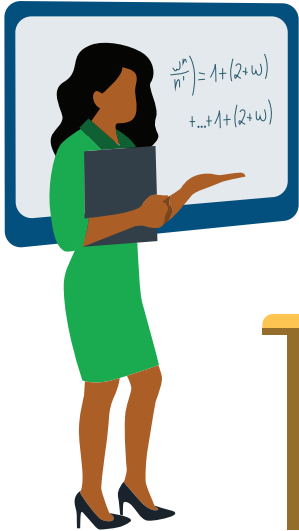


# CHANGES IN Advanced Course Enrollment and Success After Adopting an Academic Acceleration Policy



**Washington state's academic acceleration policy** is designed to reduce barriers to participation in advanced high school courses that disproportionately affect students from historically underrepresented backgrounds (students who identify as Black, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or two or more races and students eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch).

The policy uses universal screening and a behavioral nudge; all students in 11th and 12th grades whose scores on statewide standardized assessments meet the state's proficiency standard are automatically identified as qualified for advanced courses. Students are then automatically enrolled into a more advanced course in the relevant subject (e.g., Honors English instead of regular English, Advanced Placement precalculus instead of regular precalculus), and they receive information about the benefits of advanced courses and have a chance to opt out if desired.

Between 2010–11 and 2020–21, **more than 70 Washington districts adopted an academic acceleration policy.**

Beginning in 2021–22, the state required all districts to adopt the policy. **To examine whether academic acceleration increased students' participation in advanced high school courses** and subsequent academic performance, researchers at the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) compared changes in 72 districts that adopted an academic acceleration policy by 2016–17 with districts that did not implement a policy before adoption became mandatory.



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# Findings in districts that implemented an academic acceleration policy



**Students considered qualified for advanced courses in math** increased enrollment rates in advanced math courses relative to students considered qualified in districts without the policy.



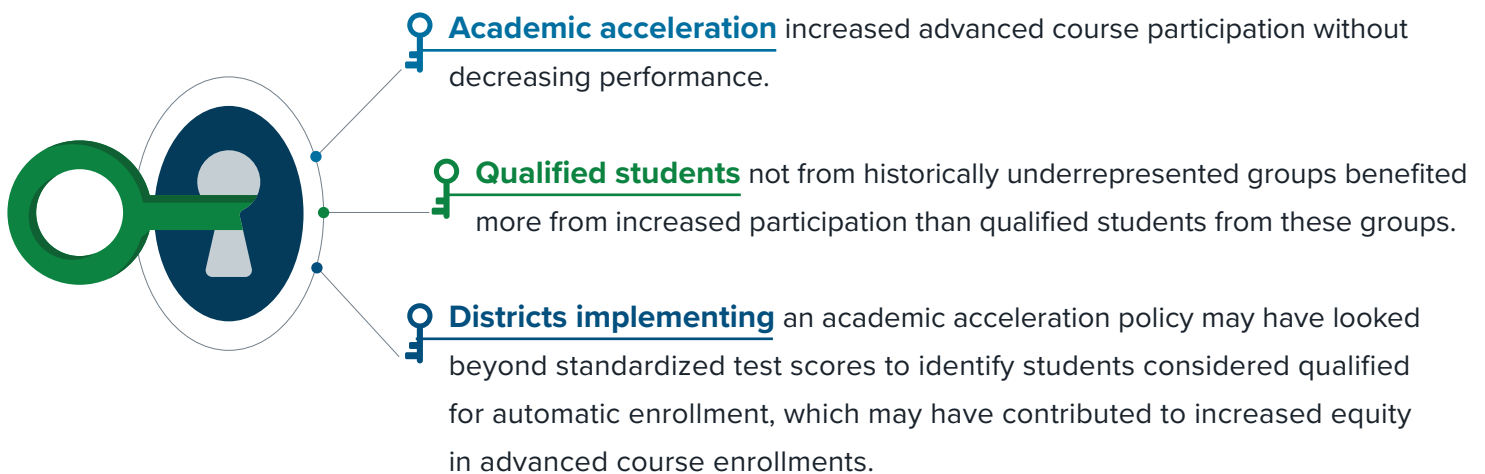
**All students**—regardless of whether they were considered qualified for advanced courses—**increased enrollment rates in any advanced course** more than students in districts without the policy.

**Students from groups historically underrepresented in advanced courses**—regardless of whether they were considered qualified for advanced courses—**increased enrollment rates in advanced math and English language arts or social studies courses** more than students in districts without the policy.



Students' grade point averages (GPAs) and their chances of on-time high school graduation remained stable overall. GPAs increased slightly for **students considered qualified** and for **students from historically underrepresented groups** regardless of qualified status.

## Key takeaways



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