

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.

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.

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.

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- 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.

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.

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- 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.

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.

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.

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- 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.

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.

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- 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 necessary 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.

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

- 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.



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](#)