any math/English course in college. Excludes students who ever participated in Running Start. To protect student privacy, groups representing fewer than 10 students were omitted from results. Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

Figure 2.
Extended Precollege* MATH *Coursetaking
Percent of students who took two or more precollege courses within their first two years of enrollment



2012-2017 award-seeking direct enrollees who took any math/English course in college. Count of precollege courses includes courses that were repeated. Excludes students who ever participated in Running Start. To protect student privacy, groups representing fewer than 10 students omitted from results. Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

"The first time that I took [the math placement test] I got math 98, Algebra, which I was not willing to take again, because I had already taken it in high school. In order for me to retake, I had to take 30 or 40 hours of online practice, which was time that I did not have to spare. Plus, I had to wait two years for the first test to be invalid.

I placed even lower at that point – I think it was 78. And I was like: 'I'm just going to have to take the class, because I can't waste any more time trying to do math' because it was the last thing that I needed.

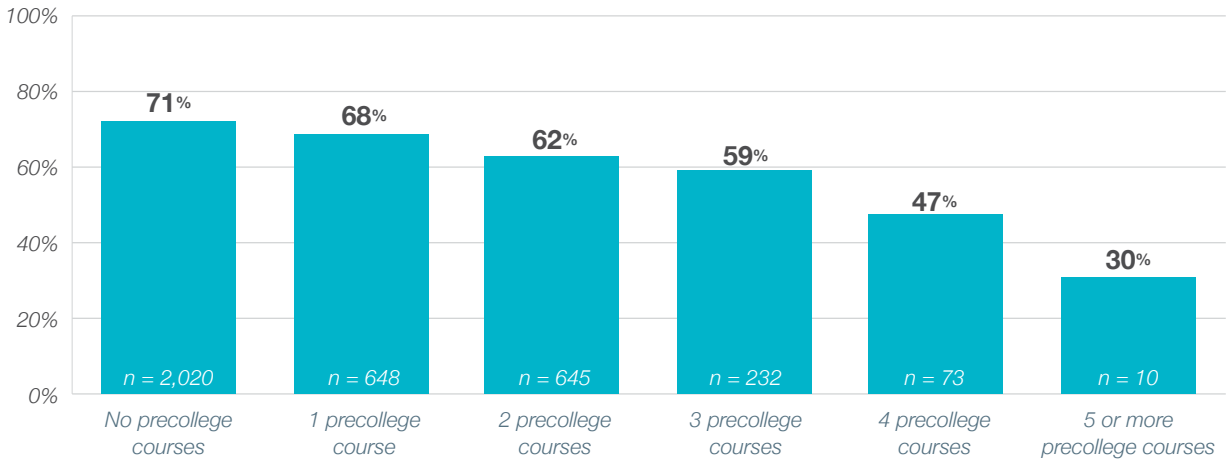
[…] because the math placement placed me all the way to math 78, I was stuck there, and then stuck with another class that was very similar to it until I was able to take my 107 class. I ended up taking three to four math classes that I did not need because of the placement test."

Latinx Lake Washington School District graduate in a transfer pathway at Bellevue College

Taking two or more precollege math courses is detrimental to the success of students in completing college-level math.

The experience of the Latinx Bellevue College student is unfortunately all too common. Seventy-one percent of students who took college-level math as their first math course earned a C or better in this course. As Figure 3 shows, the success rate in college math is lower for students who take precollege courses and eventually take a college math course, and drops with each additional precollege course that students take. In addition, 3 in 5 students who enroll in one or more precollege math courses never take a college-level math class within their first two years of enrollment.

Figure 3.
Success in College* MATH *Relative to Precollege Coursetaking
Percent of students who earned a 2.0 or better in the first college-level math course they attempted



2012-2017 award-seeking college enrollees who took attempted a college-level math course. Count of precollege courses includes courses that were repeated. Excludes students who participated in Running Start during high school. Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

An analysis of more than 3,000 Road Map Project region student academic records that controls for race, gender, high school GPA, coursetaking and other factors, finds that taking two or more precollege math courses has a negative and statistically significant relationship to earning a 2.0 or higher in college-level math.[2] This demonstrates that these courses did not adequately meet their goal of preparing students for college-level math. Along with their associated time, costs, impacts on students' financial aid status and the psychological impacts that may result from an "unsuccessful" academic experience, precollege courses are more likely to harm than help students in their pursuit of a credential.

When students were asked "can you recall a time when you felt someone at the college cared about you or helped you...?", students who took precollege courses shared fewer experiences of trust and individual support (Figure 4). Only 19 percent of students who took one or more precollege course report that they had supportive experiences that reflect trust and individualized academic support at their college compared to 40 percent of students who enroll directly in college-level courses.

Figure 4.
Precollege Coursetaking and Experience of Trust and Support
Students' responses when asked "Can you recall a time when you felt someone at the college cared about you or helped you in a way that made a difference?"

Multiple Measures Regional Survey; N = 225

"One of the advisors at RTC was very kind and helpful, constantly wanting me to reach my goals and pass all my courses that I needed. She would check up on me and make sure I was applying for the next quarter before registration opened and I am thankful for her."

Black Kent School District graduate studying science, medicine, and health at Renton Technical College

[2] *This includes students who took two or more distinct precollege math courses as well as students who repeated the same precollege math course multiple times. A similar analysis looked at English coursetaking, but did not find a statistically significant relationship between taking two or more precollege English courses and completing a college-level English course with a 2.0 or higher.*

[3] *Students who directly enrolled into college between 2015 and 2018 academic years who were eligible to place into college math based upon their high school transcript, but ended up taking precollege math.*

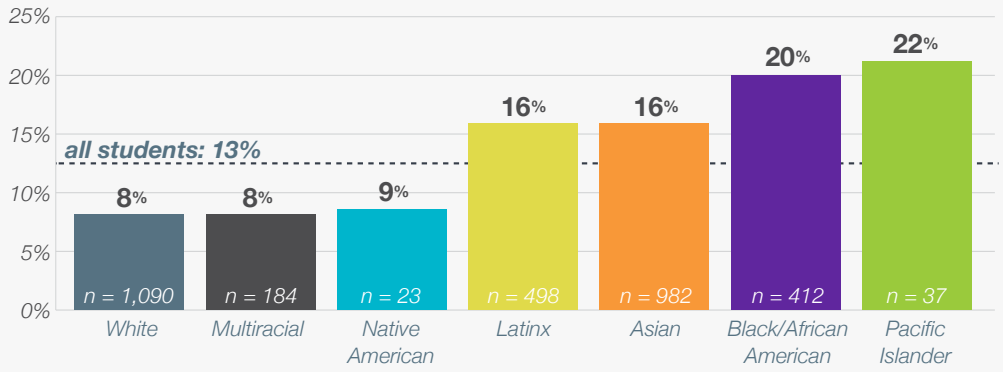
Students of color are disproportionately placed into precollege courses even when their high school transcripts make them eligible for college-level courses.

An analysis of current Road Map Project region CTC transcript-based placement policy criteria against students' prior high school coursetaking and grades finds that 13 percent of students are underplaced into precollege English and 30 percent of students are being underplaced into precollege math. As outlined in Figures 5 and 6, students of color are more likely than white students to be underplaced in both English and math. As mentioned above, underplacement has costs for students and it slows progress to completion. Underplacement in math amounts to roughly $80,000 in unnecessary tuition costs borne by Road Map Project region students each year — an average of $800 per student with Black students paying closer to $900 each as a result of taking more precollege courses.[3]

Figure 5.

***Underplacement in* ENGLISH**

Percent of students who met requirements for placement into college-level English, but ended up taking one or more precollege English courses



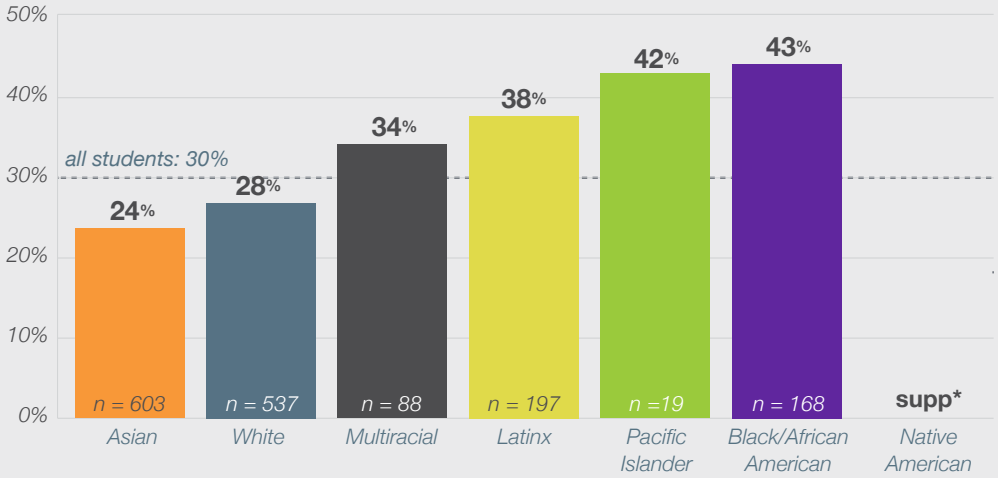
Black/African American and Pacific Islander students were placed in precollege English when they had the cumulative high school GPA required for college-level English at their college.

2015-2018 award-seeking direct enrollees who were eligible for college-level English and took any English course in college.
Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

Figure 6.

***Underplacement in* MATH**

Percent of students who met requirements for placement into college-level math, but ended up taking one or more precollege math courses



Black/African American, Pacific Islander, and Latinx students were placed in precollege math when they had the high school coursetaking and grades required for college-level math at their college.

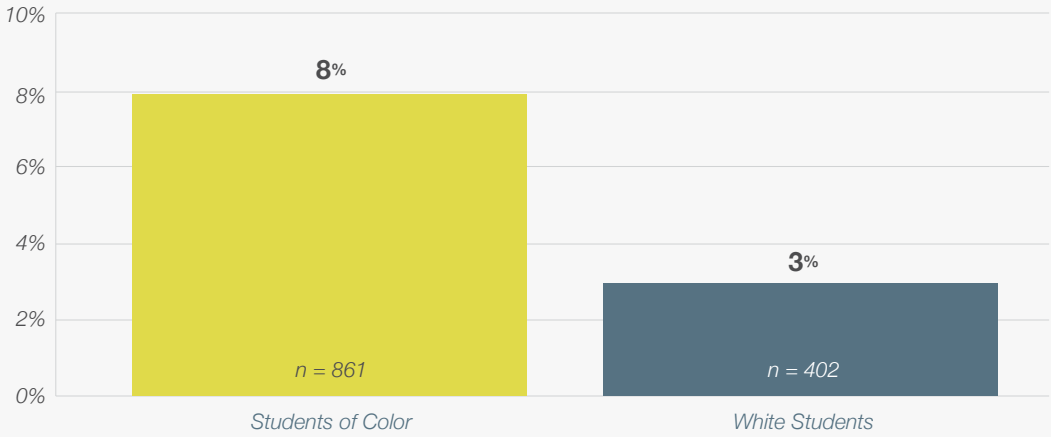
*2015-2018 award-seeking direct enrollees who were eligible for college-level math and took any math course in college. *To protect student privacy, groups representing fewer than 10 students were omitted from results.*
Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

Racial disparities persist regardless of high school GPA or coursetaking.

As summarized in Figure 7, only three percent of white students with a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher took two or more precollege English courses compared to eight percent of students of color. ***Among Black/African students this underplacement was more pronounced, with 14 percent of students taking two or more precollege English courses. Had these students been accurately placed using the English transcript-based placement policies in place at their respective colleges, every single student should have been placed into college-level English courses.*** Similarly when looking at math coursetaking, as shown in Figure 8, four percent of white students who took calculus in high school enrolled in two or more precollege courses compared to nine percent of students of color. For Asian students, this underplacement was higher, with 10 percent of students taking two or more precollege courses. This evidence makes clear that placement — including the policy, implementation, and ongoing practices of evaluation — is racist in that it perpetuates inequity between racial groups, even when students' coursetaking in high school indicates that they should be ready for college-level courses.

Figure 7.
Extended Precollege* ENGLISH *Coursetaking Among Students With a 3.0 Cumulative High School GPA

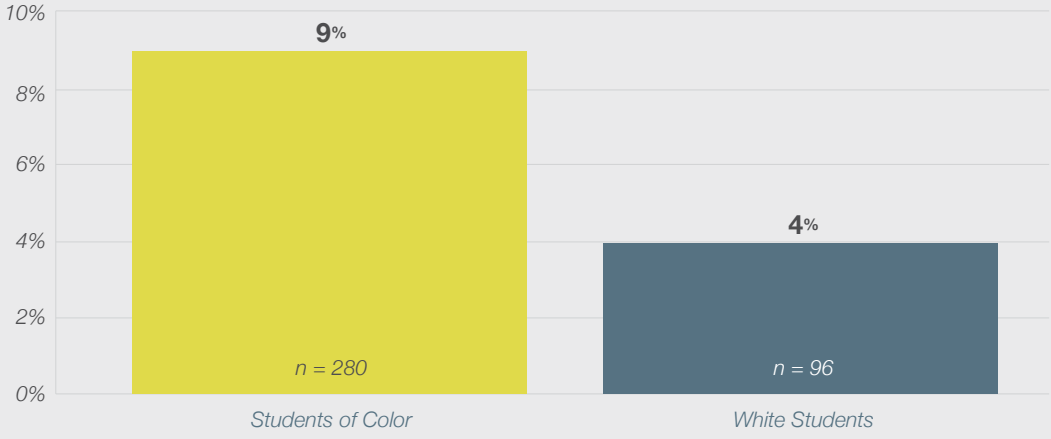
Percent of students who took two or more precollege English courses within their first two years of enrollment



2014-2016 award-seeking direct enrollees who attempted an English course at the CTC. Count of precollege courses includes courses that were repeated. Excludes students who participated in Running Start
Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

Figure 8.
Extended Precollege* MATH *Coursetaking Among Students Who Took Calculus in High School

Percent of students who took two or more precollege math courses within their first two years of enrollment



2014-2016 award-seeking direct enrollees who attempted a math course at the CTC. Count of precollege courses includes courses that were repeated. Excludes students who participated in Running Start.
**To protect student privacy, groups representing fewer than 10 students omitted from results.*
Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

Currently there is no system-wide process in place to collect information about the placement methods used and the resulting placement outcomes. This is vital information that is needed in order to understand the cause of the underplacement we are seeing. It is possible that this underplacement could be the result of a student choosing to take a precollege course or a staff member incorrectly evaluating a student's transcript. However, based on insights from the students, this is more likely a result of the system — at both the high school and CTC level — not doing enough to inform students of transcript-based placement options and/or not adequately supporting students to access their transcript, which leads to students using an alternative method like a standardized placement test.

Students face barriers in accessing their high school transcripts for placement purposes. Even when students are aware of transcript-based placement options accessing their high school transcripts can be challenging. Thirty-one percent of survey respondents reported being reliant on prior high school staff to retrieve their official transcript and only six percent were able to get their transcript without support from someone at their high school or college.

> ***"It would have been easier for me if I went directly from graduation of high school to college [...] but I had to take a gap year for family reasons. It was just a little bit of a hassle trying to get in contact with my former high school counseling department [...] and actually getting my transcript."***
>
> **White student from Federal Way Public Schools, studying education and social science at Highline College**

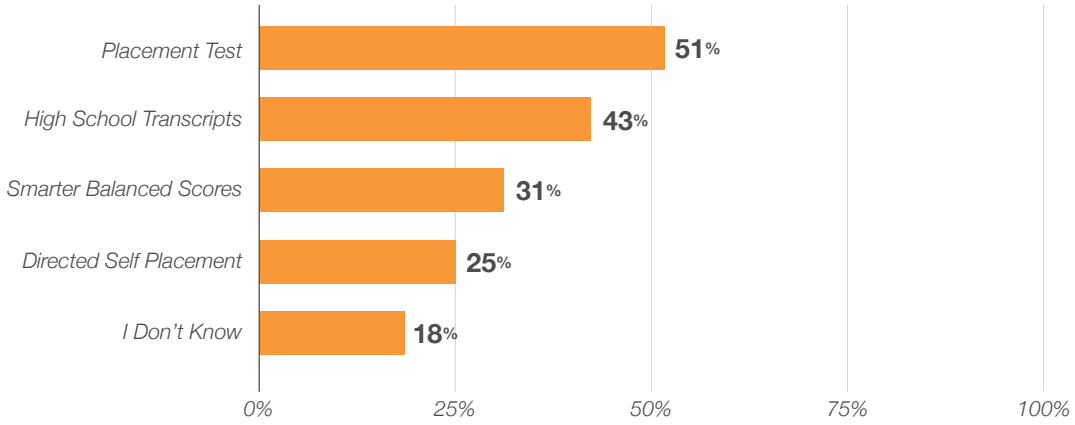
Students report that the assessment and placement process is confusing and they want it changed.

Students have a lot to say about the types of information they wish they had prior to enrollment at our local community and technical colleges. When asked: "What do you wish you'd known about your college, prior to enrolling?" most students described access to information around academic and career advising as well as general information about the campus and climate. **One-in-five current Road Map Project region CTC students who were surveyed wish they had known more about the assessment and placement process prior to enrolling in college.** Students most often referenced a lack of knowledge about placement options and specifics within placement policies such as which classes count towards college credit and the degree they are seeking as well as letter grade cutoffs for course placement. When asked what placement options their college offered, 51 percent of respondents reported that they were aware of placement tests while only 43 percent of students were knowledgeable of transcript-based placement options (Figure 9).[4]

Figure 9.
Access to Information About Placement Options

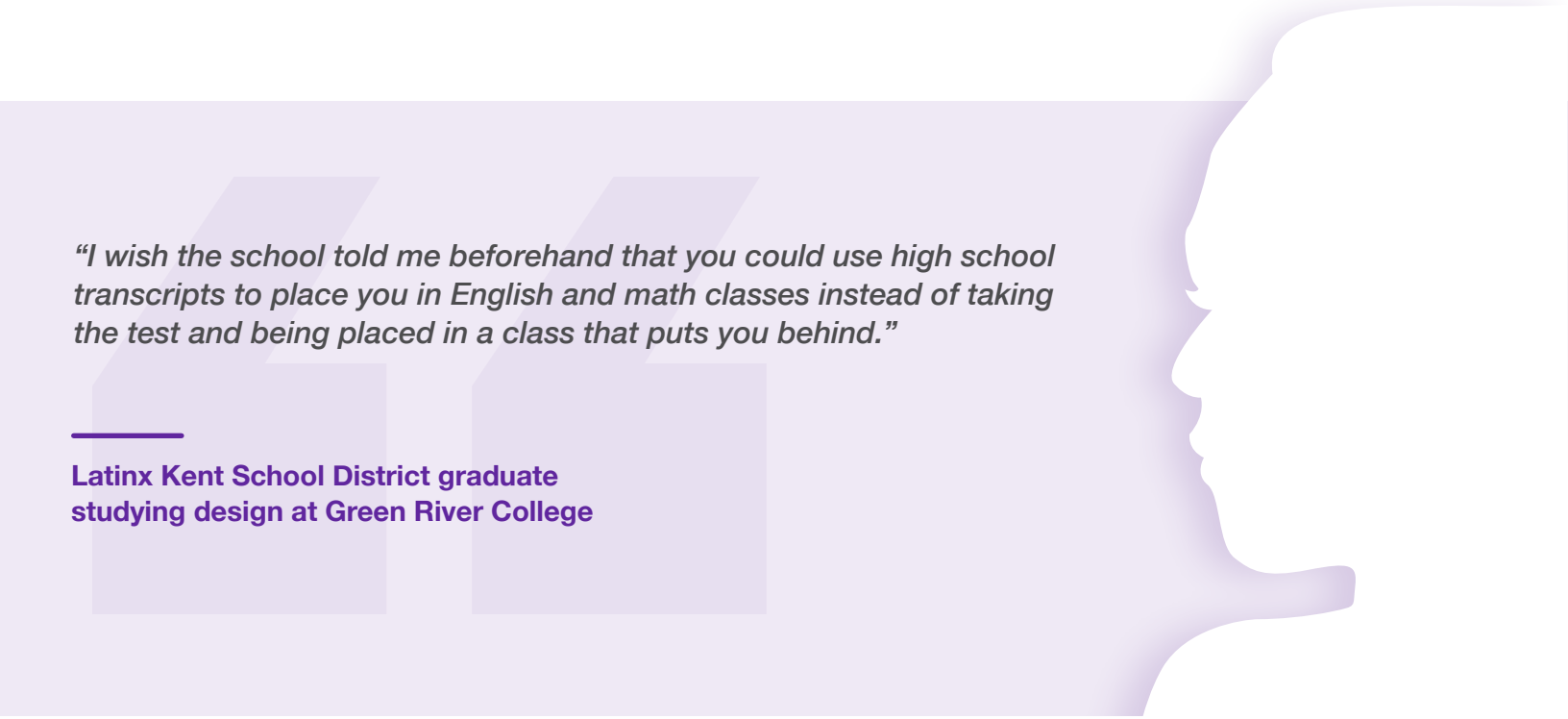
Percent of students who were aware of each placement method option

Multiple Measures Regional Survey; N = 225



[4] *At the time of the survey, all Road Map CTCs offered transcript-based placement options, standardized placement tests and allowed for placement via Smarter Balanced test scores. Green River, Highline, Renton Technical College, Seattle Central, and South Seattle College were using directed self-placement, but only in English.*

Information about standardized placement tests appears to be much more accessible via college websites than information about transcript-based placement options. When asked how they learned about placement options, 32 percent of students reported learning about the placement test via the college website while only 18 percent learned about transcript-based placement from that source. Instead, students reported learning about transcript-based placement options directly from someone in their high school or on their college campus — a communication method that has the potential to miss some students and/or leave room for confusion.



"I wish the school told me beforehand that you could use high school transcripts to place you in English and math classes instead of taking the test and being placed in a class that puts you behind."

Latinx Kent School District graduate studying design at Green River College

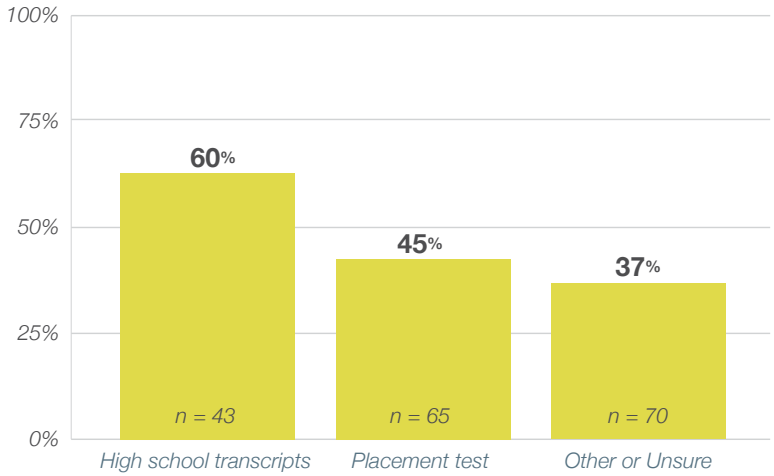
Students who place by high school transcript are more likely to avoid precollege courses and have a better placement experience overall when compared to students who place by standardized placement test.

Not all Road Map Project region colleges collect information about which placement methods students use, which presents challenges in understanding the relationship between placement method and precollege coursetaking. As summarized in Figure 10, 60 percent of students surveyed who used transcript-based placement reported that they avoided precollege math courses compared to only 45 percent of students who reported placing using a placement test. A similar effect was found with precollege English courses. Though the survey sample is small, the overall trend is consistent with data from Highline College where 61 percent of students who use transcripts place into college math, compared to 35 percent who take a standardized placement test (Burn and Waits 2018).

Figure 10.
MATH *Placement Method and Avoiding Precollege Courses*

Percent of students who avoided precollege math courses

Multiple Measures Regional Survey; N = 178



60%

of students who were able to use transcript-based placement avoided pre-college courses

"I took the ACCUPLACER [and] felt as if the scores might've been different because what I was first placed into for math was below my skill level then."

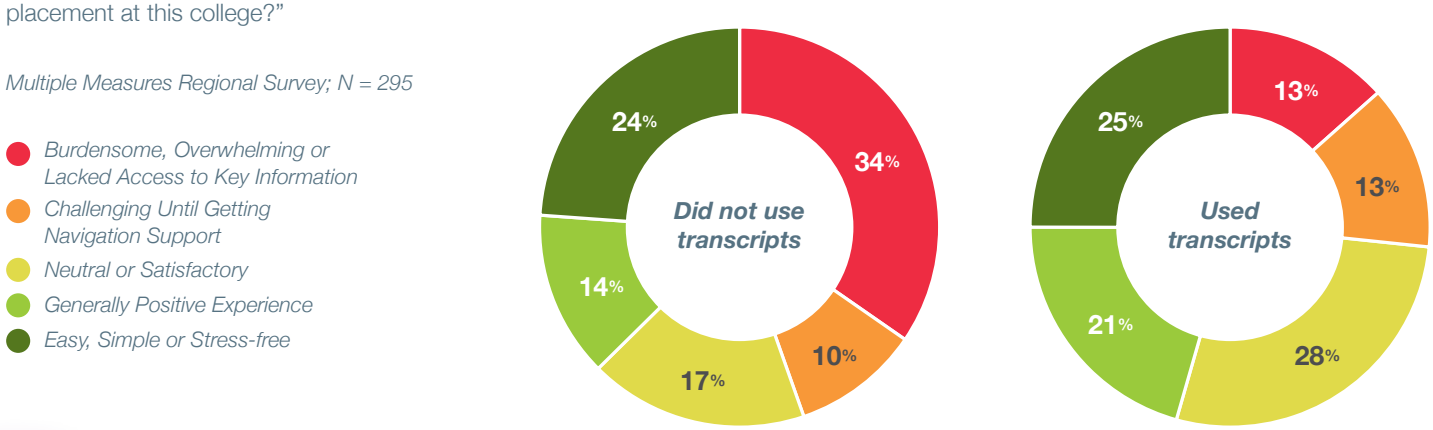
Black/African American Kent School District graduate studying health at Renton Technical College

When given the option and sufficient support to use high school transcripts for placement, students also reported a more positive and stress-free enrollment and placement experience. Only 16 percent of students who used transcript-based placement felt the placement process was burdensome or overwhelming compared to 34 percent of students who placed through another method (Figure 11).

Figure 11.
Placement Method and Overall Experience With Enrollment and Placement

Students' responses when asked "How would you evaluate your overall experience enrolling and going through your first course placement at this college?"

Multiple Measures Regional Survey; N = 295



"I had a positive experience enrolling at my college. Using my official transcripts was not difficult, and the employees of my college were helpful in pointing me in a forward direction."

Black/African American Federal Way Public Schools graduate studying education at Highline College

Lessons from one college's journey

Equity centered assessment and placement improvements can reduce opportunity gaps

Between 2006 and 2012, Highline College participated in the Achieving the Dream (ATD) national network and developed its capacity to examine student progress with an equity lens and use lessons learned to improve their services. This work surfaced racial inequity in precollege math and English courses as an area in need of improvement. In 2014, leaders began a comprehensive, college-wide approach aimed at improving the assessment and placement process. The college took four substantive steps to boost placement into college-level courses and address longstanding racial inequities in placement outcomes:

1. The English department agreed to remove the writing component of the college's English placement test, which was believed, and determined in a validity study, to misplace students — and particularly students of color — into precollege courses.
2. Highline began accepting high school transcripts for placement into English, and centralized the process for placement into math courses.
3. The college implemented "brush up" workshops to help students better understand and prepare for placement test content.
4. The assessment and placement office implemented a large-scale communications campaign across campus, to high school districts, and to community members that highlighted and operationalized the range of new placement options available to students.

The college's approach yielded immediate results: for entering students age 20 and under, placement into college-level math more than doubled between 2014 and 2015 (from 15 percent to 31 percent) and placement into college-level English courses improved from 66 percent to 74 percent.

Perhaps more importantly, these changes also had a disproportionate, positive impact on students of color. In 2015, 34 percent of entering Black/African American students 20 years old or younger placed into college-level math courses compared to only eight percent in 2014. Asian and Pacific Islander students saw a similarly positive one-year increase in placement into college-level math — from 22 percent to 48 percent. Since initiating the changes, the college has seen more or less steady, year-over-year increases in placement into college-level courses across all student groups with nearly 39 percent of 2017 entering students 20 years old or younger placing into college-level math, a dramatic increase from 15 percent in 2014.

In addition to improving placement outcomes, these changes were intended to help students of color enroll in and complete college-level math and English courses. Disaggregating outcomes by race/ethnicity shows some evidence that this effort has been successful. In particular, Black/African American students, who began with some of the lowest levels of math and English enrollment and completion, saw disproportionate improvements. Comparing the period before the changes took place (2012-2014) to the period when the new approach was in place (2015-2017), the percentage of Black/African American students who enrolled in college-level math during their first 45 credits increased by eight percentage points, and the percentage who completed college-level math increased by two percentage points. Likewise, the percentage who enrolled in and completed college-level English each increased by seven percentage points.

Highline's success in "moving the needle" on college placement is no small feat, and yet it only addresses one aspect of a student's journey. Placing into college-level math and English courses means that students can avoid the negative consequences of precollege courses, but this amounts to helping a runner find the starting line before the beginning of a marathon. The college is now working to sustain these improvements through its implementation of Guided Pathways — a comprehensive, student-centered approach to significantly improving student success and addressing racial inequity produced by college policies.

Courtesy of Highline College

Access to college courses is more dependent on which CTC a student attends rather than their previous coursetaking

Current transcript-based placement policies are not consistent from college to college. Access to college courses is more dependent on which CTC a student attends rather than their actual or previous coursetaking. Colleges placement policies can either be specifically designed for a selected high school district, or can be more generic and used by students from any regional district. As shown in Figure 12, Road Map Project region high school graduates enroll in colleges throughout the region, but as shown in Figure 13, depending on where they go to school, transcript-based placement may not be available to them.

Figure 12.
Feeder Patterns Among High School Graduates

Percentage of High School Graduates (Size Legend)

Road Map Project region 2014-2017 high school graduates who enrolled in local CTCs within one year of graduating high school ("direct enrollees"). To protect student privacy, data is suppressed for student groups with fewer than 10 students. Seattle Colleges includes North Seattle College, Seattle Central College, and South Seattle College.
Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

Figure 13.
Availability of CTC Transcript-Based Placement Policies for MATH for Graduates from Road Map Project School Districts

	Bellevue College	***Green River College***	***Highline College***	***Seattle Colleges***
Auburn School District	☑	☑	☑	
Federal Way Public Schools	☑	☑	☑	
Highline Public Schools	☑		☑	
Kent School District	☑	☑	☑	
Renton School District	☑	☑	☑	
Seattle Public Schools	☑		☑	☑
Tukwila School District	☑		☑	

Figure 14 illustrates how these policy differences impact placement outcomes. The figure summarizes math placement outcomes in a hypothetical scenario in which all high school graduates in the Road Map Project region (a) enrolled at the same college and (b) were placed using their high school transcript under current placement policies at that college.

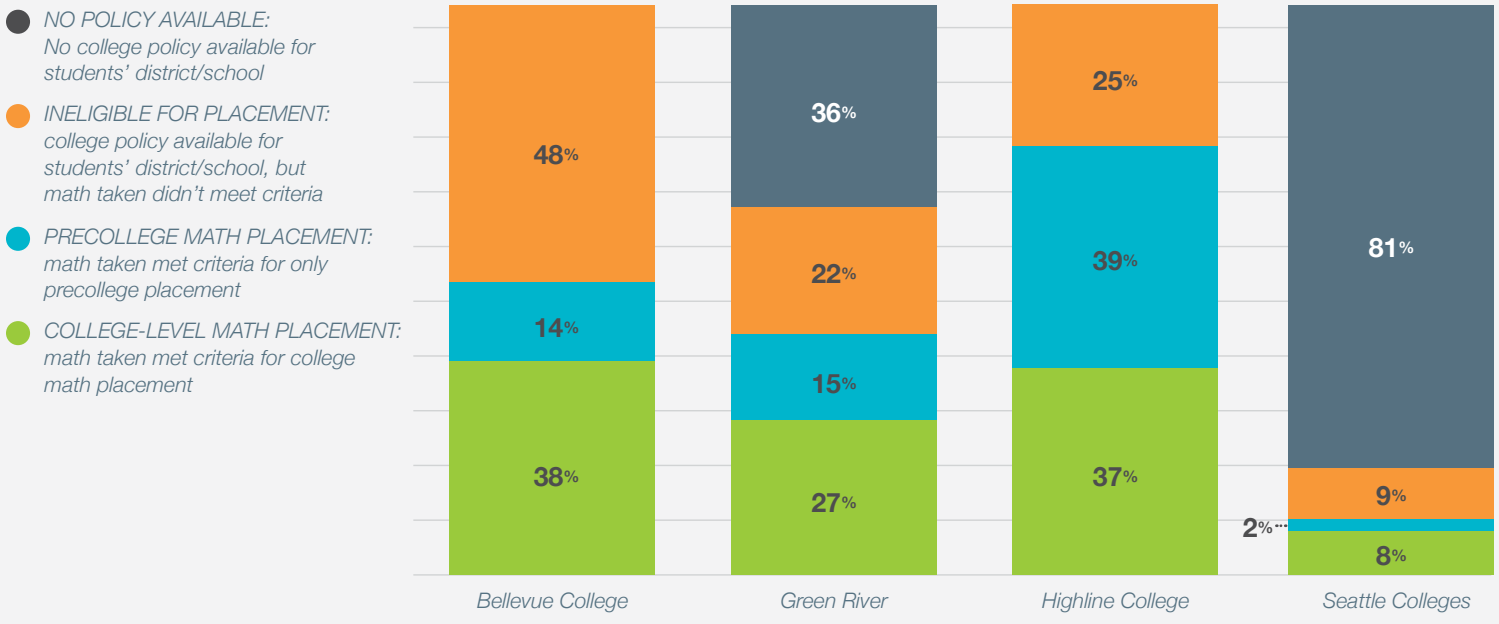
This chart highlights multiple challenges that result from our region's inconsistent and restrictive transcript-based placement policies for math:

Variation in the Availability of a Transcript-Based Policy. When colleges accept transcripts from only selected districts, this has a direct impact on the student's ability to use their transcripts for placement. Only 19 percent of students would be able to use Seattle Colleges' policy for transcript-based placement since the colleges enroll students from across the region, but do not accept transcripts for students from any district other than Seattle Public Schools. While articulation and partnership with specific colleges is a positive step in supporting postsecondary transition of our students, you can see the impacts on students when policies become overly focused on a specific district's population. As a result, in this scenario, 81 percent of students enrolling at Seattle Colleges would most likely be referred to take a placement test.

Variation in the Courses and Grades Considered for Placement. Colleges may accept transcripts from any district, but their placement criteria may not include courses that were accessible to students in their high school, or exclude grades below certain thresholds that disqualify students from using transcript-based placement. Bellevue College's policy would make almost half of students not eligible for any placement because the math classes they took in high school did not align with the criteria that the college uses for placement. This illustrates the restrictive nature of most of the region's transcript-based placement policies. We highlighted earlier the positive impact on a student's enrollment experience when they are able to utilize their high school transcripts for placement. Unfortunately many Road Map Project region CTC placement policies focus on a handful of classes or set high requirements, such as maintaining a B or higher for each section of the course. This severely limits the number of students who are able to utilize their transcripts for college placement and funnels them to high stakes, standardized testing, which has proven to be ineffective at accurately and equitably assessing students academic preparedness.

Variation in College-Level Eligibility. Each college determines the criteria that meets college-level placement. This is typically defined by a combination of the high school math course taken, the grade received in the course, and when the course was taken. Figure 14 shows the impact of this variation in college-level placement criteria: While nearly 40 percent of students would place into college-level math using Bellevue and Highline Colleges' transcript-based placement policies, only 27 percent of students could do so using Green River College's policies. This variability shows how placement policies enacted at each college may have a greater impact on student achievement than a student's high school educational experience.

Figure 14.
Variation in* MATH *Placement Outcomes across CTC transcript-based placement policies



2014-2017 Road Map Project high school graduates (n=20,878).
Based upon transcript-based policies published on college websites as of January 2020. Excludes students who participated in Running Start, and those who didn't take a math course identified through any of the college policies. Renton Technical College is excluded from this analysis because it has no transcript-based placement policy posted on its website.
Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data.

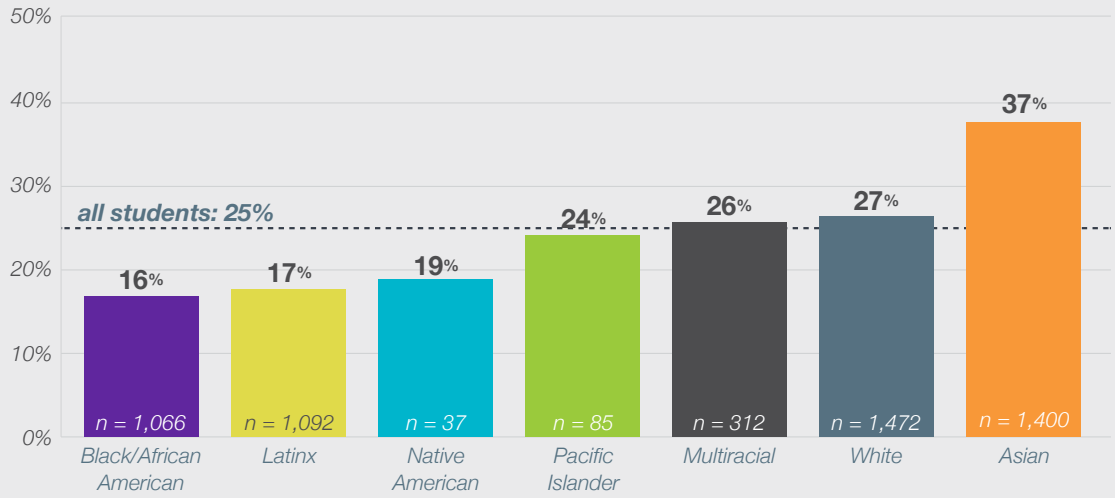
Inequity in the K-12 system contributes to inequity in college placement outcomes.

Beyond being inconsistent across colleges, current transcript-based placement policies are racist because they sustain inequities between racial groups that are present in the K-12 system.

As outlined in the prior section, in order to benefit from transcript-based placement policies, students must first be eligible to take advantage of those policies — i.e., they must have taken certain courses in high school or have a cumulative GPA that colleges consider valid as a part of their placement criteria. Students found to be ineligible to use transcript-based placement must use another assessment method such as a standardized placement test. As Figures 15 and 16 illustrate, student ability to place into college-level courses under current transcript-based placement policies varies across racial/ethnic groups. Among 2015-2018 direct enrollees, only 25 percent of all students were eligible to use transcript-based placement policy in math. Only 16 percent of Black students and 17 percent of Latinx students were eligible to take advantage of transcript-based placement in math compared to 37 percent of Asian students. While more students in all racial/ethnic groups were eligible to use transcript-based placement in English at the college where they enrolled, the gap between the racial groups at the two ends of the distribution is larger in English (27 percent) than it is in math (21 percent gap).

Figure 15.
***College-level* MATH**
Placement Eligibility
Among Direct Enrollees

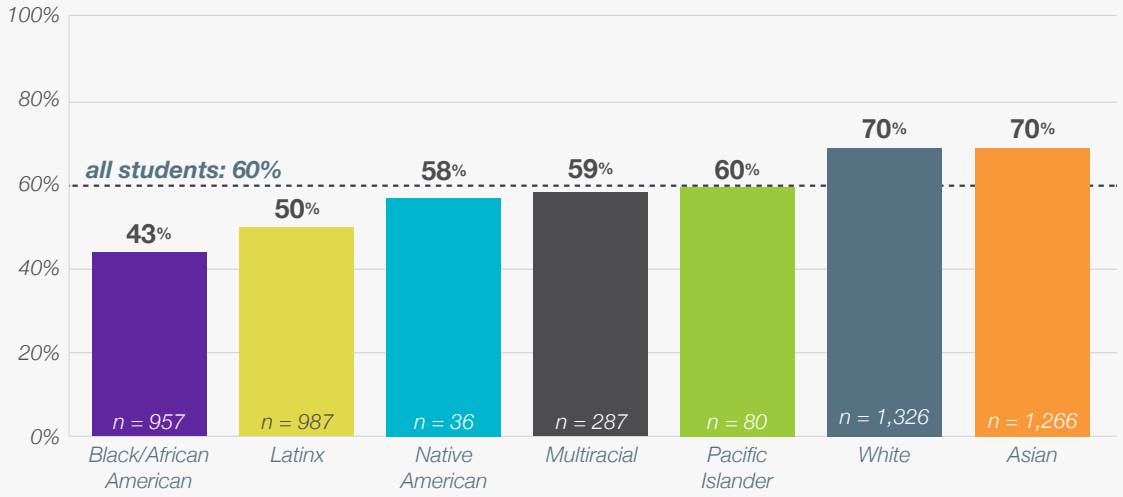
Percent of students who met requirements to be placed into college-level math at the CTC they enrolled



2015-2018 award-seeking direct enrollees.
College-level math placement eligibility based upon transcript-based policies published on college websites as of January 2020. Excludes students who participated in Running Start. Renton Technical College is excluded from this analysis because it has no transcript-based placement policy posted on its website
Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

Figure 16.
***College-level* ENGLISH**
Placement Eligibility
Among Direct Enrollees

Percent of students who met requirements to be placed into college-level English at the CTC they enrolled



2015-2018 award-seeking direct enrollees.
English placement eligibility based upon transcript-based policies published on college websites as of January 2020. Excludes students who ever participated in Running Start. Renton Technical College is excluded from this analysis because it has no transcript-based placement policy posted on its website
Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC.

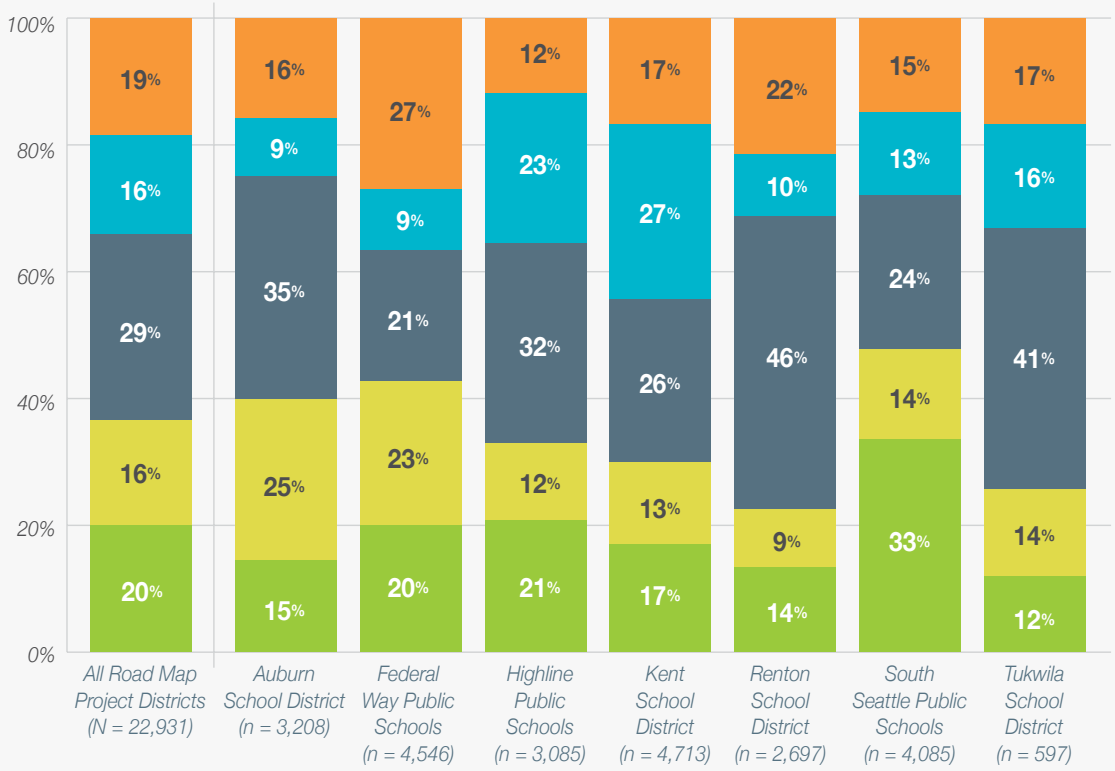
Access to advanced level courses are not evenly distributed in the Road Map Project region. As Figure 17 demonstrates, where students attend high school helps to determine the level of math they are able to complete. While nearly half of the students in the South Seattle Public Schools completed precalculus or calculus prior to graduating high school, this was true for only about one quarter of graduates from Renton and Tukwila School Districts.

Figure 17.
Highest MATH Taken by High School Graduates at each Road Map Project District

- *No Eligible Math*
- *Algebra I*
- *Algebra II*
- *Precalculus*
- *Calculus*

2014-2017 high school graduates. Excludes students who ever participated in Running Start. No Eligible Math includes students who took a math course that was not recognized by any college policy (including statistics, online math course codes that could be associated with any level of math taking, various pre-algebra courses, etc.) or math taking that the student took outside of Road Map Project schools (prior to transferring into a district or otherwise).

Source: OSPI CEDARS student-llevel data.



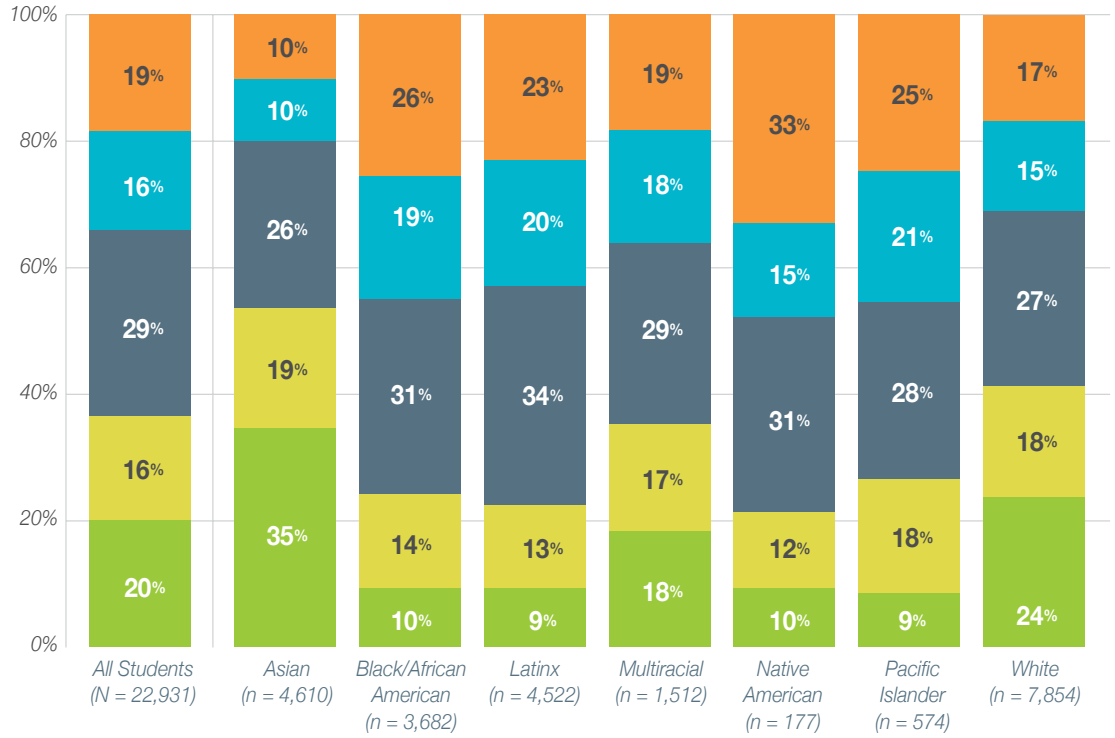
Access to precalculus and calculus courses varies greatly across schools, even among schools in the same district. When disaggregating precalculus and calculus coursetaking by race, there are gaps in coursetaking rates between racial and ethnic groups ranging from 13 to 59 percentage points across schools. As shown in Figure 18, this disparate access to rigorous math disproportionately prevents Black, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Native American students from using their transcripts to place into college-level math upon enrolling in college.

Figure 18.
Racial Inequity in Highest MATH Taken Among High School Graduates

- *No Eligible Math*
- *Algebra I*
- *Algebra II*
- *Precalculus*
- *Calculus*

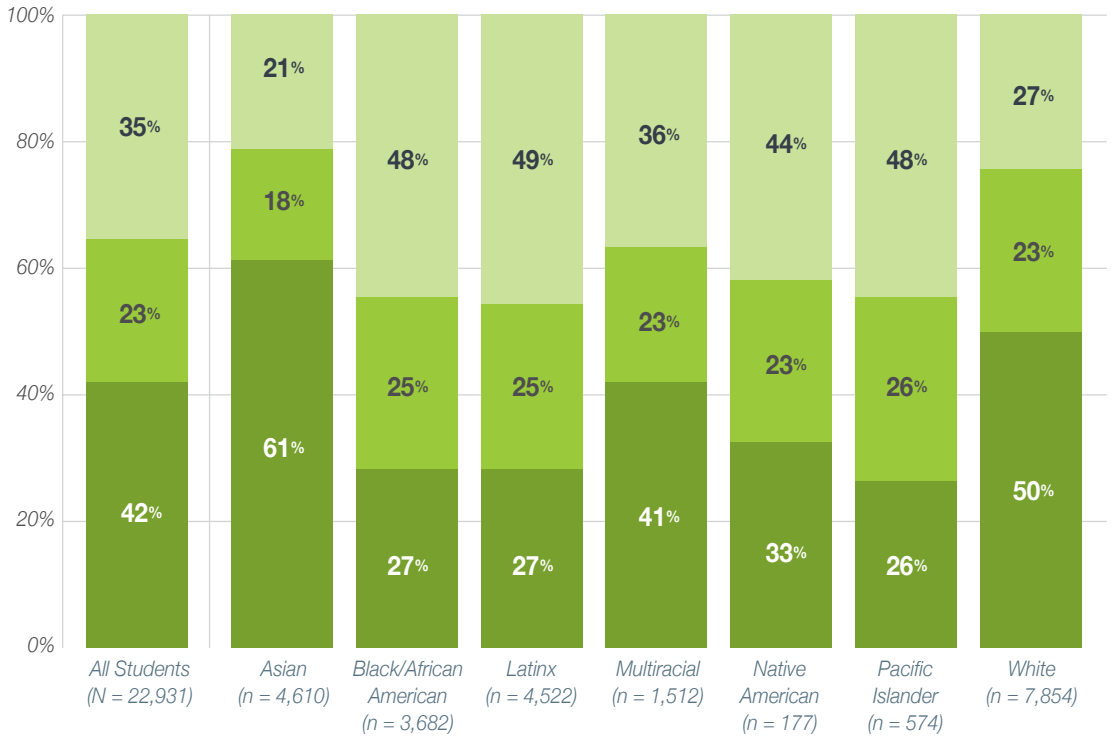
2014-2017 high school graduates. Excludes students who ever participated in Running Start. No Eligible Math includes students who took a math course that was not recognized by any college policy (including statistics, online math course codes that could be associated with any level of math taking, various pre-algebra courses, etc.) or math taking that the student took outside of Road Map Project schools (prior to transferring into a district or otherwise).

Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data.



As outlined in Figure 19, there are also dramatic differences in the GPA distribution by race/ethnicity. These differences are rooted in systemic inequities similar to those mentioned above, racial bias in educators and many other racist factors at all layers of education systems (Oluo 2018). Beyond educational inequities, many students and families face additional racial inequities that are built into other spheres of their lives — historic and present day inequities in housing, health care, the environment, and other areas. Given this dynamic, high school GPA and coursetaking might be better viewed as artifacts of access to educational opportunity rather than indicators of ability.

Figure 19.
Racial Inequity in Cumulative High School GPA Among High School Graduates



2014-2017 high school graduates. Excludes students who ever participated in Running Start

Source: OSPI CEDARS student-level data.

Taken together, Figures 18 and 19 reveal a pattern of compounding factors that have the effect of widening racial inequity in the Road Map Project region: The K-12 system does not provide students of color equitable access to high quality learning opportunities which decreases their likelihood to take advantage of transcript-based placement policies when they arrive at college. Because they are not eligible to use transcripts, they are more likely to place via standardized placement tests, which have higher error rates than high school transcripts (Bellfield and Crosta 2012). In addition, this inequitable access compounds with the earlier finding that when students of color do navigate past these barriers to access advanced level courses, they still face additional placement barriers because they are disproportionately underplaced. These factors all lead to students of color being more likely to place into precollege courses. Placement policies that rely solely on high school coursetaking or grade point average without considering the inequity in the K-12 system and early learning environments will systematically sort students from some racial/ethnic groups into precollege courses at higher rates than others.


Courtesy of South Seattle College

Incremental changes to transcript-based placement policies can improve access to college-level courses, but are unlikely to address large scale racial inequities.

In consideration of the racial inequities inherent in transcript-based placement policy criteria, we explored whether these criteria could be changed to (a) increase college-level eligibility across all racial/ethnic groups to at least 70 percent of students and (b) reduce the gap between highest and lowest percentages of college-level eligibility across racial/ethnic groups to no more than 5 percentage points in English and 10 percentage points in math.[5] To develop these policy alternatives, we tested several alternative GPA and high school coursetaking thresholds to determine what percentage of students would be eligible for college-level math and English placement at each cutoff.

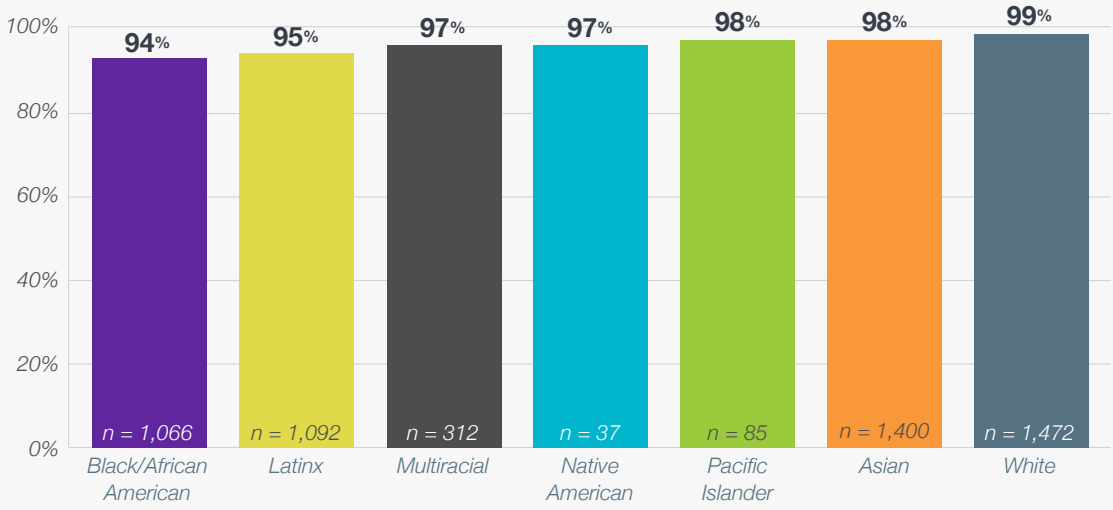
Access to college-level English courses could be improved to a minimum of 70 percent for all racial and ethnic groups by lowering the minimum GPA threshold to 2.16, but this change would still leave a racial equity gap of 18 percentage points between racial/ethnic groups at the two ends of the distribution. To accomplish both access and racial equity goals, the GPA threshold would need to be lowered to 1.63 (Figure 20).

Figure 20.
Access to College-level ENGLISH With an Alternative Cumulative High School GPA Threshold

Percent of students who would meet requirements for college-level English if cumulative high school GPA threshold was set at 1.63

2014-2017 high school graduates who enrolled in a CTC with the intent of earning a credential. Excludes students who participated in Running Start in high school.

Source:
OSPI CEDARS student-level data, and SBCTC data via ERDC.




Courtesy of South Seattle College

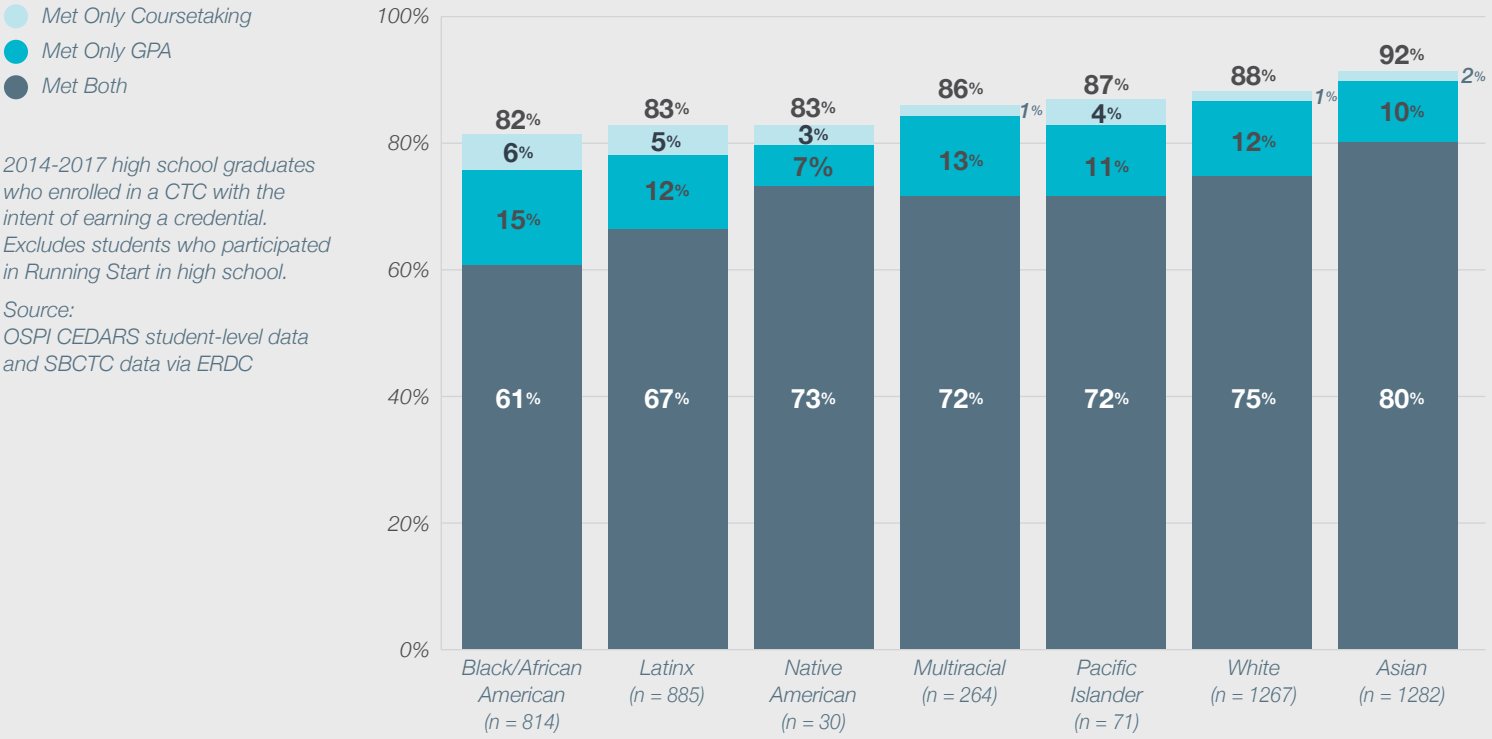
[5]*The benchmarks of 70 percent access and a 5 percentage point gap for English or 10 percentage point gap for Math were selected in a nonscientific way, but researchers feel that accomplishing both goals would indicate meaningful progress. Statewide, about 70 percent of students who identify as Asian or White place avoid precollege courses when they enroll at CTCs compared to 52 percent of Latinx students and 56 percent of Black/African American students (figures from the ERDC High School Graduate Outcomes dashboard). Thus setting a 70 percent benchmark for all racial and ethnic groups in the Road Map Project region would bring them into alignment with the racial/ethnic groups currently at the high end of the distribution statewide.*

Because current Road Map Project region CTC transcript-based placement policies do not use cumulative high school GPA for math placement, we initially explored alternative policies focused on high school math coursetaking. These approaches faced significant challenges due to inequitable access to upper level math courses in high school cited earlier in this report. Even when setting the criteria for college-level eligibility at a C or better in Algebra II, Precalculus, or Calculus, access to college-level math would not meet the minimum of 70 percent across all racial/ethnic groups. Due to these inequities, we were unable to find a transcript-based placement policy alternative for math based solely on high school coursetaking that would achieve both access and equity goals, and explored alternative policies that also factored cumulative high school GPA.

Because Algebra II is a prerequisite for nearly all college-level math courses, we set passing Algebra II in high school as a requirement for using GPA for placement. Due to the host of inequities baked into high school math coursetaking, an alternative that relies on this requirement would "lock in" a nine percentage point gap in college-level placement between Black/African American and Asian students who passed Algebra II in high school. Accomplishing both access and equity goals would require a hybrid approach that considers GPA or math coursetaking in high school. As summarized in Figure 21, setting the college-level math threshold to students who earn a minimum GPA of 1.92 or earn a C or better in Algebra II, Precalculus, or Calculus could allow 70 percent of students to be eligible for college-level math and narrow the gap between racial/ethnic groups to 10 percentage points

Figure 21.
Access to College-level* MATH *With an Alternative Cumulative High School GPA and Coursetaking Threshold

Students who would be eligible for college-level math if the eligibility criteria was: High school GPA of 1.92 or higher OR earning a C or better in Algebra II, Precalculus, or Calculus



2014-2017 high school graduates who enrolled in a CTC with the intent of earning a credential. Excludes students who participated in Running Start in high school.

Source:
OSPI CEDARS student-level data and SBCTC data via ERDC

The results of this analysis demonstrate the challenges in achieving both access and racial equity goals by making incremental changes to current transcript-based placement policies.This exercise in testing various policy alternatives highlights the only way to achieve both equity and access is to lower placement thresholds to a point that renders them inconsequential.

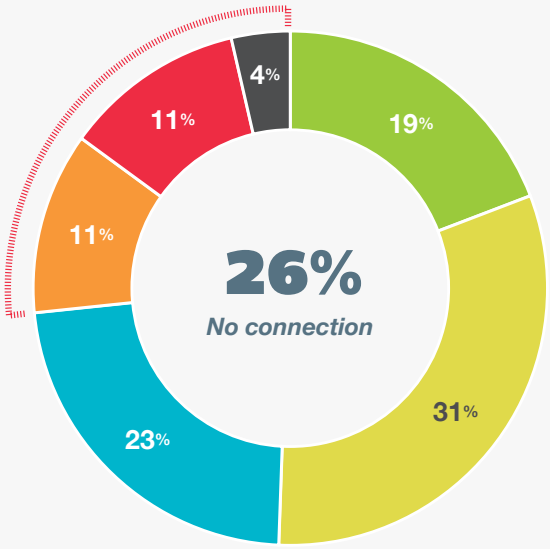
The revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.230.090 states that "**the purpose of a high school diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education,** gainful employment, and citizenship and is equipped with the skill to be a lifelong learner."

By adhering strictly to GPA and course grades CTCs are diminishing the value of a high school diploma as stated in RCW. Transcript-based placement that relies on GPA and course criteria would reify the current system paradigm — one that assumes a high school diploma is not sufficient evidence of college readiness, puts the onus on students to prove their "readiness," and disproportionately harms students of color for the K-12 system's inability to provide them with equitable learning opportunities. This inequitable access compounds with the earlier findings (on underplacement) that when students complete advanced-level courses, they still face additional barriers. **Leaders who are committed to access and equity goals must decide if they want to change placement criteria in a way that reinforces the current paradigm or start again under a new framework that centers racial equity, responds to student requests, and provides enhanced support so that students can succeed in those courses.** As Figure 22 shows, nearly a quarter of students reported not being able to connect with staff to support them. Placement policies are just one place to intervene. Essential to shifts in placement are cultural shifts on the campus. Coordinated support efforts retain students, keeping them on the path towards completion and the meaningful futures they envision for themselves.

Figure 22.
Access to Staff When Needing Academic Support
Student responses to the statement, "If I'm struggling academically there are staff at this college to support me"

N = 219

Source:
Multiple Measures Regional Survey



- *Strongly Agree*
- *Agree*
- *Kind of Agree*
- *Kind of Disagree*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly Disagree*

"If I'm struggling academically there are staff at this college to support me"

Courtesy of South Seattle College

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence summarized in this report provides new and important insights into student experiences in the Road Map Project region. The themes are familiar: The K-12 and CTC systems have known about these issues for at least a decade and efforts to date have not reduced the number of students who place into precollege courses, accelerated success in those courses, or addressed long-standing racial inequities. Improvements have been made, yet have not yielded results that address the magnitude of racial inequity in the system.

The failure to wholly provide equitable support for students of color suggests possible flaws in the theory of change that underlies prior improvement attempts. In Washington State, colleges have high levels of autonomy relative to colleges in states that have more centralized CTC systems. In this decentralized context, many improvement efforts rely on a theory that college leaders will adopt a new policy if they have evidence from another college in the state that the policy in question can achieve a desired result. Change efforts often start by attempting small scale "pilot projects" at one college or a small group of colleges and then attempt to document the outcomes under the assumption that documentation and broad dissemination will persuade leaders at other colleges to adopt the new policy. This theory — premised on concepts of local control and voluntary adoption of policies — deserves deeper interrogation.

With all these factors in mind, we're making a recommendation for a statewide paradigm shift in how placement is thought about and implemented, along with specific, more immediate recommendations supported by the evidence in this report that can better support students of color and reduce the inequities at play.

Pushing for a paradigm shift in placement

To improve access to college-level courses and increase racial equity in college placement outcomes for students across Washington state, we recommend that CTCs make placement into college-level courses the default for all recent high school graduates.

Faced with similar issues related to precollege education and institutional racism, other states have moved away from a voluntary college-by-college theory of change to one driven explicitly by state policy. California lawmakers recently passed legislation creating a new approach to assessment and placement under which, "students are no longer asked to prove they are ready for [college-level] courses. Instead, colleges must prove if students are not ready" (Cuellar Mejia, Rodriguez and Johnson 2020). This shift represents a sea change. Early evidence suggests that this approach can dramatically improve access to college-level courses and reduce inequity across racial and ethnic groups. It also shows a 20-25 percentage point increase in college-level course completion, refuting the notion that many students previously sorted into precollege courses are "not ready" to succeed in college-level coursework (Cuellar Mejia, Rodriguez and Johnson 2020).

We call on Washington State education leaders to support statewide action that would ensure the rapid implementation of default college-level placement for all recent high school graduates. A statewide approach is needed to reduce and eliminate the harm being caused to students and communities of color, and must:

- Align relevant policies between the K-12 and postsecondary system;
- Develop systems of accountability in order to actively track and address equity gaps;
- Leverage lessons learned from colleges who have proactively sought to address equity gaps in the placement process;
- Support the implementation of related statewide policy initiatives, such as Guided Pathways; and
- Shift institutional resources from practices that support a gatekeeping philosophy to practices that support holistic student support.

Placement models which reflect this framework shift have been enacted in various states, and there are also colleges in Washington state that have moved towards a default college-level philosophy. These examples could act as feasible case studies for educators. Racial justice advocates — including equity-minded leaders in the community and technical college system — could organize a lobbying effort to ensure that statewide policies are introduced and implemented in an expeditious manner. In Washington State, groups like the Equity in Education Coalition, the College Promise Coalition and Washington Roundtable could play defining roles in this effort.

Eradicating racist policies and other systemic barriers that impact students of color will be incredibly challenging. Road Map Project region CTC leaders — including presidents, faculty and staff at all levels — can begin by adopting an antiracist approach to their improvement efforts. In taking an antiracist approach, leaders would explicitly seek to improve racial equity between racial groups, acknowledge that **race-neutral policies do not create racial equity** and be comfortable allocating resources to creating new policies that account for these inherent inequities. CTC leaders can also contextualize assessment and placement not as a single event, but as part of a connected experience that spans K-12 and postsecondary education. Indeed, fixing assessment and placement problems will require a deep examination of history to understand why colleges were initially created and who they were created to serve.

K-12 and Community and Technical College Recommendations

Four more immediate recommendations and aligned actions that can help the current system evolve in this direction include:

1. Center students of color in the redesign of placement practices and ensure that they experience the enrollment and placement process as welcoming, trusting, and empowering.
2. Transform placement practices and transcript-based placement policies to maximize student access to college-level courses.
3. Investigate and acknowledge the impact of current placement practices on students of color.
4. Investigate and acknowledge the impact of inequitable grading distribution and access to math for students of color in K-12.

Each recommendation is accompanied with aligned actions and toolkits for the key leaders who can affect change. Access the full toolkit to view suggested actions for Community & Technical College (CTC) leaders, K-12 leaders, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Center students of color in the redesign of placement practices and ensure that they experience the enrollment and placement process as welcoming, trusting, and empowering.

Students of color must form the nucleus of any improvement effort. They should be engaged as co-equal partners in all aspects of policy development and implementation and CTC leaders must center their experiences as a direct reflection of the effectiveness of current policies. There are practical ways to make this happen that CTC leaders could implement right away.
Click for Recommendation 1 toolkit actions.

ACTIONS	*Key Leaders to Drive Change*
Develop and maintain a stakeholder accountability group, comprised of students, families, high school, and college representatives, as well as community partners to review placement data (access, equity, success) and provide input and guidance on placement policies.	**CTC Leaders**
College staff, in partnership with students of color, develop, implement, and evaluate practices that require learning about students' educational goals and abilities, as well as providing the support needed to be successful in college courses.	**CTC Leaders**
Develop and evaluate asset-based policies that affirm the knowledge, experiences and abilities that students possess when they enter college.	**CTC Leaders**

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Transform placement practices and transcript-based placement policies to maximize student access to college-level courses.

CTC faculty, staff and administrators control their own assessment and placement policies and can act collectively, in partnership with K-12 districts, to move toward policies that make college-level placement the default for all recent high school graduates. In the Road Map Project region, the Puget Sound Coalition for College and Career Readiness and King County Promise are vehicles that can facilitate collective action across colleges on this issue.

We acknowledge that developing and implementing a default college-level placement policy and changing state laws surrounding CTC placement will take time. Meanwhile, leaders can make immediate changes with the actions outlined in the table below.

Click for Recommendation 2 toolkit actions.

ACTIONS	*Key Leaders to Drive Change*
Eliminate underplacement through the utilization of transcript-based placement as the default method for all recent high school graduates.	**CTC Leaders** **SBCTC** **K-12 leaders**
Broaden the high school GPA and course grade thresholds used in college-level placement criteria to increase access to and success in college-level courses. Prioritize approaches that improve racial equity.	**CTC Leaders** **SBCTC**
Mitigate shortcomings to transcript-based placement by offering a range of flexible, non-test based assessment options to maximize the number of students who enter and complete transfer-level coursework within a one-year timeframe.	**CTC Leaders** **SBCTC**
Eliminate or condense precollege course sequences that place students in precollege courses for longer than one quarter. Explore alternatives to precollege courses to maximize students' likelihood of entering completing college-level math and English.	**CTC Leaders** **SBCTC**
Prioritize communication to students, families and high school counselors about their assessment and placement options.	**CTC Leaders** **SBCTC** **K-12 leaders** **OSPI**
Publicly post information about placement methods and outcomes on both college and statewide platforms. Include data on underplacement (i.e., students who meet college placement criteria but take precollege courses).	**CTC Leaders** **SBCTC**

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Investigate and acknowledge the impact of current placement practices at your institution on students of color.

Individual colleges must reckon with racial inequities in placement outcomes within the context of their college and local community. These efforts should use quantitative and qualitative data sources to investigate the impact of their current policies on students of color. Engaging faculty, staff, and students themselves in "participatory action research" models can signal deep institutional commitment to this effort.
Click for Recommendation 3 toolkit actions.

ACTIONS	*Key Leaders to Drive Change*
Evaluate and assess placement method and subsequent outcomes to better understand and address racial inequity in precollege coursetaking.	**CTC Leaders** **SBCTC**
Publish a statement that acknowledges current placement policies are harmful to students of color, apologizes to students who have been harmed, and commits to improving policies to better support racial equity goals.	**CTC Leaders** **SBCTC**
Investigate institutional culture to identify and address implicit bias and gatekeeping practices within the enrollment, placement, and advising process.	**CTC Leaders** **SBCTC**

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Investigate and acknowledge the impact of inequitable grading distribution and access to math for students of color.

Individual K-12 districts must reckon with gaps in grading and access to rigorous courses by investigating the drivers of those inequities. These efforts should use quantitative and qualitative data sources to investigate the impact of their current policies on students of color. Engaging teachers, staff and students themselves in "participatory action research" models can signal deep institutional commitment to this effort.
Click for Recommendation 4 toolkit actions.

ACTIONS	*Key Leaders to Drive Change*
Investigate grading practices and course access issues to better understand and address racial inequity in GPA and higher-level math coursetaking.	**K-12 Leadership** **OSPI**
Publish a statement that acknowledges racial inequity in regards to access to high quality learning opportunities and higher-level math courses for students of color, apologizes to students who have been denied those opportunities, and commits to improving policies to better support racial equity goals.	**K-12 Leadership** **OSPI**
Investigate institutional culture to identify and address implicit bias and gatekeeping practices within high school coursetaking and the college preparation process.	**K-12 Leadership** **OSPI**

LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE INQUIRY

We acknowledge the limitations of this study and have tried to note them throughout the report. There are four key limitations of note:

- For our research, we spoke to a relatively small sample of students as part of this report, due in part to this research occurring throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and remote schooling. Student voices and experiences are vital to improving the assessment and placement process and we would have liked to engage more students.
- Coursetaking findings from the study are limited to students who enroll from Road Map Project region K-12 districts, but CTCs serve a student population that is considerably more diverse (e.g., adults, students enrolling from districts outside of the region, etc.). For this reason, report findings should not be generalized to apply to all incoming students at Washington CTCs.
- The study focused on the outcomes of transcript-based placement policies, but did not include an investigation into the development or implementation of those policies. The authors acknowledge that faculty play a key role on most college campuses in developing and maintaining assessment and placement policies, and that college staff responsible for assessment and placement also play critical roles in its effective implementation.
- As noted elsewhere in the report, we did not have access to information on which placement method students use when they are assessed for "college readiness." While some colleges collect this information it is not currently available in a comprehensive way that lends itself to region-wide analysis.

Possible future studies and efforts to improve the assessment and placement process include:

- Additional engagement with students — and students of color in particular — to better understand their experiences and thoughts on how the assessment and placement process can be improved.
- Study of assessment and placement policy development and implementation to identify possible breakdowns in policy intent and policy impact.
- Investigation into the relationship between high school coursetaking, placement method used and placement outcome. As noted, this would require new data collection, but would shed light on a critical aspect of the assessment and placement process that is currently obscured due to lack of data.
- Inquiry into trends in enrollment and success in college-level math and English courses. This is especially critical as CTC assessment and placement policies change, in order to understand if those changes lead to an improvement in student outcomes.

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TOOLKIT

This toolkit provides ideas for how to plan for, communicate, implement, and evaluate the recommendations made from the findings revealed in ***Inequity by Design: How College Placement Policies Perpetuate Institutional Racism.*** *This toolkit is intended to be a helpful guide and a starting point, yet it is in no way comprehensive. We recognize each institution is at its own crossroads or path with addressing racial inequity in student success and we believe the actions below can be applied to making progress at each individual institution.*

If you are an advocate, use these recommendations and form an action plan to bring these solutions to educators and policymakers in your community.

More broadly, our long-term goal is to push for a paradigm shift in placement processes and practices across Washington state. We encourage a more coordinated effort across the state to address the roots of the inequities inherent in the current system.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Center students of color in the redesign of placement practices and ensure that they experience the enrollment and placement process as welcoming, trusting, and empowering.

ACTION

Develop and maintain a stakeholder accountability group comprised of students, families, high school, and college representatives, as well as community partners to review placement data (access, equity, success) and provide input and guidance on placement policies.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Ensure students of color are represented and make up the majority of stakeholders in the group.
- Intentionally recruit participants who are historically excluded from decision-making.
- Conduct a racial equity impact assessment to understand how different racial and ethnic groups are impacted by current and proposed practices.
- Co-create institutional values and a racial equity commitment for the enrollment and placement process for students.
- Use collaborative decision-making that shares real power with those most impacted.
- Agree to conduct an annual, third party student survey to gather feedback on how the placement process can be further improved.

ACTION

College staff, in partnership with students of color, develop, implement, and evaluate practices that require learning about students' educational goals and abilities, as well as providing the support needed to be successful in college courses.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Conduct a racial equity organizational assessment to understand and identify areas for improving support provided to students.
- Develop and implement systems that regularly ask students about how the enrollment and placement processes can better support their success.
- Implement protocol that requires enrollment staff to share academic support services with students and builds into their education plan.
- Ensure academic supports are culturally responsive and easily accessible for all students.

ACTION

Develop and evaluate asset-based policies that affirm the knowledge, experiences and abilities that students possess when they enter college.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Implement a protocol that uses appreciative and strengths-based approaches to identify students' strengths, skills, and interests and that connects to students' educational goals.
- Identify touch points during enrollment that articulate and affirm students' goals, make the connection with how high school coursetaking has prepared them for college courses, and confirms their readiness for college. Address areas to be strengthened and evaluate them regularly.
- Develop or strengthen asset-based tools such as Directed Self Placement that shift conversations with students from "what are you lacking" to "what are you bringing."
- Conduct a communication audit with students of color to review all forms of written communication that students receive during enrollment. Identify areas to strengthen and infuse with asset and strengths-based framing.
- Implement holistic and trauma-informed enrollment, advising, and instructional practices that acknowledge the multi-layered identities and experiences of CTC students.

Resources to support implementation of actions

- Holistic Student Supports Redesign Toolkit
- Trauma-Informed Practices for Postsecondary Education
- College on Purpose
- Holistic Advising
- Designing a System for Strategic Advising
- Organizational Race Equity Toolkit

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Transform placement practices and transcript-based placement policies to maximize student access to college-level courses.

ACTION

Eliminate underplacement through the utilization of transcript-based placement as the default method for all recent high school graduates.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Initiate a protocol that ensures college placement or enrollment staff review high school transcripts, (official, unofficial, self-report) and other available measures (SBAC, AP, SAT, etc) as the default placement for high school graduates within 10 years.
- Expand policies to accept highschool transcripts for at least 10 years after graduation. Consult and use existing research, provided in toolkit resources, to support this policy change.
- Create a process where precollege placement is flagged and reviewed before students enroll in precollege courses.
- For high school students who place into precollege, create a policy that requires enrollment in corequisite courses or other curricular approaches that place into college-level, and provide support.
- Explore and advocate for data sharing agreements with local high schools to increase access to and use of high school transcripts for placement.
- Create partnerships with advising staff at feeder high schools to develop seamless processes for incoming seniors. Evaluate effectiveness on a regular basis.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

- Investigate and pursue a statewide policy that makes college-level placement the default for incoming students.
- Examine policies similar to those included in recently enacted California legislation (AB 705 and AB 1805) and consider organizing a lobbying effort in Washington state to introduce and enact similar statewide policies.
- Explore and advocate for data sharing options to increase access to and use of high school transcripts for placement. Until then, eliminate all charges for obtaining transcripts.
- Investigate the viability for students to maintain access to their districts' student portal through the summer after graduation.
- Implement new, or assess current policies to ensure all students have digital copies of transcripts at time of graduation.
- Support protocol across all CTCs that ensures college staff review high school transcripts, (official, unofficial, self-report) and other available measures (SBAC, Bridge to College, AP, SAT,etc) as the default placement for high school graduates within 10 years. Consult and use existing research, provided in toolkit resources, to support this policy change.
- Support the adoption of standard course names and codes across high schools and districts to minimize unnecessary variation across high schools.

K-12 Leaders

- Ensure all students have access to unofficial and official transcripts when they graduate and digital access post graduation.
- Investigate the viability for students to maintain access to their high school's student portal throughout the summer after graduation, at a minimum.
- Explore and advocate for data sharing agreements with local CTCs to increase access to, and use of, high school transcripts for placement.
- Until data sharing agreements are created, eliminate all charges for obtaining transcripts.
- Ensure that college-ready course offerings are ample, and resourced sufficiently, to ensure that all students have access to the courses and supports they need to be ready for college.
- Develop and maintain a stakeholder accountability group comprised of students, families, high school and college representatives, as well as community partners to review placement outcomes and coursetaking of recent graduates.
- Share data with high school staff, administration, students, and families on an annual basis.

ACTION

Broaden the high school GPA and course grade thresholds used in college-level placement criteria to increase access to and success in college-level courses. Prioritize approaches that improve racial equity.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Engage faculty and staff in learning about the current placement outcomes on your campus and communicate goals for reducing racial equity gap.
- Use recommendations from this report and other research to implement a GPA and coursetaking placement policy with a focus on increasing access and reducing racial equity gap for eligibility. HS GPA should be added to any math transcript placement policy.
- Pilot a continuous improvement or Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle to implement and evaluate new placement thresholds.
- Create benchmarks for equitable pass rates across all sections of college-level math and English and review quarterly.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

- Use recommendations from this report and other research to advocate for a standard GPA and course completion placement policy.
- Utilize other placement policies such as Placement Reciprocity and Bridge to College as leverage for statewide agreements.
- Advocate for equity in course offerings across high schools and districts.
- Organize a professional development and action summit for faculty across the state to understand racial inequity within grading and course access in high school and college placement.

ACTION

Mitigate shortcomings to transcript-based placement by offering a range of flexible, non-test based assessment options to maximize the number of students who enter and complete transfer-level coursework within a one-year timeframe.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- For students unable to use high school transcripts, utilize other dynamic placement measures that maximize student access, equity, and success.
- Create a workgroup to explore non-test based assessment options and set a goal for implementation and phasing out of test-based options.
- Develop a checklist that staff use during the placement process to access and review all assessment options. Ensure that the staff responsible for placement use the checklist and create a system for tracking its use.
- Invite students into the decision-making about their coursetaking. Consider allowing students to self place into courses while providing opportunities to discuss relevant experience, strengths and support needs for college courses.
- Develop and implement a system to code and track students' placement measures. Use these codes to perform annual evaluations of course access and success, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other factors such as age, gender, etc.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

- Create incentives for CTCs to stop using standardized testing as a placement tool for all students, especially those who have graduated high school in the last 10 years.
- Track and report on all Guided Pathways CTCs in their implementation of "A placement process is in place that includes a range of instruments designed to provide students placement and support for completion of college-level math and English within the first year of enrollment in their program of study."
- Provide professional development opportunities for CTC faculty and assessment staff to develop non-test based assessment options for placement.

ACTION

Eliminate or condense precollege course sequences that place students in precollege courses for longer than one quarter. Explore alternatives to precollege courses to maximize students' likelihood of entering and completing college-level math and English.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Investigate and analyze precollege outcomes to determine benefit to student success and alignment with college equity goals.
- Identify resources, supports, and assessment practices to support faculty with providing instruction that combines high challenge with high support for students to place into and succeed in college courses.
- Provide CTC math and English faculty with professional development for pedagogical strategies that support students of color in college courses.
- Allocate resources for academic support services and create a process that connects students to the services and tracks participation.
- Develop a plan for offering more sections of college math and English to accommodate the increased enrollment of eligible students.
- Evaluate success of corequisite courses and other curricular approaches regularly. Corequisites and others do not need to show higher success rates than current college-level courses, although they need to show higher success than the developmental sequence.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

- Provide resources and/or incentives to colleges to significantly reduce or eliminate precollege courses.
- Amplify the outcomes of corequisite courses and other curricular approaches that increase equitable access and completion of gatekeeper courses in a central location for all Washington CTCs.

ACTION

Prioritize communication to students, families and high school counselors about their assessment and placement options.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Ensure all outreach presentations include detailed information about assessment and placement options.
- Collaborate with stakeholder accountability group to determine the best format to share assessment and placement information and identify opportunities for broad dissemination.
- Ensure information and steps for the placement process are published and easy to find on college websites, campus, or other outward facing platforms.
- Include information about placement policies when communicating with students in all enrollment and admissions correspondence.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

- Create a template for CTC and high school staff to use that provides information about placement policies and students' ability to access college-level courses.
- Recommend that CTCs distribute this information in all enrollment and admissions correspondence and on their websites.
- Recommend that high schools distribute this information to all seniors when discussing High School and Beyond Plans.

K-12 Leaders

- Initiate or evaluate the protocol with High School & Beyond Plans that ensures students know about their placement options at transfer college. Also ensure they understand the importance of using high school transcripts and the difference between precollege and college courses.
- Talk to students early on about how their math coursetaking in high school and GPA will impact their postsecondary plans. Ensure high school math teachers, counselors and families are informed and supporting students along the way.
- Provide students with reports each term that show what courses they have completed, and a personalized roadmap for 2- and 4- year college readiness to assist them in course planning.
- Create partnerships with enrollment staff (admissions, placement, financial aid) at local CTCs to stay informed of placement policies and develop seamless processes for incoming seniors. Evaluate effectiveness on a regular basis.

ACTION

Publicly post information about placement methods and outcomes on both college and statewide platforms. Include data on underplacement (i.e., students who meet college placement criteria but take precollege courses).

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Ensure placement options are published and easy to find on college websites, and that they spotlight the most equity-producing measures.
- Publicly post placement results, including the number of students assessed and the number of students placed into college-level courses and precollege courses disaggregated by race and ethnicity.
- Share placement results annually with CTC faculty and staff, feeder high schools, and SBCTC.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

- Provide a platform for all CTCs to publicly post placement results, including the number of students assessed, placed into college-level courses, corequisite courses, and precollege courses disaggregated by race and ethnicity.
- Host an annual college access and equity summit to review statewide high school to college transition and placement outcomes.
- Create an annual review of all CTCs to ensure placement measures and steps for the placement process are published and easy to find on college websites.

Resources to support implementation of actions

- Research on length of HS transcript as a predictor for student success
- Tool to identify students likelihood of success
- Case Closed on Traditional Remediation
- Making the case for corequisite courses
- Real Leadership for Educational Equity: If not now, when?

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Investigate and acknowledge the impact of current placement practices at your institution on students of color.

ACTION

Evaluate and assess placement method and subsequent outcomes to better understand and address racial inequity in precollege coursetaking.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Conduct annual analysis on where each placement measure places students, correlation with success in and completion of gateway courses for incoming students. Disaggregate by race/ethnicity.
- Share data with stakeholder group to create and evaluate solutions.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

- Conduct an annual statewide analysis of placement measures and outcomes, completion of gateway courses and credential attainment of incoming students. Disaggregate by race/ethnicity.
- Host an annual college access and equity summit to review statewide high school to college transition and placement outcomes.

ACTION

Publish a statement that acknowledges current placement policies are harmful to students of color, apologizes to students who have been harmed, and commits to improving policies to better support racial equity goals.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Make clear statements to campus faculty and staff about racial inequity within placement and make the case that new policies are necessary to reach racial equity goals.
- Make a clear, public commitment to revise college placement policies as a way to increase access and improve racial equity. Post commitment on college website and all outreach materials.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

- Make clear statements to all CTC faculty and staff about racial inequity within placement and make the case that new policies are necessary to support their racial equity goals. Include explicit examples of policies and practices that need to be changed to ensure clarity and accountability.
- Post the statement on CTC website and share in public forums.

ACTION

Investigate institutional culture to identify and address implicit bias and gatekeeping practices within the enrollment, placement, and advising process.

Steps for Implementation:

Community and Technical College Leaders

- Evaluate practices of the campus testing center to determine what measures are routinely offered to students and whether there are discrepancies between racial groups.
- Conduct focus groups with students and families aimed at understanding student experience with enrollment, placement, and advising processes.
- Conduct focus groups with staff, faculty, and administrators aimed at understanding and identifying factors that may contribute to implicit bias or gatekeeping within the enrollment, placement, and advising process.
- Collaborate with stakeholder accountability groups to provide context for focus groups, design questions, and develop solutions.
- Establish new course placement processes and policies that address and seek to mitigate implicit bias and gatekeeping practices.
- Interrogate the institutional power structures where placement decisions are made to identify bias and gatekeeping practices.
- Using an antiracist lens, create a process and policy for how placement decisions get made, in order to support the college's goals of becoming an equity-producing institution.
- Set up accountability measures to monitor new practices and processes identified to reduce implicit bias and gatekeeping practices.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

- Conduct statewide focus groups with students and families aimed at understanding student experience with enrollment, placement and advising processes at all CTCs.
- Conduct focus groups with CTC staff, faculty and administrators aimed at understanding and identifying factors that may contribute to implicit bias or gatekeeping within the enrollment, placement and advising process.
- Collaborate with stakeholder accountability group to provide context for focus groups, design questions and develop solutions.
- Interrogate the institutional power structures where placement decisions are made to identify bias and gatekeeping practices.
- Set up accountability measures to monitor new practices and processes identified to reduce implicit bias and gatekeeping practices.

Resources to support implementation of actions

- Equitable Placement Toolkit
- Implicit Bias Test
- Safe Colleges Implicit Bias and Microaggression Awareness on Campus

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Investigate and acknowledge the impact of inequitable grading distribution and access to math for students of color.

ACTION

Investigate grading practices and course access issues to better understand and address racial inequity in GPA and higher-level math coursetaking.

Steps for Implementation:

K-12 Leaders

- Conduct yearly evaluation of GPA distribution and share with high school staff, administration, students, and families.
- Identify the courses with the most inequitable pass rates and set benchmarks to increase equitable outcomes.
- Investigate and interrogate the factors that lead to disproportionate numbers of students of color terminating their math pathway at Algebra II.
- Evaluate data related to the access to Algebra II and higher math courses disaggregated by race and ethnicity.
- Make a plan to increase access to pre-calculus and calculus for students historically underrepresented in those courses.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

- Conduct an annual evaluation of GPA distribution across the state and share with K-12 administration, educators, students, and families.
- Identify courses with the most inequitable pass rates and set statewide benchmarks to increase equitable outcomes.
- Conduct research on how students' math courses are determined between grades 7-12. Identify inconsistencies and disparate impact.
- Investigate and interrogate the factors that lead to disproportionate numbers of students of color terminating their math pathway at Algebra II.
- Conduct a statewide analysis of student enrollment in high school math courses, that considers coursetaking of Running Start students, disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

ACTION

Publish a statement that acknowledges racial inequity in regards to access to high quality learning opportunities and higher-level math courses for students of color, apologizes to students who have been denied those opportunities, and commits to improving policies to better support racial equity goals.

Steps for Implementation:

K-12 Leaders

- Make clear statements to district teachers and staff about racial inequity in access to math courses and make the case that new practices are neccessary because they are equitable and anti-racist.
- Consult with stakeholder accountability group to provide input of experience and develop solutions.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

- Make clear statements to district teachers and staff about racial inequity in access to math courses and make the case that new practices are necessary to support their racial equity goals. Include explicit examples of policies and practices that need to be changed to ensure clarity and accountability.
- Post the statement on CTC website and share in public forums.

ACTION

Investigate institutional culture to identify and address implicit bias and gatekeeping practices within high school coursetaking and the college preparation process.

Steps for Implementation:

K-12 Leaders

- Conduct focus groups with students and families aimed at understanding student experience with college preparation and coursetaking offerings throughout their K-12 journey.
- Conduct focus groups with teachers and counselors aimed at understanding and identifying processes that impact inequitable course offerings and college preparation.
- Collaborate with stakeholder accountability group to provide context for focus groups, design questions, and develop solutions.
- Set up accountability measures to monitor new practices and processes identified to reduce implicit bias and gatekeeping practices.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

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- Conduct focus groups with teachers and counselors aimed at understanding and identifying processes that impact inequitable course offerings and college preparation.
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- Set up accountability measures to monitor new practices and processes identified to reduce implicit bias and gatekeeping practices.

Resources to support implementation of actions

- Grading for Equity
- Real Leadership for Educational Equity: If not now, when?
- Implicit Bias Test
- Safe Colleges Implicit Bias and Microaggression Awareness on Campus