



Guardrail 2.1

Executive Summary

College-Level Course Enrollment and Success Among CMS Graduates

Research, Evaluation, and Analytics
Office of Accountability

October 10, 2023

Introduction

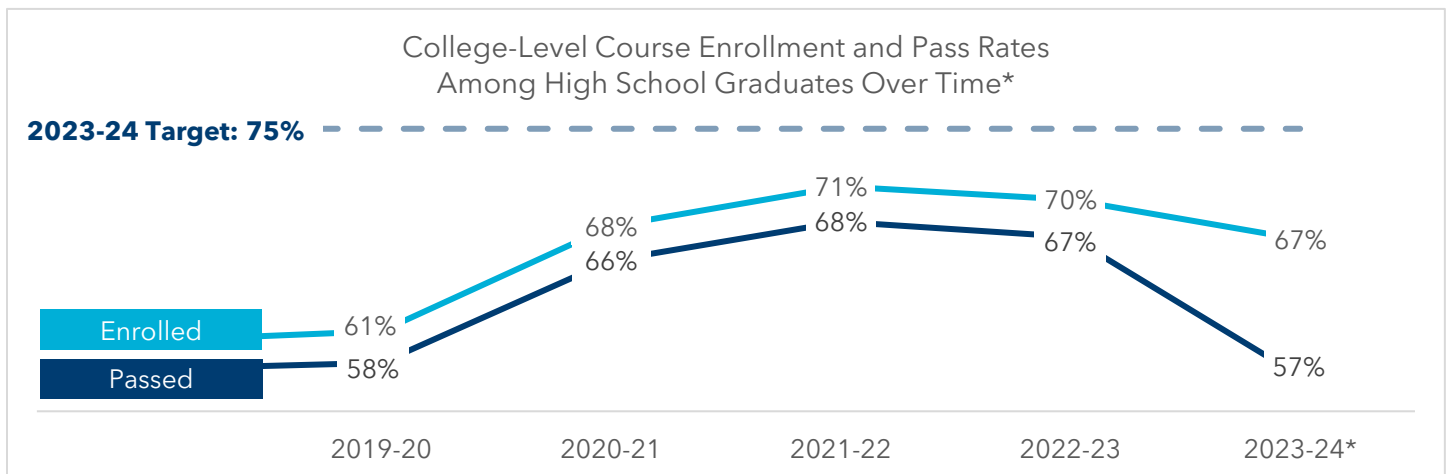
This executive summary presents a brief overview of college-level course enrollment trends across high school graduates at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). Data in this report pertain to Guardrail 2.1 in the district’s Goals and Guardrails, which states that the percent of high school graduates taking and passing at least one college-level course will increase from 58 percent in June 2021 to 75 percent in June 2024.

Students may take college-level courses as part of the following programs: Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual Enrollment (DE), Cambridge (CB), and Career and Technical Education (CTE, 300 or 400 level only). Students may openly enroll in any of these courses if the courses are available at their current school and they meet certain requirements. Also, note that enrollments at a postsecondary institution as part of CTE programs, including dual credit courses where students may receive both high school and college credit, are classified as DE courses in this report. Honors courses are excluded as they are not part of the guardrail.

For previous school years, only graduates receiving a diploma by June 30 are included in the analysis, excluding students who earned a certificate in lieu of a diploma. For the 2023-24 school year, students currently enrolled in grades 12 and 13 serve as proxy for this year’s graduate cohort (hereafter referred to as potential graduates). Students in grade XG were excluded because they are more likely to be working towards a graduate certificate than a diploma. Enrollment and passing rates were calculated by dividing the number of students who had ever enrolled in or passed a college-level course, respectively, by the number of students enrolled in a given school year. Note that currently-reported percentages and counts may differ from previous reports, as current rules for identifying college-level courses (e.g., inclusion of CTE courses) were applied retroactively to previous years. Also, course enrollment records were only extracted from 2013-14 to present. Data for this report are current as of September 1, 2023. **The early nature of the data for 2023-24 should be carefully considered when interpreting the findings in this report.**

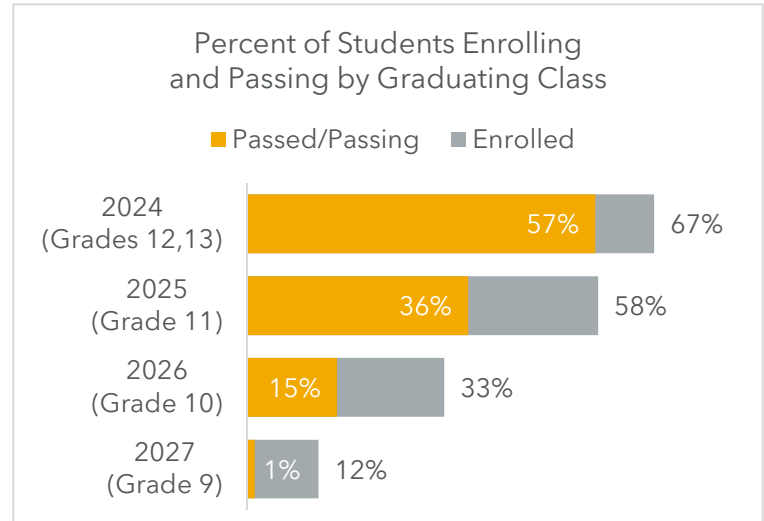
Progress Towards Target

At this point in the 2023-24 school year, 57 percent of potential graduates (5,689 of 9,899 students) have passed or are currently on track to pass a college-level course. **To meet the 2023-24 target of 75 percent**, 1,736 *additional* students would need to pass a college-level course for the first time by the end of the school year. Currently, there are **960** students who have yet to pass but are currently enrolled in and not passing a college-level course. For the district to meet its target, these students in addition to **776** new enrollees must pass a college-level course by the conclusion of the school year.



*Note. Values for 2023-24 reflect current students in grades 12 and 13 who have enrolled or have passed/are currently passing a college-level course.

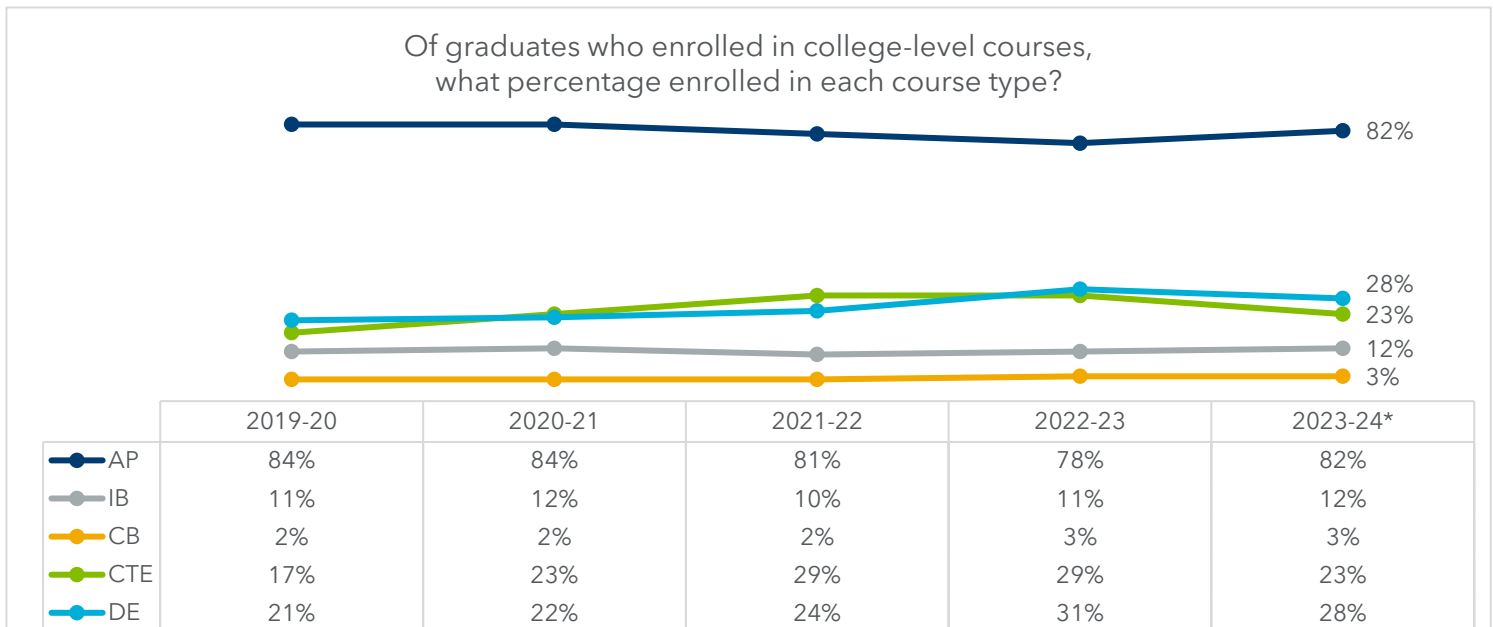
If the district intends to monitor college-level course enrollment beyond the current school year, it should pay close attention to patterns of course enrollment and passing prior to grade 12. For example, 36 percent of students in grade 11 have passed or are currently passing a college-level course compared to 15 percent and one percent of students in grade 10 and grade 9, respectively. The largest enrollment increase appears to occur between grade 9 and grade 10 (here, 21 percentage points). These patterns suggest that most students who intend to enroll in college-level coursework do so by grades 10 and 11 and that that meeting district goals may prove difficult if only targeting seniors.



Patterns in College-Level Course Enrollment

As the district aims to meet its 2024 target, it should also consider the level of interest and/or access to college-level coursework among students. The graph below illustrates how graduates' enrollment choices have changed over time. For example, of graduates who enrolled in a college-level course in 2019-20, 84 percent took at least one AP course, compared to 82 percent of potential graduates in 2023-24. Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Enrollment (DE), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs have elicited the highest participation rates for the past five years. This is not surprising given the relatively limited number of schools offering IB and CB courses in the district. Notably, enrollment percentages for DE and CTE courses have increased by seven and six percentage points, respectively, from 2019-20 to 2023-24.

Did you know?
The percentage of potential 2023-24 graduates who have enrolled in a CTE course is 43 percent in Title I schools compared to 19 percent in non-Title I schools.



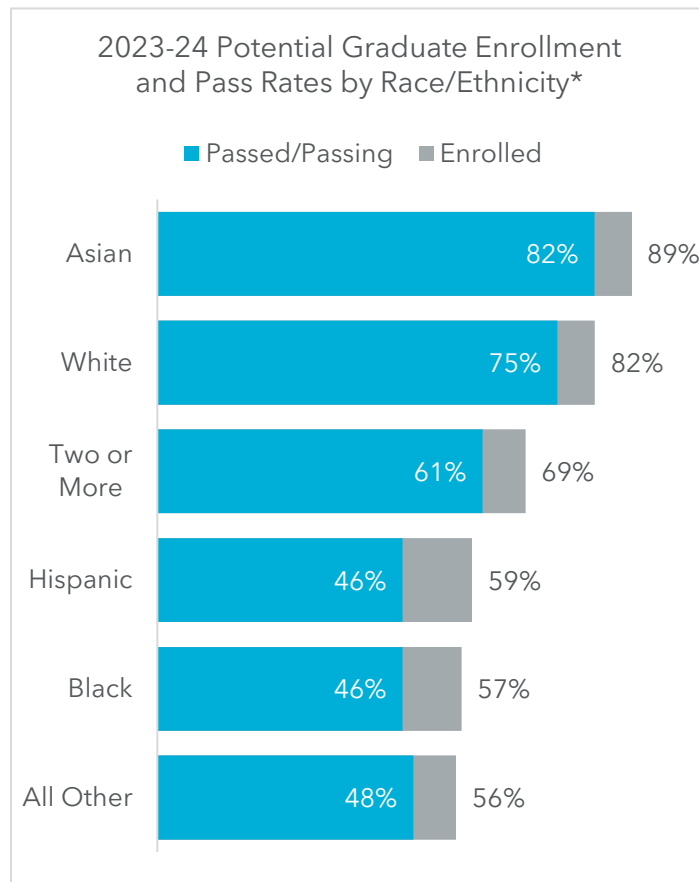
*Note. Values for 2023-24 reflect current students in grades 12 and 13 who have enrolled in a college-level course.

Another issue to consider is whether access to and success in college-level courses are similar across student groups. Among 2023-24 potential graduates, 59 percent of Hispanic students and 57 percent of Black students have enrolled in a college-level course, compared to 89 percent and 82 percent of Asian and white students, respectively.

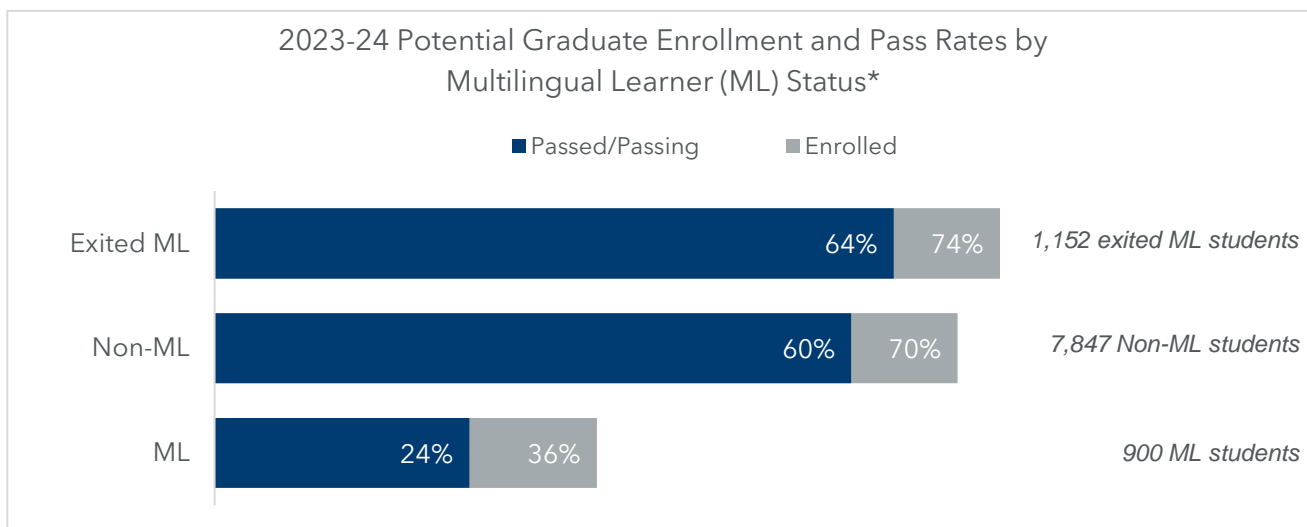
These patterns hold when looking at the percentage of potential graduates who have passed or are currently passing a college-level course. For example, a 13 percentage point gap exists between enrollment and passing rates among Hispanic students. However, it is important to note that many courses may not have updated student grades or passing status at this point in the school year which may impact data and gaps between enrollment and passing rates.

Looking at enrollment and passing rates based on Multilingual Learner (ML) status also provides several interesting insights. Exited ML students have the highest rates of enrolling and passing an advanced course compared to their counterparts (though, the number of non-ML students is much higher than for exited ML or ML students).

The gap between enrollment and passing is also similar between exited ML and non-ML students. Further, despite language barriers, 36 percent of ML students still opt into college-level courses. Together, these findings suggest that ML students, with the right supports, can thrive in college level coursework in the district.



*Note. Values for 2023-24 graduates reflect current students in grades 12 and 13.

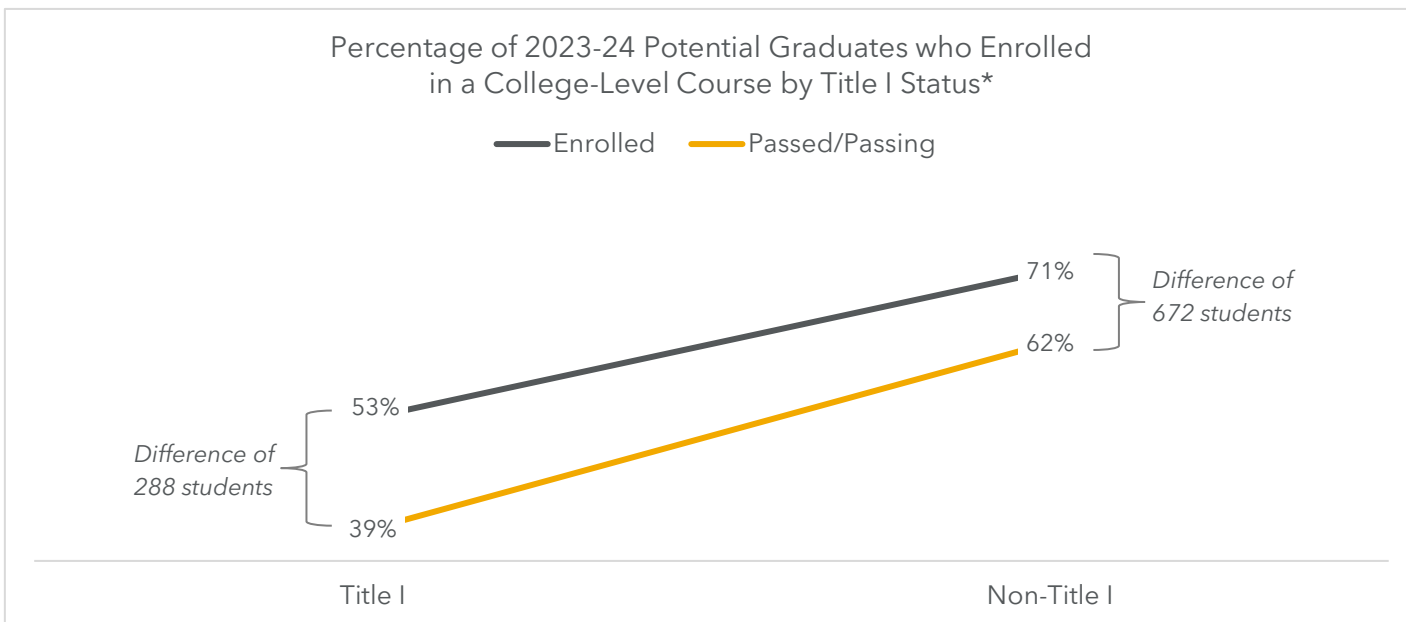


*Note. Values for 2023-24 graduates reflect current students in grades 12 and 13.

Patterns at the School Level

College-level course enrollment and passing rates also vary substantially at the school level. For example, the graph below depicts the percentage of 2023-24 potential graduates who have enrolled and passed or are on track to pass a college-level course by Title I status. Note that students are assigned to schools where they are *currently* enrolled, not to schools where they have taken a course.

Approximately 39 percent of potential graduates in Title I schools have passed or are currently passing a college-level course, compared to 62 percent of those in non-Title I schools. Not only are enrollment and passing percentages higher for non-Title I compared to Title I schools, but the gap between enrollment and pass rates is substantially wider for Title I schools at this point in the school year.



*Note. Values for 2023-24 graduates reflect current students in grades 12 and 13.

The table on the next page presents enrollment and pass rates by school. In many smaller, early- and middle-college schools, 100 percent of potential graduates have enrolled and/or have passed or are passing a college-level course. Of the three schools with the largest number of potential graduates, South Mecklenburg High School has a notably lower pass rate (59 percent of 687 students) compared to Myers Park High School (72 percent of 799 students), and Ardrey Kell High School (75 percent of 907 students).

Of the 10 schools with the lowest percentage of students passing a college-level course, seven are designated as Title I schools. Yet, Hawthorne Academy of Health Sciences and West Mecklenburg High School have the highest pass rates among Title I high schools in the district at 100 percent and 56 percent, respectively.

As the percentage of potential graduates who have passed or are on track to pass a college-level course decreases, the difference between the enrollment and pass rates tends to increase. One exception is Charlotte-Mecklenburg Virtual School, which has a gap of eight percentage points, with 39 percent of potential graduates having enrolled in and 31 percent who passed/are passing a college-level course. Please recall that these values reflect the experiences of the students who are currently enrolled at each school, thus students may have taken a course at a school where they are not currently enrolled.

College-Level Course Enrollment and Pass Rates by School

School Name	Potential Graduate Count	Percent Enrolled	Percent Passed/Passing	Difference (Enrollment - Passed/Passing)
Charlotte Engineering Early College-UNCC	95	100%	100%	0%
Charlotte Teacher Early College	58	100%	100%	0%
*Hawthorne Academy of Health Sciences	54	100%	100%	0%
Merancas Middle College High	134	100%	97%	3%
Levine Middle College High	113	100%	97%	3%
Cato Middle College High School	110	100%	96%	4%
Harper Middle College High	106	100%	94%	6%
JT Williams Secondary Montessori	35	91%	77%	14%
Ardrey Kell High School	907	81%	75%	6%
Myers Park High School	799	79%	72%	7%
Providence High School	495	80%	72%	8%
William Amos Hough High School	607	76%	70%	6%
East Mecklenburg High School	427	78%	68%	10%
Phillip O. Berry Academy of Technology	326	81%	66%	15%
Military and Global Leadership Academy	38	71%	63%	8%
Northwest School Of The Arts	125	74%	62%	12%
South Mecklenburg High School	687	69%	59%	10%
*West Mecklenburg High School	242	68%	56%	12%
North Mecklenburg High School	400	60%	52%	8%
David W. Butler High School	438	62%	50%	12%
Mallard Creek High School	448	54%	48%	6%
Palisades High School	440	53%	40%	13%
Independence High School	418	50%	39%	11%
*Rocky River High School	283	59%	39%	20%
Hopewell High School	361	45%	38%	7%
*West Charlotte High School	252	48%	37%	11%
*Harding University High School	224	52%	37%	15%
*Julius L. Chambers High School	435	51%	36%	15%
Olympic High School	288	54%	35%	19%
*Charlotte-Mecklenburg Virtual School	155	39%	31%	8%
*Garinger High School	304	47%	29%	18%
*Cochrane Collegiate Academy	64	36%	25%	11%

*Title I school.

Note. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Academy, Metro School, and Turning Point are excluded because they had 10 or fewer students in grades 12 or 13 with relevant records.

Recommendations

The findings of this report indicate that the district must take action to increase college-level course enrollment and passing rates among potential graduates to meet its 2023-24 target of 75 percent of high school graduates passing a college-level course. Even if all 960 potential graduates who are first-time enrollees in college-level courses pass a course this year, the district must enroll and pass 776 additional potential graduates between now and June 2024 to meet its goal. Because full-year AP courses are the most popular among students and the school year is already underway, meeting this goal may be unlikely. Also, while a decline in the number of potential graduates relative to the number of students passing a college-level course *could* push the district closer to its goal, the potential inverse relationship between graduate counts and rates of passing a college-level course highlights the need for the district to analyze Guardrail 2.1 in tandem with cohort graduation rates at the district and school levels (as previously shared in the 2022-23 Guardrail 2.1 summary report).

In terms of strategies needed to meet this goal, now and in the future, the district must consider factors impacting both short- and long-term progress. This school year, the district should focus on identifying potential graduates who are at risk of failing their first college-level course and render the appropriate supports to help them succeed this year. High-achieving or highly-motivated students who may lack the knowledge, resources, or encouragement to enroll in college-level courses but may excel in them should also be identified and supported. If no programs are currently in place to identify these students, then the district should quickly work to create one or encourage Learning Communities to do so. Finally, the district should fully back programs, such as Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS), that are tasked with identifying and helping students who may otherwise never enroll in college-level courses. This support should also address the need for centralized data collection and tracking to measure district-wide progress.

For future goals related to college-level coursework, the abovementioned strategies should be considered. In addition, robust plans are needed to support and engage specific populations across the district for *all middle and high school grade levels*. Black and Hispanic students have notably lower enrollment and successful completion rates compared to other race/ethnicity groups. The same pattern exists for Title I schools compared to non-Title I schools. One avenue for increasing enrollment is to make more courses available across the district, especially those that are already popular among students. While the current teacher shortage may impede this task, an increased focus on classes that take place in local colleges could help students access courses while also gaining college credit or useful career certifications.

Increased collaboration and interactions between schools and local businesses early in middle or high school may also help students to imagine new avenues for their future education or careers and to seek out opportunities beyond the standard curriculum. The district should also carefully examine the pathways by which students can access and develop an interest in college-level coursework. This will help to identify and remedy barriers, such as the successful completion of course pre-requisites; scheduling conflicts; participation identification processes; and encouragement from teachers, staff, and school leaders.

Finally, to improve success in college-level courses, it may be beneficial to improve students' confidence regarding their ability to excel and ensure that they have the necessary supports (at home, school, and/or in the community) to pass. It is also important to consider the possibility that some students may be more comfortable re-enrolling in courses after previous failures than others. Some students may also be hesitant to take courses for fear of failing and the potential impact on their grade point average (GPA). To accommodate students' various comfort levels with college-level courses, the district could offer courses that operate at a slower-pace, are available over the summer, or serve as credit-free introductions to advanced material. As the district works toward the 2023-24 target for Guardrail 2.1 and potential future goals, the recommendations outlined above should be closely considered.