

Advocating for Equity Across All Levels of Government

DIMENSION 4:

EMPOWERING, RIGOROUS CONTENT

**ALLIANCE FOR
RESOURCE
EQUITY**

Uniting advocates and education leaders
to unlock excellence for every student



DIMENSION 4:

EMPOWERING, RIGOROUS CONTENT

THE VISION: Each student — including students of colors and students with higher needs — has access to high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum, materials, coursework, and class offerings to meet their needs, so all students can reach high standards and thrive.

KEY QUESTION

4.1

Does each student have access to high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum and instructional materials?

Federal

- **Congress** authorizes, oversees, and funds federal programs that can support the provision of a rigorous, empowering education, including:
 - Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to support students from low-income backgrounds
 - ESSA Title III to support English learners
 - Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) funding to support students with disabilities
 - Impact Aid to support federally connected students
- **The US Department of Education** provides guidance and technical assistance, primarily to state education agencies, about how federal education funds can and should be used to provide high-quality curriculum and instructional materials

State

- **State legislatures** can:
 - Establish statewide standards and graduation requirements (*Note: forty-seven states and the District of Columbia have minimum statewide high school graduation requirements met either by the legislature or state education agency. Colorado, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania leave high school graduation requirements up to local districts*)
 - Work with state boards of education to make pre-service and in-service training on high-quality and culturally relevant practices a requirement for obtaining state teaching licenses
 - Work with state boards of education to limit restrictions that reduce student access to engaging, accurate materials and instead recommend or require that districts adopt only high-quality and culturally relevant curricula



- **State education agencies** can:
 - Distribute state program funding to support and encourage adoption of high-quality curricula
 - Provide guidance on how quality and cultural relevance is defined
 - Issue a list of approved materials and offer guidance to help districts adopt them
 - Recommend open educational resources and partner with curriculum organizations and state universities to create supplemental open materials and guidance
 - Require that districts replace low-quality curricula with standards-aligned curricula to receive federal funding
 - Provide professional learning opportunities to help teachers select high-quality and relevant materials and understand the research behind them

School District

- **Local school boards** evaluate curriculum materials, formally oversee curriculum adoption
- **School districts** can:
 - Provide guidance on how quality and cultural relevance is defined and adapt state-level guidance for local contexts
 - Purchase high-quality curricular materials and create homegrown content informed by partnerships with educators and local communities to embed learning in local contexts
 - Create curriculum evaluation rubrics, facilitate committee reviews of materials, establish pilot programs, and vote on curriculum adoption
 - Provide professional assistance to help teachers use materials that are high-quality and culturally relevant and adapt materials that are not

School

- **School leaders** can:
 - Provide teacher training on what it means for content to be high-quality and culturally relevant, and help teachers adapt content in alignment with these standards
- **Educators** can:
 - Decide how they use district-provided materials in the classroom
 - Adapt the provided materials to their own teaching style and to the interests and needs of their students
 - Integrate their students' families, communities, and culture into their daily instruction

Is each student enrolled in courses that set them up for success in college and a meaningful career, including equal access to advanced courses?

Federal

- **Congress** authorizes and funds programs to help remove barriers and help students of color, English learners, and students from low-income backgrounds prepare for and succeed in advanced or career-aligned courses, including:
 - Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to support students from low-income backgrounds
 - ESSA Title II to support students who are English learners
 - ESSA Title IV, which provides for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment program
 - ESSA Title IX Part A to support children who are experiencing homelessness
 - 21st Century Schools, which helps students cover exam fees, AP or IB courses, and dual enrollment
- **The US Department of Education** can:
 - Collect and publicly report school-level enrollment and outcome data on the race and ethnicity of students doing advanced coursework
 - Provide guidance and technical assistance on removing barriers that prevent children who are experiencing homelessness from accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including career and technical education and advanced coursework

State

- **State legislatures** can:
 - Establish graduation requirements, financial aid completion requirements, and accountability systems aligned to college and career readiness
 - Create incentives for districts, schools, and teachers to expand access to accelerated or career coursework and enable more students to graduate with the most rigorous high school credential
 - Encourage or require districts to equitably enroll qualified students in advanced coursework with policies such as automatic enrollment or universal screening
 - Issue guidance for dual enrollment partnerships and establish dual enrollment eligibility requirements and credit transfer policies
 - Provide funding assistance for placement tests, tuition, registration, and fees
 - Create programs to provide students who are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education with college preparation support or career professional skills
- **State education agencies** can:
 - Offer professional development opportunities for teachers, especially for teachers in advanced coursework and those serving certain student populations
 - Align high school graduation requirements with entry criteria for public colleges and universities
 - Provide financial incentives to attract qualified teachers and encourage teachers to seek credentials in high-need subject areas

- Provide guidance to school counselors to help them identify students for advanced coursework and help students plan for college or a career
- Provide guidance for dual enrollment partnerships between postsecondary institutions and school districts
- Mandate personalized academic and/or career plans for each student that informs them of graduation requirements, scholarship requirements, postsecondary institution admission requirements, opportunities to take advanced coursework and/or earn college credit in high school, and other available career courses
- Include advanced coursework enrollment and outcome data — broken down by race, ethnicity, and income — on school report cards

School District

- **Local school boards** can:
 - Approve rigorous curricula that prepare all students for college and careers
 - Establish systems for student progression and standards for student performance evaluations
 - Implement a rigorous college and career preparatory sequence with an opt-out (rather than opt-in) option
 - Establish multiple entryways into advanced coursework, starting in the earliest grades, and remove unnecessary barriers (i.e., testing fees, etc.)
- **School district administrators** can:
 - Offer professional development opportunities for teachers and counselors to help them shift mindsets that may be rooted in bias
 - Determine advanced course offerings, the number of seats in advanced courses, and class schedules
 - Partner with local postsecondary institutions and businesses

- to offer early college or career experiences
- Set enrollment requirements for advanced courses
- Ensure schools or programs with specialized curriculum, including STEM, provide access to underserved (or underrepresented) students
- Offer specific testing accommodations for students who are English learners and/or students with disabilities
- Collect and publicly report race and ethnicity data and analyze student diversity in advanced courses
- Offer dual-enrollment opportunities for students, and ensure equitable access to those opportunities

School

- **School leaders, educators, and counselors** can work to remove barriers to advanced coursework early on and help all students succeed
- **School leaders** can:
 - Work with district administrators to decide advanced course offerings, the number of seats in advanced courses, and class schedules
 - Survey students to understand their college and career aspirations and allocate resources accordingly
 - Identify students for advanced course enrollment, using multiple measures
 - Hire school counselors to help students plan courses and prepare for life after graduation
 - Provide clear information in families' and caregivers' home languages about the benefits of advanced coursework and recommend courses to prepare their students for college and career options
 - Ensure an adequate pipeline of teachers, including teachers of color, to meet demand for advanced coursework

- Create early-warning systems to identify when students are not meeting readiness goals at each grade level and conduct transcript audits to determine where students get off track
- Partner with postsecondary institutions to have college students with underrepresented backgrounds mentor middle- and high-school students

- Expose students to alumni and community members of color from diverse backgrounds who have pursued a variety of college and career pathways, and give students insight into how education could help them reach their own goals

KEY QUESTION

4.3

Does each student have access to arts and enrichment opportunities beyond core content?

Federal

- **Congress** authorizes and funds the National Endowment for the Arts, which supports arts education research, policy and services in schools and communities
- **The US Department of Education:**
 - Works with the National Endowment for the Arts to set priorities for arts education
 - Distributes federal education funding to support a “well-rounded education,” including enrichment and arts education, through programs such as:
 - The Assistance for Arts Education grant program
 - Title IV of the the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which provides for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program
 - Provides guidance and technical assistance, primarily to state education agencies, about how federal education funds can and should be used
- **The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention** distributes federal grant funding for arts programs for justice-impacted students

State

- **State legislatures and state education agencies** can:
 - Determine certification requirements for teachers in the arts and require arts courses for non-arts teacher certification
 - Require schools to offer instruction in at least one arts discipline
 - Include arts education, foreign language, and other content in state graduation requirements, or require arts education assessments
 - Work with governors to allocate and distribute state funding to support grant programs or schools for the arts
 - Require schools and districts to publicly report arts education offerings for in state accountability systems
 - Work with nonprofit organizations to collect and publicly report data on enrollment in arts courses and the number of qualified arts teachers in the state
- **State boards of education** can:
 - Adopt standards for arts education in pre-K, elementary, and secondary school and establish diploma seals in arts and STEAM education to recognize student arts achievement upon graduation

- Work with state legislatures to require arts education for state accreditation
- **State arts agencies and arts councils** support funding for arts education via chambers of commerce and help connect teaching artists to classrooms

School District

- **Local school boards** can:
 - Approve district-wide arts curricula and enrichment opportunities, including extended school day and summer programming
 - Fund arts education within the school day
 - Establish community partnerships with businesses, nonprofits, teaching artists, and other organizations to provide arts and enrichment opportunities
 - Work with school district administrators to provide professional development for arts education to improve instruction and help all teachers integrate arts into their curriculum
- **School district administrators** can collect data on available arts facilities, instructional minutes devoted to the arts, and the number of arts educators in the district
- **Local arts councils** can support arts programming in schools and community spaces and help connect teaching artists to students

School

- **School leaders** can:
 - Make hiring decisions that impact availability of arts instruction
 - Design school schedules to minimize conflicts between arts and enrichment classes and other core courses
 - Offer professional learning opportunities for arts and non-arts educators, leveraging community resources and allowing time for co-planning among educators
 - Establish after-school, intersession, or summer enrichment programs within existing school budgets
 - Provide information to caregivers in their home languages about how their students can get involved in arts and enrichment opportunities
 - Build connections with postsecondary partners to offer college-level arts and enrichment courses and ensure teachers are trained to offer advanced coursework in arts and enrichment courses
 - Identify and seek grant funding for arts and enrichment opportunities
- **Educators** can design lessons and assessments to authentically integrate the arts into their courses