



**STAND**  
for children

WASHINGTON



# FULFILLING THE PROMISE

2024

## **ACADEMIC ACCELERATION POLICY PROGRESS REPORT**



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# INTRODUCTION

Since 2012, Stand for Children Washington has been tracking and advocating for the adoption and implementation of academic acceleration policies, which are designed to remove barriers to dual credit coursework like College in the High School and Advanced Placement. Five years after the 2019 law requiring that school districts adopt this policy, this **2024 Academic Acceleration Implementation Progress Report** analyzes where we are now and where we have yet to go in order to fulfill the promising potential of academic acceleration policies for students across Washington.

We've witnessed a steady increase in these district-wide policies—from about 50 school districts in 2019 to 219 school districts in 2024—and a statewide progression toward greater access, participation, and success for students as a result. This is heartening evidence of the powerful impact of these policies on the academic opportunities of Washington's students. But we are not yet at 100% policy adoption statewide.

Our 2024 analysis uncovered key equity implications for students in school districts that do not have a policy and have no plans to adopt one, critical issues at the root of non-adoption, and opportunities for policy and advocacy to address this issue and improve students' access to high quality, rigorous coursework that will prepare them for life beyond high school.

## Some key facts about the state of academic acceleration policy adoption in Washington:

- Of the 250 school districts with high schools, 219 (87.6%) have adopted an academic acceleration policy.
- Another 10 (4%) are on track to adopt one in 2024.
- As of July 2024, the remaining 21 (8.4%) do not have plans to adopt a policy.
- Most policy non-adoption districts are located in rural communities with limited advanced course offering capacity.
- Most policy non-adoption districts have small student populations and higher than average percentages of Hispanic/Latino students and Native American students.
- There is little coordinated information-sharing, best practice support, or implementation oversight provided to school districts around academic acceleration, at a systemic level.

There is still work to be done to increase equity and access to advanced courses in Washington State. This report offers further analysis and recommendations for educators, policymakers, and community members who want to ensure that all students have access to the challenging coursework that will inspire and prepare them for life after high school. Requiring policy adoption has served as a powerful catalyst. Now, we must make deeper, more sustained and more coordinated statewide commitments to ensure these policies are producing their intended student outcomes.



# WHAT IS ACADEMIC ACCELERATION?

Academic acceleration policies are designed to reduce historic barriers to dual credit and advanced classes, particularly for underrepresented groups. This includes barriers such as teacher recommendation requirements, essay competitions, or simply a lack of consistent information sharing with students about course options and the course planning process. Academic acceleration policies use objective measures to enroll students who have reached proficiency in a subject area, into the next most rigorous course in that content area in their next year of school. Rather than using subjective measures to enroll students and/or asking students and families to “opt in” to advanced coursework, academic acceleration policies take the opposite approach.

By automatically enrolling students as the default pathway, these policies allow students to “opt out” if they choose, but sends the message that by default, this is where they belong.

In 2019, the Washington State legislature passed HB 1599, requiring all school districts to adopt an academic acceleration policy beginning in the 2021-2022 school year. [Research shows](#) that this requirement has paid off: school districts that adopted a policy show higher overall enrollment in dual credit courses, higher enrollment in advanced math and English courses for historically underrepresented students, and higher GPAs for students from historically represented groups.

## SAMPLE MODEL POLICY

The board recognizes the need for all high school students to have greater access to rigorous advanced courses, including dual credit programs. To that end, the district will automatically enroll students who meet or exceed the state standard on the eighth grade or high school English language arts or mathematics statewide student assessment in the next most rigorous level of advanced courses or program offered by the high school.

The subject matter of the courses or program in which students are automatically enrolled will be determined by the areas of the statewide assessment in which the student met state standards. Students who meet or exceed state standard on the English language arts statewide student assessment are eligible for enrollment in English, social studies, humanities, and other related subjects. Students who meet or exceed the state standard on the mathematics statewide student assessments are eligible for enrollment in advanced mathematics courses. Beginning in 2021-2022 school year, students who meet or exceed the state standard on the Washington comprehensive assessment of science are eligible for enrollment in advanced courses in science.

Students who successfully complete the advanced courses will then be enrolled in the next most rigorous level of advanced courses, with the ultimate goal being the student’s automatic enrollment in dual credit courses.

The district will notify students and parents/guardians regarding the academic acceleration policy and the advanced courses available to students. The district will provide the parent/guardian with an opportunity for the student to opt out of participation in the academic acceleration process and enroll in an alternative course or program that aligns with the student’s high school and beyond plan goals.

[Source: Quincy School District](#)

# POLICY ADOPTION ANALYSIS

The 2019 law required school districts to adopt an academic acceleration policy by the 2021-2022 school year, and while a majority of Washington school districts have adopted an

academic acceleration policy as required by RCW 28A.320.195, as the 2023-2024 school year draws to a close there remain districts that do not have an adopted policy.

	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	PERCENT OF DISTRICTS	STUDENT ENROLLMENT	PERCENT OF STUDENTS
TOTAL DISTRICTS ADOPTED	219	87.6%	1,042,933	94.9%
TOTAL DISTRICTS <b>NOT</b> ADOPTED	31	12.4%	56,064	5.1%

As of July 24, 2024

Note: School districts without high schools, tribal school districts, and charter schools were excluded from this analysis, leaving a total of 250 school districts required to have a policy.

Of the 31 school districts that have yet to adopt the required policy, about one third are in the process of doing so, and the remaining 21 districts have not indicated plans to adopt the policy. These are very small districts, all with under 5,000 students, the majority having less than 1,000 students.

## (POLICY ADOPTION ANALYSIS CONTINUED)

**School districts that have not adopted a policy and are not working towards adoption as of the 2023-2024 school year:**

**21** districts

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ESD	TOTAL ENROLLMENT (22-23)
Castle Rock School District	Educational Service District 112	1,500
Chewelah School District	Educational Service District 101	847
Crescent School District	Olympic Educational Service District 114	362
Easton School District	Educational Service District 105	92
Ferndale School District	Northwest Educational Service District 189	4,704
Garfield School District	Educational Service District 101	120
Harrington School District	Educational Service District 101	125
Highland School District	Educational Service District 105	1,095
Lake Chelan School District	North Central Educational Service District 171	1,310
Lyle School District	Educational Service District 112	210
North Franklin School District	Educational Service District 123	2,079
North River School District	Capital Region ESD 113	60
Orcas Island School District	Northwest Educational Service District 189	782
Othello School District	Educational Service District 123	4,726
Quillayute Valley School District	Olympic Educational Service District 114	3,452
Selkirk School District	Educational Service District 101	261
South Whidbey School District	Northwest Educational Service District 189	1,191
Taholah School District	Capital Region ESD 113	182
Tekoa School District	Educational Service District 101	201
Thorp School District	Educational Service District 105	259
Warden School District	North Central Educational Service District 171	943

*As of July 24, 2024*

## (POLICY ADOPTION ANALYSIS CONTINUED)

Given the small sizes of the non-adopter districts and potential resource constraints including limitations to the breadth of courses they can offer to students, we suspect that simply adopting a policy would not significantly increase student access to dual credit courses.

Most non-adopter districts have dual credit enrollment rates far below the statewide average, likely due to the limited availability of dual credit courses given their small school sizes. They likely do not have the ability to offer multiple sections of classes, making it difficult to distinguish a class on the transcript as “accelerated” or “honors.” Reduced resources to actually offer additional dual credit courses, and the presence of critical competing priorities including school funding constraints and declining enrollments, may explain why some districts do not currently have plans to adopt an academic acceleration policy.

In our outreach, district leaders also identified significant capacity challenges that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We spoke with district leaders who witnessed complete staff turnover and no longer had access to update the website with their adopted policy. Lack of staffing and focus on other COVID-19 priorities meant that some districts did not even know they were out of compliance with this and other policy requirements. Many have embarked on whole-scale review and update of all board policies, which likely means it will take

even longer to adopt an academic acceleration policy in these systems.

Our outreach process also highlighted known gaps in state oversight for required district policies. The State Board of Education tracks the implementation of this policy via a self-report survey, but does not have the authority to follow up with non-compliant districts beyond sharing implementation resources. And there is no requirement that school districts publicly post their academic acceleration policies for families and students to see—begging the question: if a policy exists, but no one can find it, is it really there?

*If a policy exists,  
but no one can find it,  
is it really there?*

These infrastructure and support needs have broad and troubling equity implications for students. Non-adopter districts serve higher proportions of Hispanic/Latino and Native American students. Nearly half of enrolled

students in non-adopter districts are Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students make up nearly 3% of enrolled students in these districts which is more than double the state average. Statewide, overall disparities in dual credit access impact Hispanic/Latino students and Native American students most significantly. While all students have a 64.5% enrollment rate in dual credit, Native American and Hispanic/Latino students are enrolled in dual credit at rates of 45.7% and 59.9%, respectively<sup>1</sup>. These disparities are driven by a number of factors, including opportunity gaps that begin well before high school.

<sup>1</sup> <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>.



**School Districts that are working on adopting a policy  
as of the 2023-2024 school year:**



SCHOOL DISTRICT	ESD	TOTAL ENROLLMENT (22-23)
Cusick School District	Educational Service District 101	369
Fife School District	Puget Sound Educational Service District 121	3,874
Kent School District	Puget Sound Educational Service District 121	25,815
LaCrosse School District	Educational Service District 101	75
Odessa School District	Educational Service District 101	2,30
Palouse School District	Educational Service District 101	179
Prescott School District	Educational Service District 123	219
Lind-Ritzville School District	Educational Service District 101	200
Touchet School District	Educational Service District 123	231
White Pass School District	Capital Region ESD 113	371

*As of July 24, 2024*

# WHAT'S NEXT

Since HB 1599 passed, [we've convened](#) district leaders, state agencies, and researchers to delve into the opportunities and challenges presented by academic acceleration policies and policy implementation. We have synthesized research, district experience, and statewide convening data to identify key drivers of success in attaining dual credit equity statewide. These drivers can be found on our [Journey Map](#) resource. This charts a path to successful, meaningful, impactful implementation of an academic acceleration policy, and highlights six drivers of equity that district and school leaders can engage in to deepen their commitment beyond policy adoption. Districts in any phase of their journey to implement an academic acceleration policy can follow this path of best practices to set their schools up for equitable and sustained success.

What started as a simple monitoring of policy adoption has uncovered a slew of issues—staffing shortages, lack of resources and opportunities for rural districts, lack of oversight or support, and bureaucratic complications, to name just a few. These issues are connected to

larger challenges looming over the Washington state public education landscape, and require our collective attention, advocacy, and innovation. Adopting a policy is a necessary step towards dual credit equity, but it is not sufficient by itself to ensure equitable access.

We have also continued to examine the overall [state of dual credit equity in Washington state](#). In this work we have identified continued disparities in access to many types of dual credit programs, as well as opportunities to increase the value of college credit earned in high school in Washington. One of the most significant areas of opportunity is in Career and Technical Education (CTE) dual credit programs. Nearly 90% of the class of 2022 took a CTE dual credit course, but data suggests that fewer than one-third will earn college credit, and even fewer will be able to apply that credit in the post-secondary environment of their choosing. As we continue to push for robust access to advanced coursework, we must also ensure that the coursework yields continued value for students.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations for Districts & School Leaders

- Confirm your district has an active and publicly accessible academic acceleration policy (RCW 28A.320.195).
- Ensure counselors, classroom educators, students, and families are aware of the policy. This awareness building can and should be integrated with the completion and utilization of the High School and Beyond Plan, as well as the notification requirements in [HB 1146](#).
- Review disaggregated enrollment data for advanced courses, including dual credit.
  - ➔ Is your policy identifying enough qualified students, or are there significant gaps for certain student groups?
- Consider expanding how you identify students as “qualified” beyond a test score.
- Use the six drivers in the [Journey Map](#) to engage in and deepen your commitment beyond policy adoption.

## Recommendations for Legislators & State Agencies

### ➤ Washington Legislature:

- ➔ Pass or update legislation to establish robust support systems, compliance monitoring, and funding mechanisms are in place to ensure academic acceleration policy adoption.
- ➔ Eliminate barriers to advanced courses for students from low-income backgrounds, such as course, transcription, and exam fees.
- ➔ Increase the rate of students earning transferable college credit for CTE dual credit courses by automatically providing students with a transcript, facilitating regional and/or statewide articulation agreements, and more.

- ➔ Direct Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), and Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) to collaborate on collecting and clearly reporting essential data, so the legislature, state agencies, and local communities can identify equity gaps and monitor progress.
- ➔ Link student records across all education levels and agencies via a single course and credit earning system used by all dual credit programs in the state. This is a longer term goal and would require deep cooperation between local districts, colleges, and state education agencies.

### ➤ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction:

- ➔ Ensure greater disaggregated advanced coursework data for school leaders and the public to facilitate student decision-making and district action planning.
- ➔ Identify and disseminate effective methods for addressing the racial/ethnic, geographic, and other disproportionalities that persist in advanced coursework access to school districts and Educational Service Districts (ESDs).

### ➤ State Board of Education:

- ➔ Work with remaining non-adopter districts to ensure the adoption of a policy. Even in a district with few or no accelerated classes, policy adoption can spark a conversation about how to expand access to rigorous coursework that will prepare students for their post-secondary aspirations. Ensure that districts know they can tailor the policy to their unique context as long as the language is compliant with state law.
- ➔ Provide additional support and guidance to small school districts on the implementation of required state policies.





# APPENDIX 1: RESOURCES

## Legal References

- [HB 1642](#) (2013)  
*Established grant program*
- [HB 1599](#) (2019)  
*academic acceleration passed as part of Graduation Pathways bill (See section 502, page 49)*
- [RCW 28A.300.560](#)  
*Data on college credit through dual credit courses—posting on website*
- [RCW 28A.320.195](#)  
*Academic acceleration for high school students—adoption of policy*
- [RCW 28A.320.196](#)  
*Academic acceleration incentive program—Dual credit courses—allocation of funds reports*

## Research

- [Closing Advanced Coursework Equity Gaps for All Students](#)
- [Increasing Access to Advanced Coursework in Washington](#)
- [Leveling Up: A Behavioral Nudge to Increase Enrollment in Advanced Coursework](#)
- [Why Are Black and Latino Students Shut Out of AP STEM Courses?](#)

## State level resources

- [Dual Credit programs in Washington](#)
- [Washington State Report Card](#)
- [Dual Credit Dashboard](#)

## District Resources

- [Student Insight Card](#)—provided by Equal Opportunity Schools, a nonprofit working directly with school districts and states to increase access to dual credit coursework.
- [WA STEM's Equitable Dual Credit Toolkit](#)
- [The Alliance for Resource Equity's Guidebook on Empowering Rigorous Content](#)
- Example policies for Boards of Directors
  - [Tacoma](#)
  - [Franklin Pierce](#)
  - [Quincy](#)
- [Journey Map](#)



# APPENDIX 2: JOURNEY MAP



## The Path to Dual Credit Equity

Dual credit programs are integral for future opportunities for students— young people who engage in dual credit are more likely to graduate, go to college, and earn a degree. Despite this, thousands of students are excluded from dual credit opportunities each year, disproportionately impacting BIPOC students and students from low-income backgrounds.

**In 2019, Washington State became the first state in the country to pass a policy that requires all districts to automatically advance any qualified student to the next most rigorous course.** Adopting and implementing policies around equitable enrollment drives shifts in student access, opportunity, and achievement.

**Stand for Children Washington has synthesized research, district experience, and statewide convening data to identify the most impactful drivers of success, and to chart a path to successful implementation of an academic acceleration policy.**

Districts in any phase of their journey to implement an academic acceleration policy can follow this path of best practices to set their schools up for equitable and sustained success.

### MAP KEY

Each action is accompanied by a symbol(s) from the following key to indicate where support or change is needed to implement the best practices along this path.

- ▲ **Supporting students**  
Opportunities to support students include providing them with necessary information about dual credit programs, removing barriers to dual coursework, building their confidence, and creating inclusive learning environments.
- **Increasing staff capacity**  
Best practices to increase staff capacity include ways to advise and identify students for dual credit coursework as well as increase access to culturally relevant curriculum and teaching practices.
- 🏠 **Shifting district or school procedures**  
Opportunities to shift district or school procedures that will support academic acceleration including using data to inform goals and action plans to increase equitable enrollment, changing enrollment policies and practices, and investing in educator diversity.

For more information about adopting and implementing an academic acceleration policy, please visit our [website](#) or email [wainfo@stand.org](mailto:wainfo@stand.org)



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Prepared by:  
 intentional futures

## ADOPTION

### Formally adopt and publish an academic acceleration policy that:

- ◆ Automatically enrolls students who meet any single eligibility metric.
- ▲◆ Permits self-selection even if other metrics are not met.
- Reinforces the responsibility of school staff to proactively identify students.
- ◆ Reinforces the responsibility of the school to engage and inform families about the academic acceleration policy, advanced coursework options, and benefits.
- ◆ Acknowledges and aims to close equity gaps in advanced course enrollment.



### Automatically enroll students using more expansive readiness metrics

- ◆ Automatically enroll students in the next rigorous course if they meet any metric. Metrics could include:
  - Self-selection
  - Identification based on interests
  - Meeting state standards on exams
  - Strong school attendance
  - School leadership
  - Other non-traditional metrics

*On average, students identified by expanded metrics do just as well if not better than students identified by GPA or test scores alone.*



### Provide training for staff to identify barriers and create asset-based expectations for students

- Ask students about their trusted staff and leverage existing relationships.
- ▲■ Conduct individual meetings with every student to plan coursework that aligns with their strengths, interests, and aspirations.
- ▲■ Increase counseling capacity among all staff and build trust with students.
- Provide professional development for staff on how to use multiple metrics to proactively identify underrepresented students for advanced courses.
- ◆ Invest in teacher and counselor diversity.

## CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT

### Evaluate progress and incorporate learnings to continue improving equitable access

- ◆ Collect, use, and report on data around enrollment to create accountability and drive continuous improvement.
- ◆ Survey students, families, and staff on dual credit experiences and school climate to identify necessary training and resources for improving access and inclusivity.
- ◆ Set cadence to review and possibly amend policy to incorporate learnings that will increase access and enrollment.



### Empower students and families with access to information about dual credit

- ▲◆ Require schools to inform families of the policy, dual credit options, benefits, and financial supports available.
- ▲◆ Leverage or create forums for students to learn about dual credit course opportunities from their peers.
- ▲◆ Engage families starting in middle school in multiple, asset-based, and culturally responsive ways about dual credit (info sessions, advising hours, webinar, newsletter, email, etc).



### Create dual credit classrooms designed for student belonging

- ◆ Create a classroom community where students feel comfortable asking their peers and teachers for help.
- ◆ Conduct culturally responsive outreach to 9th grade classrooms to help shape student perceptions about themselves, dual credit, and a college-going mindset.
- ▲■◆ Use culturally responsive curriculum and create inclusive classroom environment.
- Provide teachers with frequent, growth-oriented feedback and coaching.

*Students are more likely to opt out of advanced courses when they don't see their identities reflected in the curriculum, classroom culture, and/or those teaching the courses.*



### Use data to inform decisions about how to increase access and enrollment

- ◆ Make data around enrollment public, transparent, and current.
- ◆ Use data disaggregated by race and income to create a shared action plan among schools to target support to those historically excluded from dual credit opportunities.
- Share data and train staff on student aspirations, equity, and the power of adult expectations on student academic success.
- ◆ Set ambitious and measurable goals for improving access and publicly report district and school progress.
- ▲ Use student survey data to identify trusted staff.



### Address barriers and capacity needs that exclude students from dual credit opportunities

- ▲◆ End teacher contracts, pre-requisite requirements, 'approval' of student lists, tests or essays for entry into courses, or other practices that inhibit open access.
- ▲◆ Reduce financial barriers for students and families such as fee waivers, transportation subsidies, access to free or low cost materials, etc.
- ◆ Implement retention policies that allow for comfortable risk taking (trial periods, course auditing, pass/fail options to limit GPA impact).
- ▲◆ Require meetings between the student and trusted adult to determine what supports can be offered before opting out of an advanced course.

## IMPLEMENTATION



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Stand for Children is a unique catalyst for educational equity and racial justice to create a brighter future for us all.



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