



RESEARCH REPORT

# **A YAASPA White Paper: Addressing Racial Inequities in Concurrent Enrollment**

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YOUNG ASPIRING AMERICANS FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM  
"REDEFINING THE STANDARDS TO PULL DOWN THE BARRIERS!"

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## Abstract

This white paper provides an overview of existing barriers within concurrent enrollment in Aurora Public Schools that prevent students of color from participating in concurrent enrollment. The paper discusses the policy landscape, the intersectionality of race identity and equity in education, and support needed to advance opportunities for high school students. Each of these focus points highlights challenges that historically underrepresented students face in school to reach academic self-efficacy. It is our hope that this paper initiates action to address racial inequities in concurrent enrollment opportunities and paves the path for future research efforts on these issues.

## Background

The Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act, HB 09-1319 and SB09-285, was passed in 2009 by the Colorado State Legislature to create a pathway between high school and postsecondary institutions. The intent was to double the number of postsecondary degrees and reduce the number of students who drop out of high school by fifty percent (CDE, 2010). The Concurrent Enrollment (CE) program offers high school students the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary courses and earn college credit at no tuition cost (CDE, 2022). Data has shown that concurrent enrollment plays a crucial role in increasing the likelihood of a student enrolling in college within one year following high school graduation, graduating with a postsecondary degree, and obtaining higher workforce earnings after postsecondary education (CDE, 2022). Concurrent Enrollment has the potential to increase students' self-efficacy by boosting their confidence in their ability to attend college, thereby increasing college matriculation and completion (Buckley, 2020).

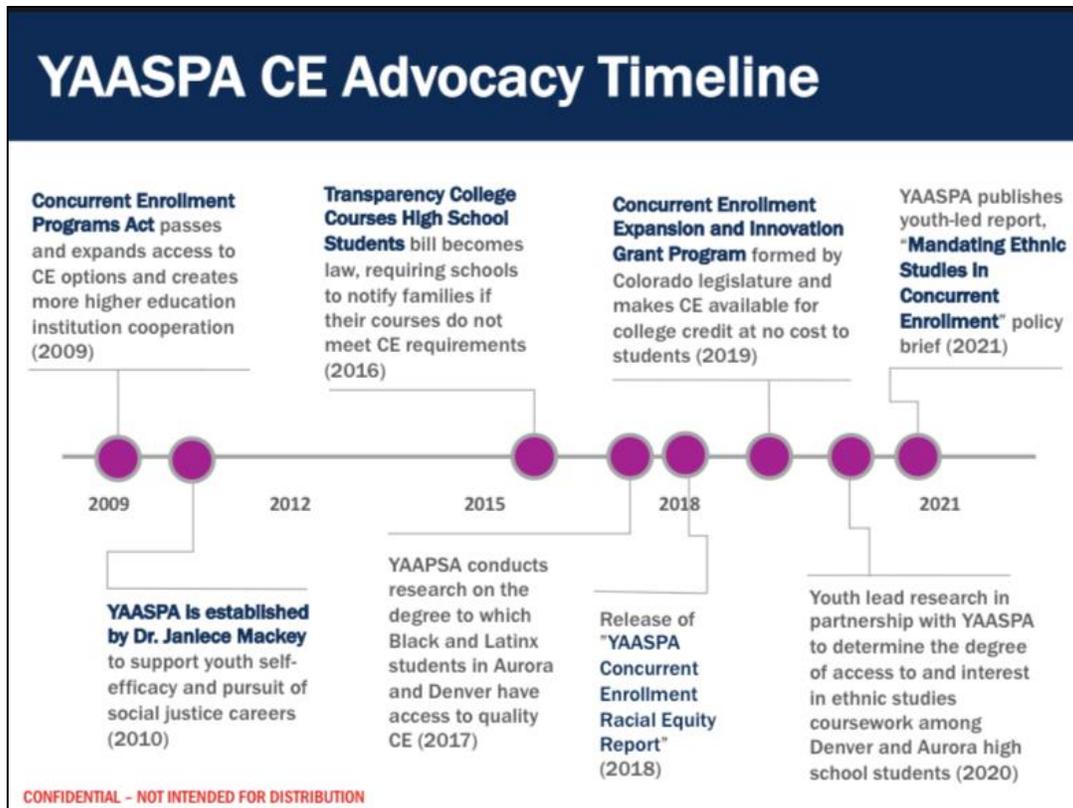
Race/Ethnicity	Graduation Rate	Graduates	% point change from 2020	Dropout Rate
American Indian	64.5%	301	-2.2	3.2%
Asian	91.5%	2,161	+0.3	0.5%
Black	76%	2,324	-0.6	2.6%
Hispanic	74.2%	17,322	-1.2	2.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	76.5%	166	+3.7	2.3%
Two or More Races	81.6%	2,220	-0.8	1.6%
White	86.6%	31,348	+0.6	1.1%

**Table 1:** 2020-2021 Four-Year Graduate Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Instructional Program Service Type	Graduation Rate	Graduates	% change from 2020	Dropout Rate
Students with Disabilities*	66.4%	4,982	+4.6	2.0%
Limited English Proficient**	67.5%	5,922	-2.7	3.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	70.6%	22,150	-1.7	2.5%
Migrant	67.0%	234	-4.7	2.7%
Title I	64.0%	7,132	-1.4	3.2%
Homeless	53.6%	1,530	-3.1	4.7%
Gifted and Talented	94.2%	7,873	0.0	0.4%

**Table 2:** 2020-2021 Graduation Rates by Instructional Program Service Type

Although the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act was created to increase opportunities for more equitable education, it's critical to evaluate how historically underrepresented students (ethnically diverse, low-income, and first-generation to college) continue to face more barriers in obtaining a postsecondary education. Table 1 depicts the four-year high school graduation and dropout rates by race/ethnicity for 2020-2021. The steep contrast between the graduation rate for American Indian students (64.5%), Black (76%), Hispanic (74.2%), and White (86.6%) indicate that students of color continue to have a lower graduation rate and higher dropout rate than their white counterparts (CDE, 2022). On average, the four-year graduation rate for students of color was 76.1%, which is a 1.0 percentage point decrease from the previous academic year (CDE, 2022). In Table 2, students with disabilities (66.4%), limited English proficiency (67.5%), and who are economically disadvantaged (70.6%) experienced a lower graduation rate than the state average of 83.2% (CDE, 2022). The data underscores the disparities that continue to exist within education and the need to address these systemic barriers for students with marginalized identities in the form of policy reform and social advocacy. Figure 1 depicts the timeline of YAASPA's advocacy efforts towards racial equity in concurrent enrollment.



**Figure 1:** A display of YAASPA’s CE Advocacy Timeline

**Executive Summary**

Students with marginalized identities have been historically underrepresented in concurrent enrollment programs in Colorado (Robles, 2018). Since the passage and integration of the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act, there has been a lack of studies on how students are targeted for participation in CE programs, how students and their families perceive CE, and how racial identity and language play a critical role in determining access, participation, and equity in CE.

**Description of the Study:**

This report will evaluate data findings from a 2019 survey distributed and completed by 138 high school students from Aurora Public School who were not in concurrent enrollment. Information regarding the student’s grade level, race, and first and second language was collected. In the survey, students were asked the following questions:

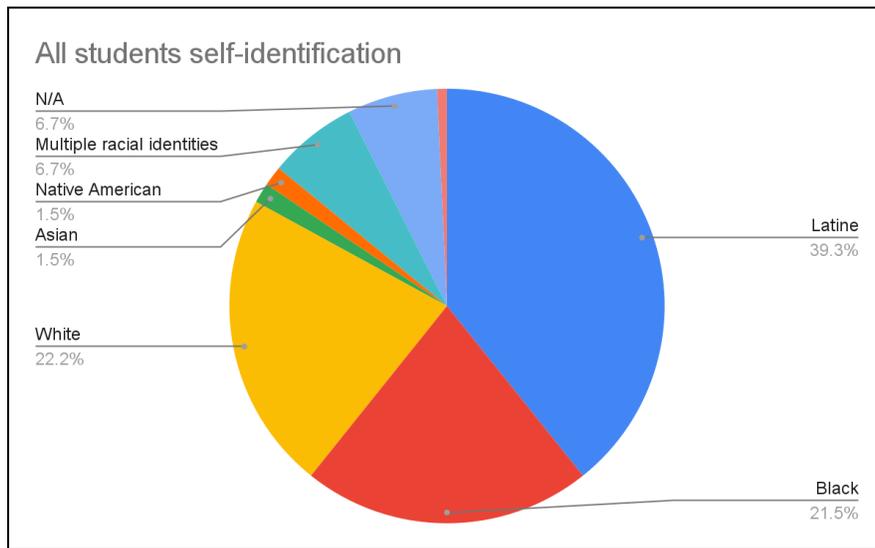
- *Have you heard of concurrent enrollment?*
- *Have you heard of the ASCENT program?*
- *Have you been offered to take a concurrent enrollment course?*
- *Would you take concurrent enrollment if it was offered to you?*
- *Are there reasons you are not taking concurrent enrollment?*

- *What support do you need to get into college classes?*

The purpose of this survey was to understand the current barriers that prevent students with marginalized identities from participating in concurrent enrollment. Analyses considered how racial identity and language affect the student's attitude toward concurrent enrollment. Additional analyses were made based on the questions asked in the survey.

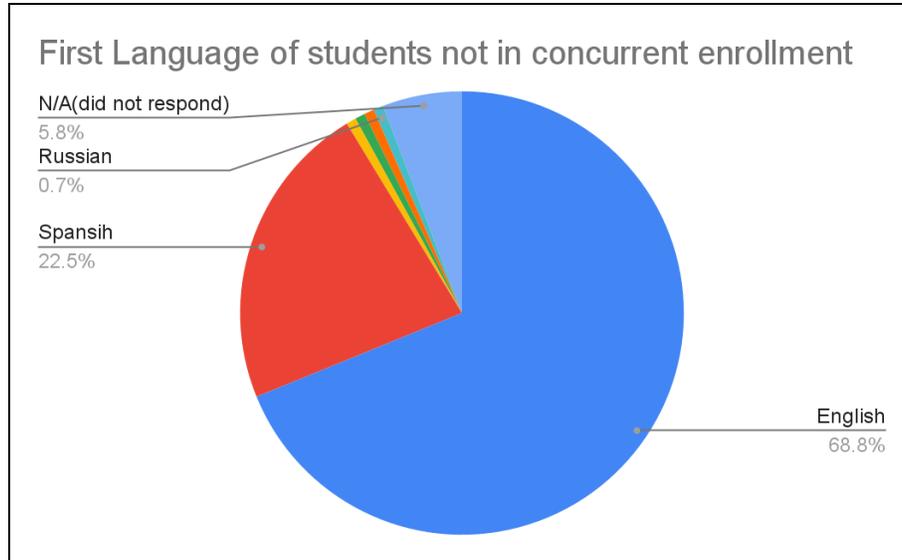
## Key Data

### *Racial identity and language*



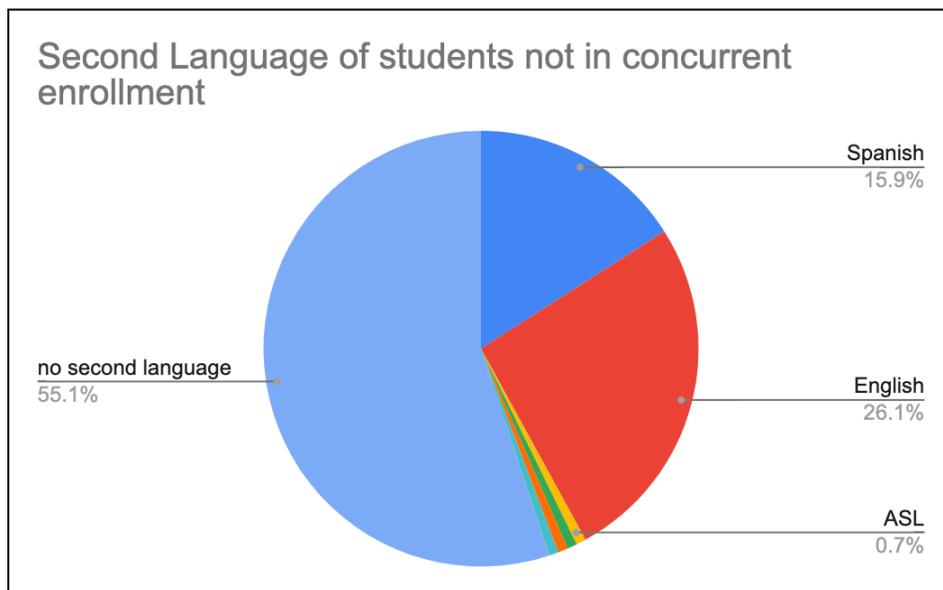
**Figure 2:** A display of the self-reported races and ethnicities as stated by the students (consolidated data)

This display is a consolidated version of several other graphs that go into further detail on the terms used by students when answering what race they identify as/with. Of 138 students there were 9 who declined to answer this question when surveyed. When analyzing the data, it became apparent that students identified themselves with colonizer terms, using language such as 'minority' to describe their race. This is significant because people of color have been historically minoritized by their race, and this inflicts a view that if one is not white, one is less than. This graph also includes students who identify as biracial, which includes identifying with any of the following; Black, White, Asian, and Latine.



**Figure 3:** A display of all the first languages reported by the students interviewed

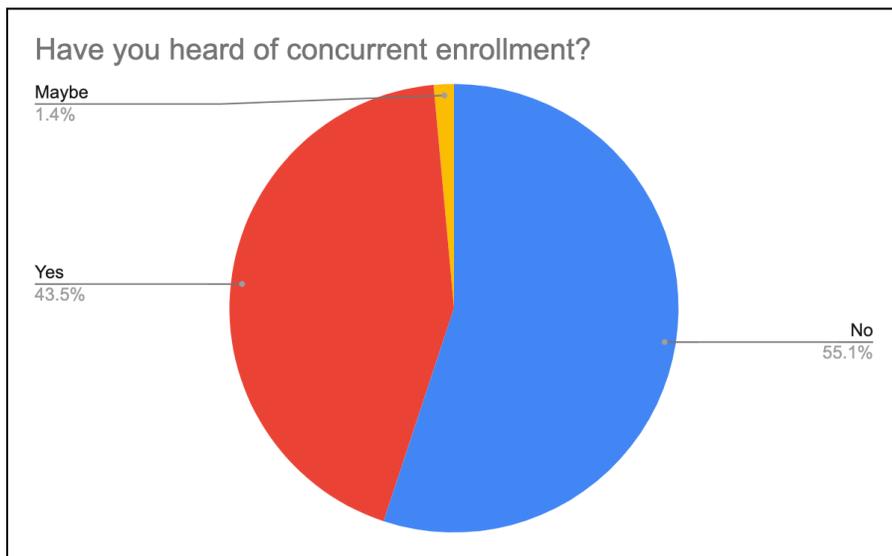
The data was manipulated by translating Spanish words into English in order to create consistency within the data. Of all students interviewed, 68.8% of students said that they do speak English as a first language, leaving 25.4% of students reporting that they did not speak English as a first language. 5.8% of students declined to answer, and it was found that there were a total of 8 different first languages spoken within the surveyed schools.



**Figure 4:** A display of the second languages reported by the surveyors

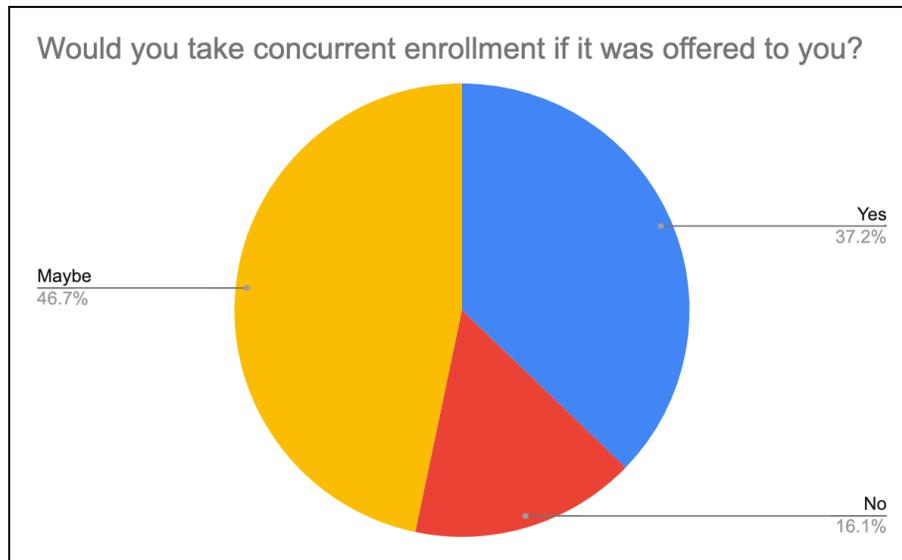
There were a total of 6 different second languages reported, with a majority of the students surveyed not declaring a second language. The greatest second language was English at 26.1%, with Spanish in second at 15.9%. The figures for language display how great the Spanish-speaking population is among the students and schools surveyed. This was significant when considering this is the data for students not in concurrent enrollment. A majority of college courses are not taught in Spanish (with the exception of language courses) which poses a barrier for students whose first language is Spanish.

***Have you heard of concurrent enrollment?***



**Figure 5:** Display of survey results to the question, “Have you heard of concurrent enrollment?”

Based on the figure above, the majority of students (55.1%) have not heard of concurrent enrollment. This brings up the question of *why are students not hearing about concurrent enrollment?* Teachers and administrators play a significant role in educating students about a wide range of opportunities. Therefore, if students are not directly informed about what concurrent enrollment is, this decreases the probability of students enrolling or feeling capable of doing so.



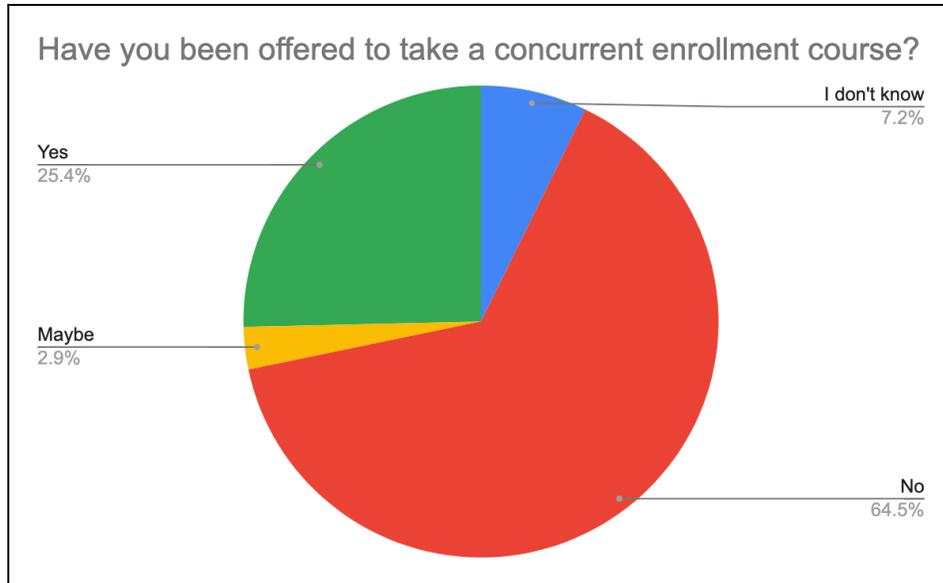
**Figure 6:** Display of survey results to the question, “Would you take concurrent enrollment if it was offered to you?”

Based on the figure above, nearly half of the respondents answered, “maybe” to the question “Would you take concurrent enrollment if it was offered to you?” According to the testament of students who attended Aurora Public Schools, there are multiple barriers for students, especially those of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, that impact their capacity and feelings regarding concurrent enrollment.<sup>1</sup>

For example, the language barrier prevents many students from not only understanding what concurrent enrollment is but also their ability to enroll. Higher education institutions are permitted to implement a form of placement testing—such as the ACCUPLACER—to evaluate the student’s readiness to take college-level courses.<sup>2</sup> Passing these tests can be extremely challenging for students whose first language is not English. According to the survey results, transportation and payment fees are also other barriers that many students face when considering concurrent enrollment.

<sup>1</sup> Garcia Torres, A. & Kamani, A. YAASPA. July 28, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/ceprogramsfaq>

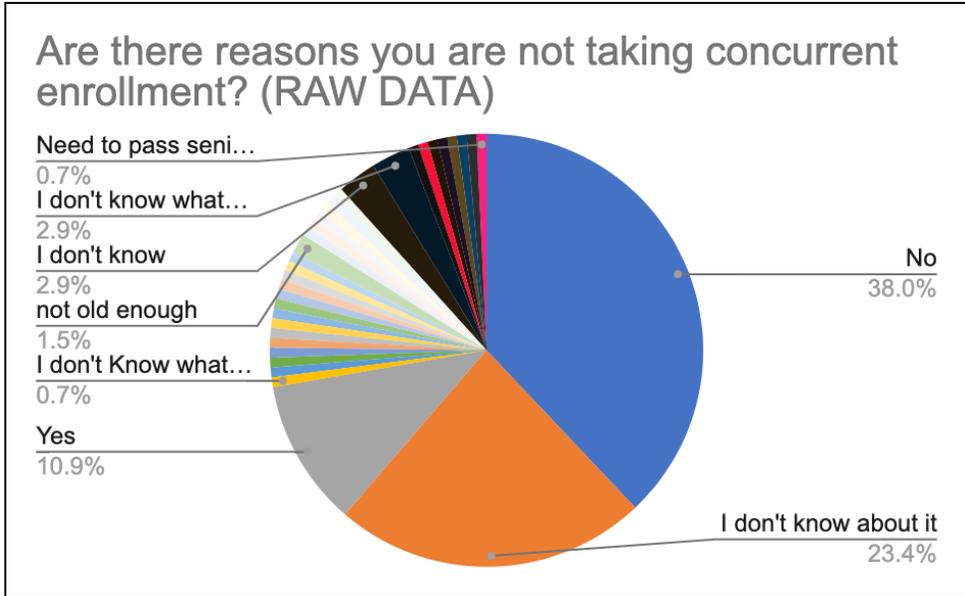


**Figure 7:** Display of survey results to the question, “Have you been offered to take a concurrent enrollment course?”

While 67% of students *who haven't heard of concurrent enrollment* claim they would take it if it was offered to them, 85% of students *who have heard of concurrent enrollment* claim they would take it if it was offered to them. These percentages, therefore, potentially indicate a positive correlation between hearing about concurrent enrollment and taking concurrent enrollment. What this signifies is that dialogue is crucial for students to understand what concurrent enrollment is and to develop interest.

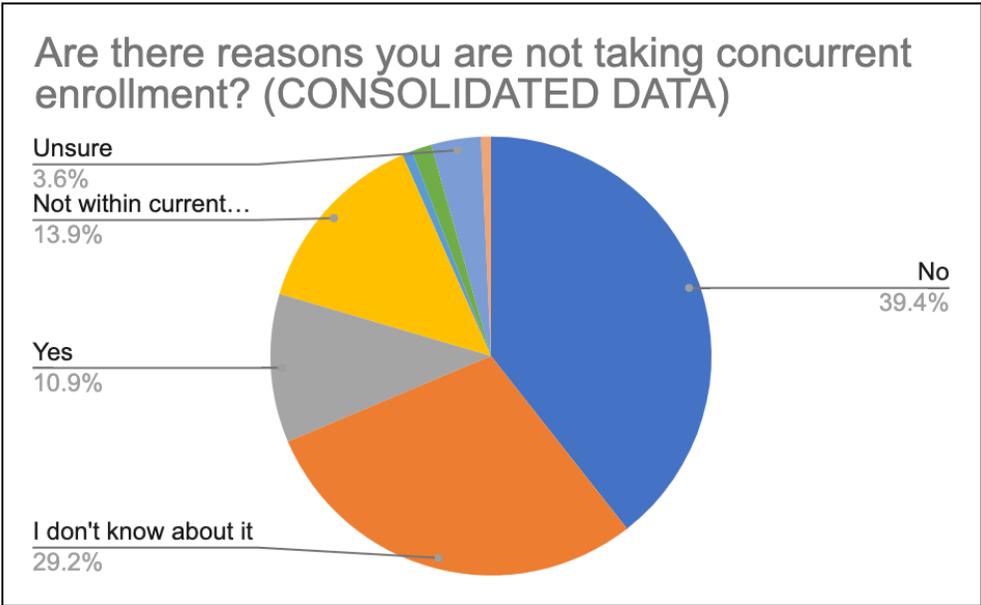
***Would you take concurrent enrollment? / Reasons in not taking it***

Considering the indecisiveness displayed in the question “Would you take concurrent enrollment”, there are clear reasons which cause this sentiment. The aforementioned 46.7% of students responding “Maybe” as well as the 16.1% of students responding “No” indicates there are barriers that prevent students from firmly taking part in concurrent enrollment. In analyzing the reasons for not taking concurrent enrollment, it was important to apply 3 separate lenses in inquiring if there were any reasons. The first lens was unfiltered; it placed the students’ voices center stage by not consolidating their rhetoric.



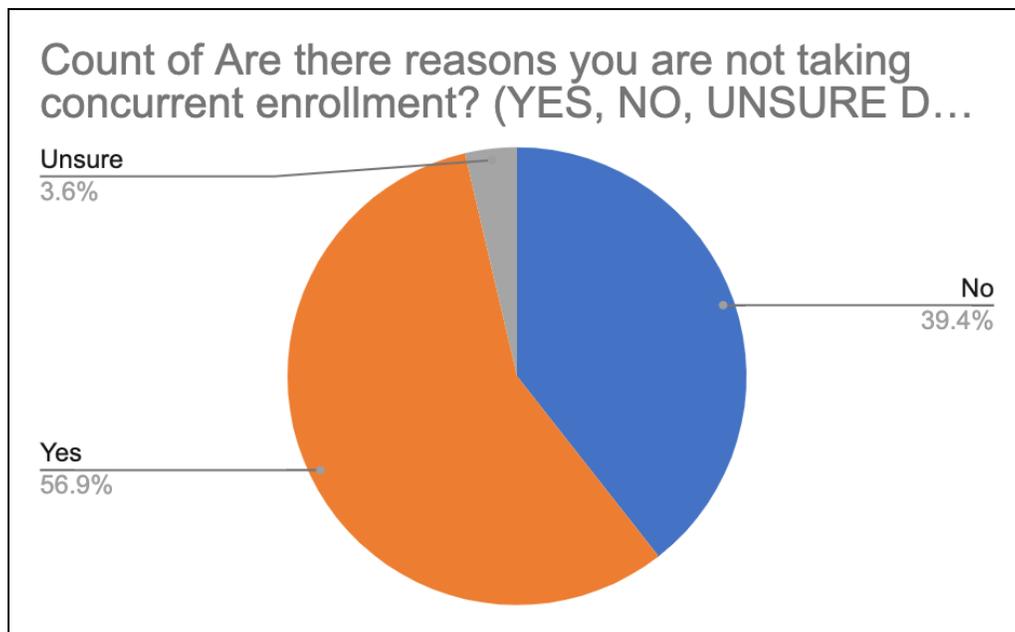
**Figure 8:** Display of survey results to the question, “Are there reasons you are not taking concurrent enrollment (RAW DATA)”

In this initial lens, 38% of students surveyed answered that *there are no reasons* for taking concurrent enrollment, while 23.4% of respondents said *I [student] don't know about it [concurrent enrollment]* and 10.9% answered that *there are reasons for not taking concurrent enrollment*. At initial observation, it seems like a plurality of students believe there aren't specific reasons for not taking concurrent enrollment. However, moving into the second and third lenses of analysis challenge this notion.



**Figure 9:** Display of survey results to the question, “Are there reasons you are not taking concurrent enrollment (CONSOLIDATED DATA)”

This second lens aims to consolidate respondents’ responses as many conveyed similar ideas in their responses with slightly different wording. This phenomenon explains why in the previous figure, there are many “slices” of the chart with 1 or 2 responses. This consolidation explains why more students seemed to have answered that *there are no reasons for not taking concurrent enrollment* (39.4% compared to lens 1’s 38%) and that *I [the respondent] don’t know about it* (29.2% compared to lens 1’s 23.4%). This surface-level consolidation helps to see a clearer depiction of the data, but the main purpose of this lens was to group any specific reasonings in not taking concurrent enrollment. Specific reasonings (not just the generalized “Yes” category) fit into the, *not within current capacity* category (13.9%). This consolidation encompasses reasons like cost, transportation, after-school employment, graduation requirements, and not feeling ready for the rigor.



**Figure 10:** Display of survey results to the question, “Are there reasons you are not taking concurrent enrollment (YES NO UNSURE DATA)”

The figure above is dramatically different visually. The 39.4% of respondents who conveyed that *there are no reasons for not taking Concurrent Enrollment* remains the same from the second lens, but the category of respondents answering that *there are reasons for not taking concurrent enrollment* dramatically increased to 56.9% from the previous 10.9%. The reason that this category is significantly larger and makes up the majority of the figure is because the *I [the respondent] don’t know about it* [concurrent

enrollment] and the *Not within current capacity* categories are inherent reasons for not taking concurrent enrollment. There are systemic barriers in place that prevent students from taking concurrent enrollment, ranging from needing to support their families to not having the proper amount of information to make an informed choice about concurrent enrollment.

### **Strategy Recommendations**

Data reveals potential barriers that make it inequitable for students, especially Black and Latine students, to participate in concurrent enrollment. Not having access to transportation, the ability to pay CE fees, or take placement testing due to a language barrier not only hinders CE enrollment but undermines the student's potential for academic growth and development. From this data, there is also an apparent need for ethnic studies courses as many students identified their race with their nationality. One student identified their race as a 'minority,' and they identified themselves as less than. All these barriers contribute to disproportionate participation and retention rates in concurrent enrollment. To address these racial inequities, the following recommendations propose to:

*1) Create more dialogue on concurrent enrollment among marginalized students, educators, counselors, and families*

It's imperative that all students are informed about what concurrent enrollment is, the requirements and benefits, and how to participate in concurrent enrollment. The sample data from the survey showed that more than half of students have not heard of concurrent enrollment, indicating the need to make information about CE more accessible to all students, especially students of color. Although many students are eligible for concurrent enrollment, most are not encouraged, informed, or supported by their teachers, counselors, and families. In order for students to utilize this opportunity, there needs to be more dialogue on concurrent enrollment. A CE toolkit can provide teachers, families, and students with the necessary information regarding CE. Information can include reflective questions for students to ask their counselor and teachers about CE as well as encourage them to advocate for themselves and their education. Students can ask their counselor and high school leaders the following prompts:

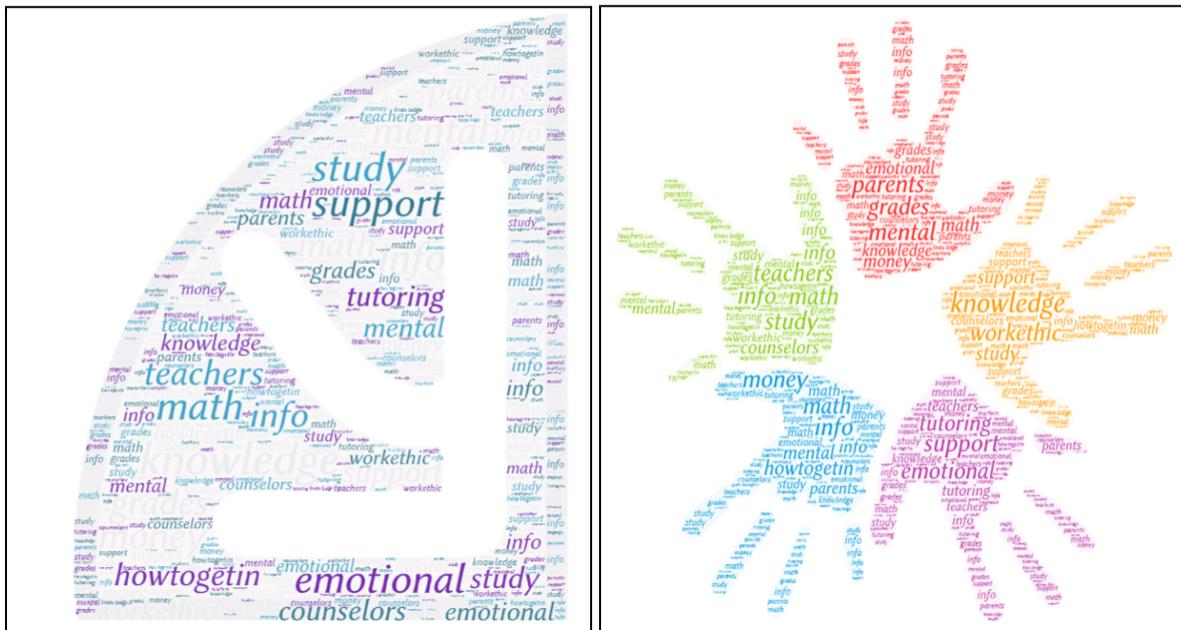
- *How many CE courses are offered at my school?*
- *Which courses can I take?*
- *If there is a course not being offered, ask why?*
- *How do I enroll in CE?*

- What resources are there for students to help with the ACCUPLACER, tutoring, and mental health support?
- What is being done to get more courses offered at my school?

## 2) Strengthen academic, mental, and emotional support from families, counselors, and educators

There is a strong need for mental and emotional support for students to take on challenges that concurrent enrollment comes with including learning more advanced material, navigating transportation and fees, and juggling extracurriculars and homework. In the survey, many students reported that they needed encouragement and academic support from their teachers and counselors in order to get into college classes (YAASPA, 2019). The need is especially stronger for students with marginalized identities. Therefore, counselors, educators, and school leaders can foster a more supportive environment by engaging students with reflective prompts such as:

- What are the challenges and barriers that you face in participating in concurrent enrollment?
- What would you like to know about concurrent enrollment?
- What are your current interests of study? What college classes would you be interested in taking?
- What are ways that I can support your academic endeavors?



**Figure 11:** Display of students' answers to the question, "What support do you need to get into college classes?"

### 3) Mandate Ethnic Studies Programs as a CE program requirement (Rodriguez et al., 2021)

Racial identity, ethnicity, and language have a strong influence on a student's experience in education and attitude toward concurrent enrollment. The 2019 survey revealed a wide range of racial and ethnic diversity as well as languages among students. However, 9 out of the 138 respondents who did not answer the question regarding their racial identity as well as a student's answer to their racial identity as a "minority" indicates a need to have more ethnic studies programs throughout a student's education. Oftentimes, students are discouraged from embracing their racial identity because of the euro-centric curriculum, so mandating ethnic studies should be mandated in CE programs to address racial inequities in education.

#### **Conclusion**

Overall, the 2019 survey data from APS high school students demonstrate the **need to address racial inequities within concurrent enrollment** in the form of increased dialogue and support (mental, emotional, and academic) for marginalized students as well as mandated ethnic studies in CE programs. As YAASPA continues to advocate for youth advocacy within concurrent enrollment, there is a multitude of ways for the state of Colorado, school districts, and school leaders and teachers to contribute to the mission of increasing access to concurrent enrollment for all students. The Department of Education can increase the capacity of schools to offer more concurrent enrollment courses and resources for students by allocating more funding to school districts. School districts and school leaders can foster engagement with students and families on how to navigate concurrent enrollment through various forms of communication and dialogue. Additional research should be conducted to analyze the support needed to increase participation and retention among marginalized students within concurrent enrollment. Through unified efforts, the Concurrent Enrollment Program can be more accessible and equitable for all students.

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## Appendix: APS CE Toolkit



### APS CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT TOOLKIT

#### WHAT IS CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT (CE)?

"The Concurrent Enrollment (CE) program provides high school students with the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary courses and earn college credit at no tuition cost to them or their families." (CDE, 2022)

Data show students who completed Concurrent Enrollment were more likely to (Buckley et. al, 2020):

- Attend college (77%) than those who did not take CE (52%)
- Earn a 2-year degree within 2 years of graduating high school (13% vs. 5%)
- Earn a 4-year degree (25% vs. 16%)
- Earn a higher workforce earning after 5 years (\$15,767.45 vs. \$14,377.98)

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR COUNSELOR

- How many CE courses are offered at my school?
- Which courses can I take?
- If there is a course not being offered, ask why?
- How do I enroll in CE?
- What resources are there to help with the Accuplacer, tutoring, and mental health support?
- What is being done to get more courses offered at my school

#### HOW TO ENROLL IN CE

#### QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for the program, you must:

- be under 21 years of age and enrolled in any Aurora Public School and in grades 9-12
- have Accuplacer, CCPT, ACT, or SAT scores appropriate for the approved class OR meet APS grade waiver qualifications
- have parent or guardian and high school counselor signatures and approval

#### REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

The following forms must be completed and returned to your counselor:

- CCA application for admission: <https://www.ccaurora.edu/getting-started>
- Accuplacer, CCPT, ACT or SAT scores
- Agreement and Registration form
- Promissory Note

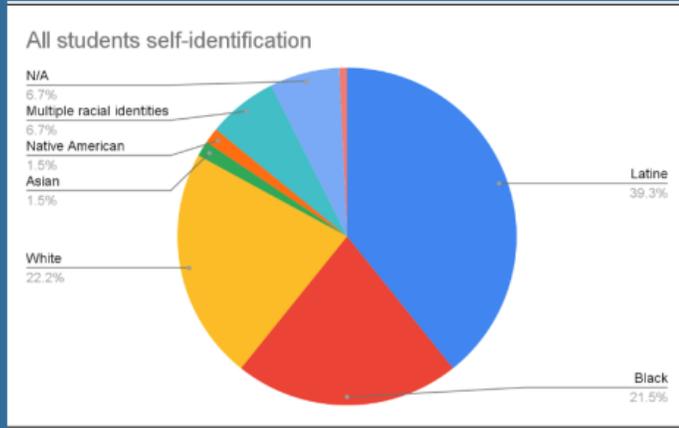
For a step-by-step procedure for CE enrollment, go to:

<https://aurorak12.org/schools/college-credit-options/concurrent-enrollment/>

If you have any questions on CE enrollment, contact:

- Mike Gallegos - District Course & Transcription Specialist - [magallegos@aurorak12.org](mailto:magallegos@aurorak12.org)
- Dave West - Coordinator, Counseling Services - [dlwest@aurorak12.org](mailto:dlwest@aurorak12.org)

## ADDRESSING RACIAL INEQUITIES IN CE



These are data findings from a 2019 survey distributed and completed by 138 high school students from Aurora Public School who were not in concurrent enrollment

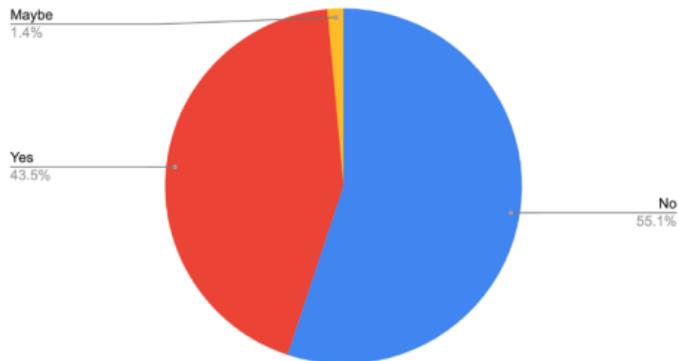
The majority of students who are not in CE are students of color, with Latine students making up the largest percentage of BIPOC students, followed by Black students. Additionally, Spanish is the first language for 22.5% of students, **Recognizing the racial disparities in CE is crucial in addressing inequities in education.**

### KEY FINDINGS:

The majority of students surveyed (55.1%) have not heard of CE

64.5% of students have not been offered to take a CE course

Have you heard of concurrent enrollment?



While 67% of students who haven't heard of concurrent enrollment claim they would take it if it was offered to them, **85% of students who have heard of concurrent enrollment claim they would take it if it was offered to them.**

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Students, especially Latine and Black students, need **ENGAGEMENT** and **SUPPORT** from their teachers, counselors, and families on navigating concurrent enrollment.



## ADVOCACY

### REACH OUT TO DISTRICT LEADERS TO ADVOCATE FOR CE COURSES

- Debra E. Gerkin President [degerkin@aurorak12.org](mailto:degerkin@aurorak12.org)
- Stephanie Mason Vice President [stephanie.mason@aurorak12.org](mailto:stephanie.mason@aurorak12.org)
- Nichelle Ortiz Treasurer [nichelle.ortiz@aurorak12.org](mailto:nichelle.ortiz@aurorak12.org)
- Michael Carter Secretary [michael.carter@aurorak12.org](mailto:michael.carter@aurorak12.org)
- Tramaine Duncan [tramaine.duncan@aurorak12.org](mailto:tramaine.duncan@aurorak12.org)
- Dr. Anne Keke [anne.keke@aurorak12.org](mailto:anne.keke@aurorak12.org)
- Vicki Reinhard [vicki.reinhard@aurorak12.org](mailto:vicki.reinhard@aurorak12.org)

