

**First-in-Nation Law to Reduce Barriers to Advanced Classes for All Students
Adopted In Washington State**

***Families Commend Legislature, Inslee for Historic Bill That Expands
Equity in High School Dual Credit, Advanced Placement***

Legislation Championed by Stand for Children - Washington

Olympia, WA -- Washington State is now the first state in the country to adopt an automatic enrollment policy for advanced math, English, and science classes in all high schools. The policy, also known as Academic Acceleration, is designed to reduce historic barriers to dual credit and advanced class enrollment, especially for underrepresented students. In addition to reducing enrollment disparities in advanced courses, the attainment of college-level credit in high school also reduces financial barriers for post-secondary opportunities. A review of education policy research on Academic Acceleration is available at the conclusion of this press release.

“Stand for Children and our tireless advocates will continue to strengthen programs that work to lift more kids toward bright, successful futures. If students are qualified for advanced coursework, we expect to see them challenged and ultimately surpassing every indicator of student success,” said Libuse Binder, Executive Director at Stand for Children Washington, a longtime champion of the policy and legislation.

The policy was included as part of [HB 1599](#) (section 502, page 49) in an amendment introduced by Senator Mark Mullet, passed by the state legislature on April 22 and signed by Governor Inslee on Tuesday, May 7th. School districts have until the 2021-22 school year to implement the policy and the law also allows families to opt their student out of the advanced classes if desired.

The 2019-2021 biennium budget passed by the Washington State Legislature includes funding to provide for dual credit programs including subsidized Advanced Placement exam fees and International Baccalaureate class fees and exam fees for low-income students.

Stand for Children Washington, a bipartisan education advocacy organization, championed the legislation as partners in the [High School Success Coalition](#) along with Black Education Strategy Roundtable, College Success Foundation, Graduate Tacoma, Treehouse, and Washington Roundtable.

What is Academic Acceleration?

Academic Acceleration is a process where students who meet standard on state-level exams are automatically placed into the next most rigorous course in the matching content area(s). As of 2018, at least 50 school districts in Washington have already implemented the policy and a majority have improved the equity of advanced classes by enrolling more historically

underserved students (Stand for Children analysis of OSPI data, 2018). The program seeks to rectify historic bias that has limited access for students of color and other underserved groups to advanced education options.

Research on Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment programs (partnerships between high schools and colleges) show that advanced, college-credit earning programs increase students' likelihood to graduate from high school, enroll in college, and to perform better in college. There is also evidence that these effects are particularly profound for low-income students and students of color (see references).

Policy has Roots in Federal Way & Tacoma School Districts, 2013 Legislation

The commitment to ensuring equitable opportunities in advanced coursework in Washington was pioneered by Federal Way Public Schools - the state's 9th largest district - when its school board implemented an Academic Acceleration policy in 2010-11. The district saw a dramatic rise in enrollment of advanced classes with a notable increase for students of color. According to 2019 data, passing rates for advanced classes at Federal Way are at 92% and all racial subgroups are passing at rates of 87% or higher.

"I saw the dramatic benefits of academic acceleration firsthand when the policy was instituted while serving on the Federal Way School Board in 2011, and those benefits, particularly for scholars of color, have continued," **said Senator Claire Wilson of the 30th legislative district, vice-chair of the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee.** "It surpasses my greatest hopes for my first year as a lawmaker that this opportunity gap-closing strategy will be available to all students in school districts across our state. Equitable access to academic acceleration is a fundamental, essential investment that enables more scholars, particularly those from communities of color, to fulfill their potential and thrive in the diverse communities to whom we look for new generations of scholars and leaders." Senator Wilson was also the co-sponsor of the Academic Acceleration policy's original legislative vehicle, SB 5343.

Inspired by the success in Federal Way, in 2013 the Washington State Legislature passed [HB 1642](#), championed by Stand for Children - Washington, which established the Academic Acceleration Incentive Program to encourage adoption of the policy with grants for school districts. As recently as 2016-17, school districts who received the grant and implemented the policy saw significant gains in enrollment by students of historically underrepresented populations ([OSPI, 2018](#)).

"Every kid deserves to know they are capable of tackling any challenge and that they are worthy of the opportunity to try. After six years of pursuing this policy, I'm so proud of this outcome and everyone that helped us get there," **said Representative Eric Pettigrew of the 37th district in South Seattle, the prime sponsor of the 2013 bill.**

Tacoma Public Schools - the state's fourth largest district - followed Federal Way's lead in 2014-15 and has similarly seen dramatic increases in enrollment across all student groups.

Enrollment in advanced classes has doubled from 27.5% to 71.1% for all students since 2013 and tripled for historically underserved students of color from 19.5% to 60% (Tacoma Public Schools, 2019).

“We’ve seen huge results in Tacoma with more kids taking these classes and these exams. And that corresponds with more kids graduating. And as those numbers go up, we have to remember that each one of those numbers is a kid,” **said Josh Garcia, Deputy Superintendent of Tacoma Public Schools and one of the original architects of the policy in Federal Way.**

References: Advanced classes improve graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment

Linda Hargrove, Donn Godin, and Barbara Dodd, [College Outcomes Comparisons by AP and Non-AP High School Experiences](#) (New York: The College Board, 2008).

Chrys Dougherty, Lynn Mellor, and Shuling Jian, [The Relationship Between Advanced Placement and College Graduation](#) (Austin, Texas: National Center for Educational Accountability, 2006).

A. Berger et al., [Early College, Early Success: Early College High School Initiative Impact Study](#) (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2014);

Anna Rosefsky Saavedra, "[The Academic Impact of Enrollment in International Baccalaureate Diploma Programs: A Case Study of Chicago Public Schools](#)," Teachers College Record 116, no. 4 (2014);

Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics, Longitudinal Impact of the AP Experience Among AdvanceKentucky Students (Frankfort, KY: Author, 2013);

What Works Clearinghouse, [WWC Intervention Report: Dual Enrollment Programs](#) (Washington, DC: US Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2017).

Relevant Press on Academic Acceleration and Dual-Credit Programs

Guest essay: We need to stop gatekeeping advanced classes, Nate Bowling for the Seattle Times, March 2019

<https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/guest-essay-we-need-to-stop-gatekeeping-advanced-classes/>

Students from Educated Families More Likely to Take Dual-Credit Courses, Education Week, February 2019

https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/high_school_and_beyond/2019/02/students_from_educated_families_more_likely_dual_credit.html?r=1229195431

Gifted programs across Washington leave out Black and Latino students - but Federal Way is one model for change, Seattle Times, April 2017

<https://www.seattletimes.com/education/lab/gifted-programs-across-washington-leave-out-black-and-latino-students-except-in-federal-way/>

Closing the Achievement Gap, One School at a Time, The Atlantic, January 2015

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/01/closing-the-achievement-gap-one-school-at-a-time/431826/>

Proposed Law Would Require Washington Schools to Enroll Students in AP Classes, KUOW, February 2013

<https://kuow.org/stories/proposed-law-would-require-wash-schools-enroll-students-ap-classes/>

Pulling a More Diverse Group of Achievers into the Advanced Placement Pool, New York Times, November 2013: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/27/us/pulling-a-more-diverse-group-of-achievers-into-the-advanced-placement-pool.html>

Advanced Students In Federal Way, Wash. Automatically Enrolled In AP, IB And Cambridge Programs, Huff Post, June 2011 https://www.huffpost.com/entry/advanced-students-federal-way_n_869487

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Stand for Children - Washington

Stand for Children - Washington is a non-profit education advocacy organization focused on ensuring all students receive a high quality, relevant education, especially those whose boundless potential is overlooked and under-tapped because of their skin color, zip code, first language, or disability. To fulfill our mission, we organize parents and community members to speak up and demand excellent schools for their children. We work closely with state legislators to shape education policy and with school districts to implement programming that will benefit every kid. We ensure that the policies we fight for reach classrooms and directly support students by supporting school districts with guidance and tools to implement successful strategies.

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