



Secondary Revisioning

Evaluation of 2018-19 Efforts to Improve Student On-Time Graduation Rates and Postsecondary Readiness

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Abstract:

The Secondary Revisioning initiative was adopted as a 2018-19 Board-approved Superintendent SMART Goal and encompassed four major strands. Strand 1 provided professional development in preparation for a revised course schedule supporting additional credit-earning opportunities and longer instructional blocks. Strand 2 funded student support and intervention activities to increase the number of students on track to graduate with 24 credits. Strands 3 and 4 supported the development of enhanced Career Connected Learning programs (CCL/CTE), student advisory, and High School & Beyond Planning (HSBP).

To investigate baseline implementation and support planning for future investments, we conducted interviews with building leaders, surveyed teacher and staff perceptions, and conducted focus groups at

six high schools (Ballard, Chief Sealth, Cleveland, Franklin, Nova, and Seattle World). Focus groups included ninth grade teachers, MTSS staff (e.g., counselors, interventionists), and students receiving support services.

We have synthesized data from these activities into several key findings.

- **Strand 1:** Revisioning investments broadly expanded professional development opportunities for high school teachers, with surveys indicating teachers mostly perceived PD activities as having moderate-to-large positive impacts on their practice. Although building leaders also endorsed the aims of Revisioning, they reported that funding uncertainties and unexpected mid-year shifts sometimes adversely impacted implementation. Findings from focus groups suggested strategies to increase student choice and incorporate relevant 'real-world' content and learning experiences may be most effective in increasing secondary student engagement.
- **Strand 2:** Ninth grade teachers perceive that differences in middle school preparation are a key challenge impacting efforts to increase academic rigor and ensure all students successfully complete at least 6 credits in ninth grade. Teachers and building leaders generally believe that credit earning opportunities may need to be expanded, particularly in buildings with 6-period schedules. Both MTSS staff and teachers report that high school MTSS processes need to be further systematized to ensure all students receive targeted supports based on identified academic, behavioral or social emotional needs.
- **Strands 3 and 4:** Students overwhelmingly communicated the belief that real-world, one-on-one interactions – like college visits and fairs, mentoring programs, and job shadowing – have had the most impact on their postsecondary planning. Feedback from students suggest two District actions could improve student postsecondary planning: (1) improved access to and marketing of career-connected learning (CCL) opportunities across the district and city and (2) earlier provision of information about colleges, other postsecondary opportunities, and financial aid options.

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Seattle Public Schools

Research & Evaluation Department

October 2019



Secondary Revisioning

SPS 2018-19 SMART Goal 3 Overview



The Secondary Revisioning initiative was adopted as a district SMART Goal in 2018-19. Initially planned as a multi-year investment, Secondary Revisioning aimed to increase the percentage of students on-track for on-time graduation under WA State's new 24 credit requirement while improving student readiness for post-secondary college and career pathways.

This work informed the development of 2019-24 SPS Strategic Plan priority goals relating to on-time graduation and college and career readiness, which will guide the selection of new initiatives.

Research & Evaluation (R&E) partnered with College & Career Readiness (CCR) to evaluate Year 1 of Revisioning implementation in 2018-19.

Secondary Revisioning

2018-19 Superintendent SMART Goal 3

Background

Secondary Revisioning Strands

Strand 1	Professional development to support revised courses and schedule with additional credit-earning opportunities and longer instructional blocks.
Strand 2	Student support and intervention activities to increase the number of students on track to graduate with 24 credits.*
Strand 3	Development of enhanced Career Connected Learning programs (CCL/CTE).
Strand 4	Support enhanced student advisory and High School and Beyond Planning (HSBP).

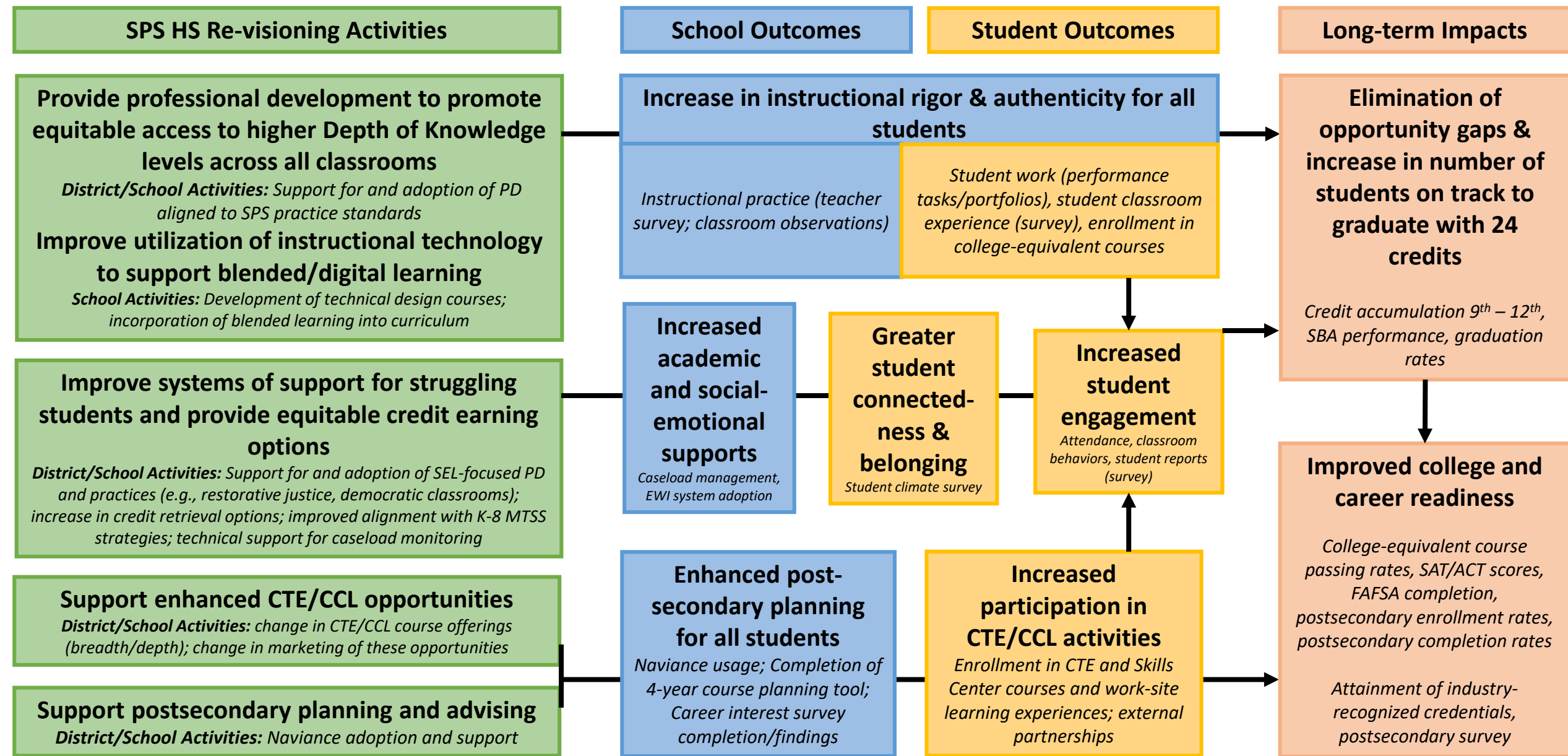
**Note: This strand previously focused on implementation of new schedule expanding credit opportunities beyond 24 credits but was revised due to budgetary challenges.*

Research Questions

- **Aim 1: *Improve organizational coherence***
 - To what extent are schools coordinating their resources, systems, and processes with a collective focus on improving student on-time graduation and readiness for post-secondary success? How do school-level strategies align with district reform efforts?
- **Aim 2: *Identify baseline metrics for future impact analyses***
 - What did implementation look like in Year 1? What challenges and opportunities for improvement can be identified?



Initiatives and Outcomes Framework



Y1 Data Collection and Analysis



Fall '18

Winter

Spring

Fall '19

On-site school leader interviews

Logic models presented at Principal LLD

Teacher and staff survey administered

Focus groups with students, teachers, and wraparound support staff conducted

Creation of district and school logic models

Development and iterative review of teacher/staff survey

Survey findings and mid-year credit analysis presented at Principal LLD, 24 Credits Workgroup

Summary of Year 1 findings and recommendations



Y1 Data Collection and Analysis



Student-level data analyses



9th & 10th Grade Credit Earning
9th Grade Course Failures
Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA)

Surveys



Teachers, Certificated Non-Teaching Staff and Paraprofessionals:
February 2019, 749 respondents

School leader interviews



Ballard Center School	Nathan Hale Nova
Chief Sealth	Rainier Beach
Cleveland STEM	Roosevelt
Ingraham	Seattle World
Franklin	Skills Center
Lincoln	South Lake
Middle College	West Seattle

Focus group site visits



Ballard
Chief Sealth
Cleveland STEM
Franklin
Nova
Seattle World

Y1 Formative Evaluation Process



- Regularly shared research findings in monthly sessions with high school principals to promote cross-school collaboration



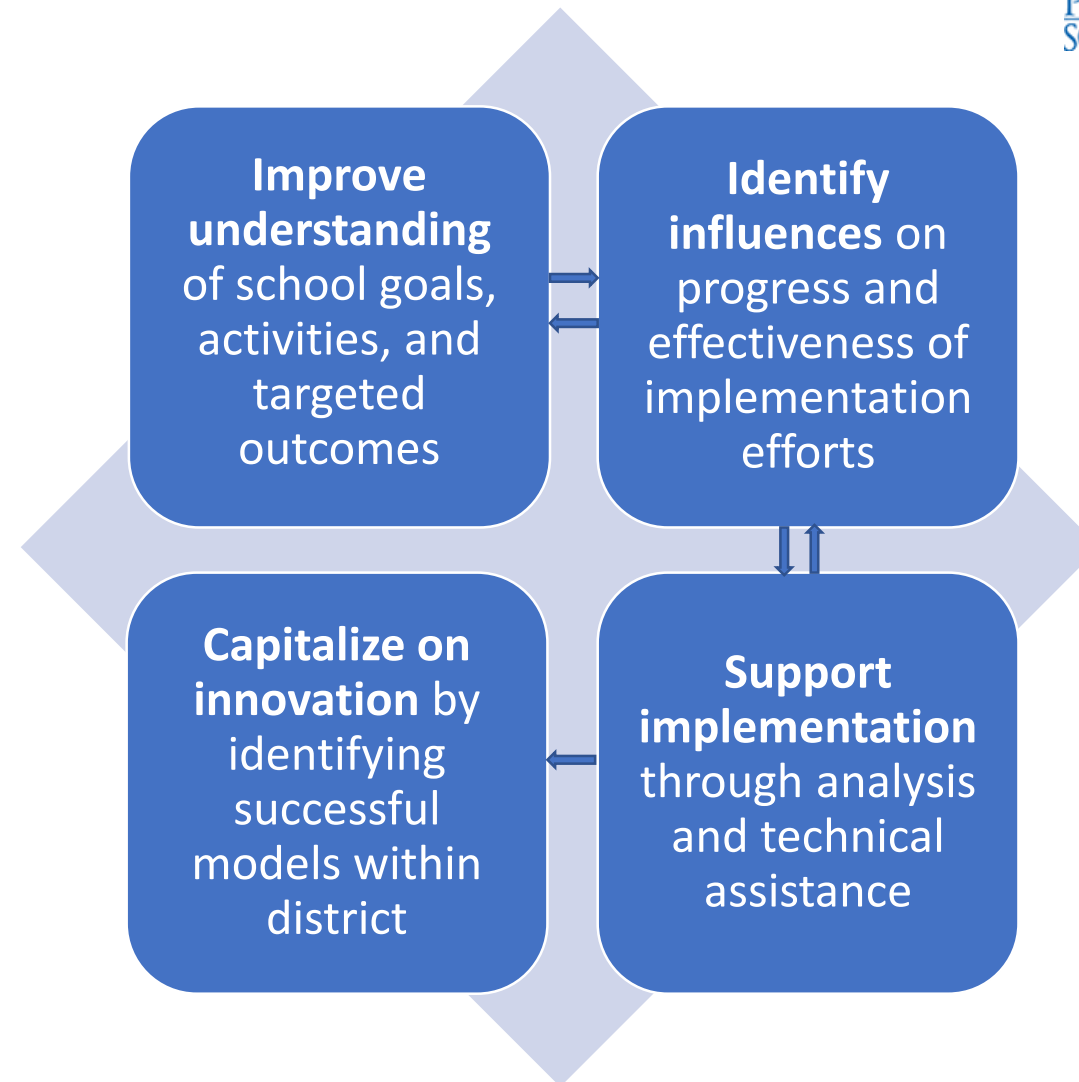
- Summarized key survey findings in reports to schools and program managers



- Developed school-level logic models to inform district logic model design and promote alignment



- Conducted focus groups with 9th and 10th grade teachers, student support providers (e.g., counselors), and students receiving supportive services



Study Limitations



All research activities emphasized breadth over depth (i.e., coverage of each strand) to inform the development of future initiatives.

Survey findings represent self-reported findings from teachers, interventionists, and other certificated staff who responded to surveys. Response rate was approximately 45% across teachers and staff.



Site visit findings may not be representative of the experiences of all teachers, staff, and students.

- Schools were selected based on demographics of student body to ensure representativeness
- For focus groups, we requested participation of:
 - Students receiving supportive services (e.g., case management)
 - 9th Grade teachers
 - ‘Wraparound’ support staff (e.g., counselors, case managers)



Data analyses are descriptive only; they do not present causal claims about program effectiveness.

Secondary Revisioning Strand 1: Key Findings

Professional
Development to Support
Increased Student
Engagement and
Academic Rigor



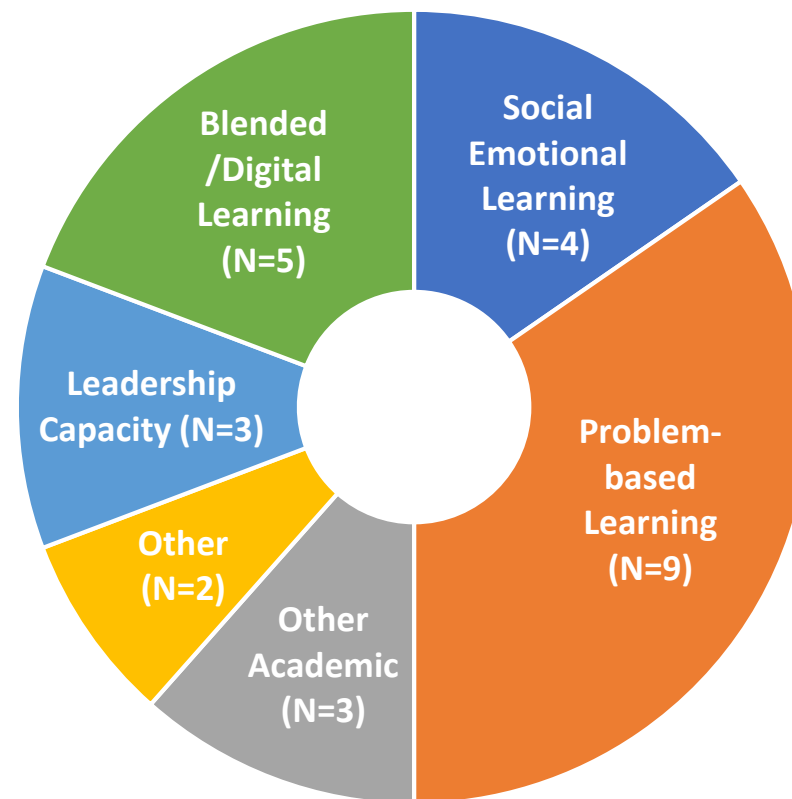
Strand 1 Implementation Findings

Finding 1: Revisioning investments broadly expanded professional development at the secondary level.

Teachers engaged in diverse professional development experiences in 2018-19. Schools adopted distinct approaches to **improve student engagement** and **increase academic rigor**.



95% of surveyed teachers (N = 364) reported they received a half-day or more of professional development in 2018-19 – a 16% increase over the percentage reporting PD within the previous five years (79%).



Revisioning-Funded Professional Development Activities & Resources 2018-19

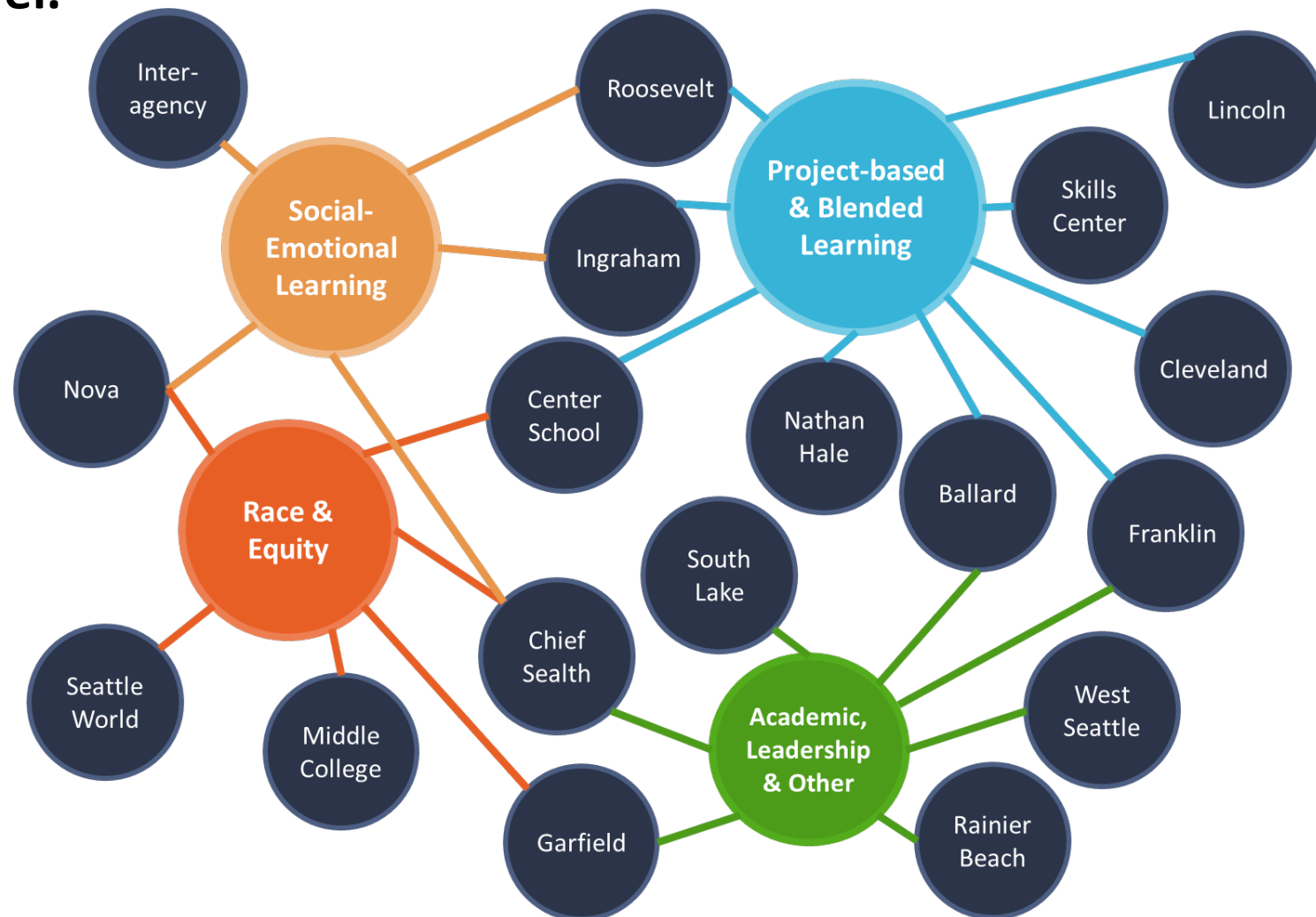
Strand 1 Implementation Findings

Finding 1, continued: Revisioning investments broadly expanded professional development at the secondary level.

Revisioning-funded professional development fell into four primary clusters:

- Project-based Learning and Blended/Digital Learning
- Social-emotional Learning
- Race and Equity Training
- Academic Support and Building Leadership Development

Schools and teachers had the choice of working with external providers or internal SPS teams.



Strand 1 Implementation Findings

Finding 2: Building leaders reported that mid-year shifts following an unexpected budget shortfall affected implementation and sometimes impeded adoption of multi-year professional development plans.



During Fall 2018 interviews, school leaders indicated that **budgetary uncertainties undermined the goals of Revisioning.**

Mid-year cancellation of a planned multimillion dollar adoption of a district-wide 7-period schedule frustrated leaders who felt students needed additional opportunities for credit earning under the 24 credit guidelines. Some schools that contracted for professional development to support teaching in longer instructional blocks **modified PD plans.**



Leaders at six schools reported challenges selecting professional development providers aligned with the goals of Revisioning, and suggested **additional district guidance** could support this process in the future.

“I see professional development in **three year cycles.** You can’t do everything at once.”

– High School Principal

“You can spend a lot of time and energy in design. And implementation, that's pretty exciting. But **sustaining things** is where you really find out whether you're going to be able to do it or not, and **that's some of the toughest work.**”

– High School Principal

Strand 1 Implementation Findings

Finding 3: School leaders broadly endorsed the aims of Revisioning and could identify areas of alignment between school-level priorities and intended Goal 3 impacts. However, most progress benchmarks identified by schools focused on student outcomes and did not explicitly link those outcomes to intermediary changes in adult practice.



During interviews, school leaders identified goals for improving student engagement and outcomes (like increased attendance or decreased course failures) but **rarely described specific, measurable benchmarks** related to changes in **teacher/adult practice**.



Leaders at some schools indicated that **PD-aligned 'look-fors'** would help them understand the effects of PD on teacher practice and provide instructional support.



Strand 1 Outcomes: Teachers

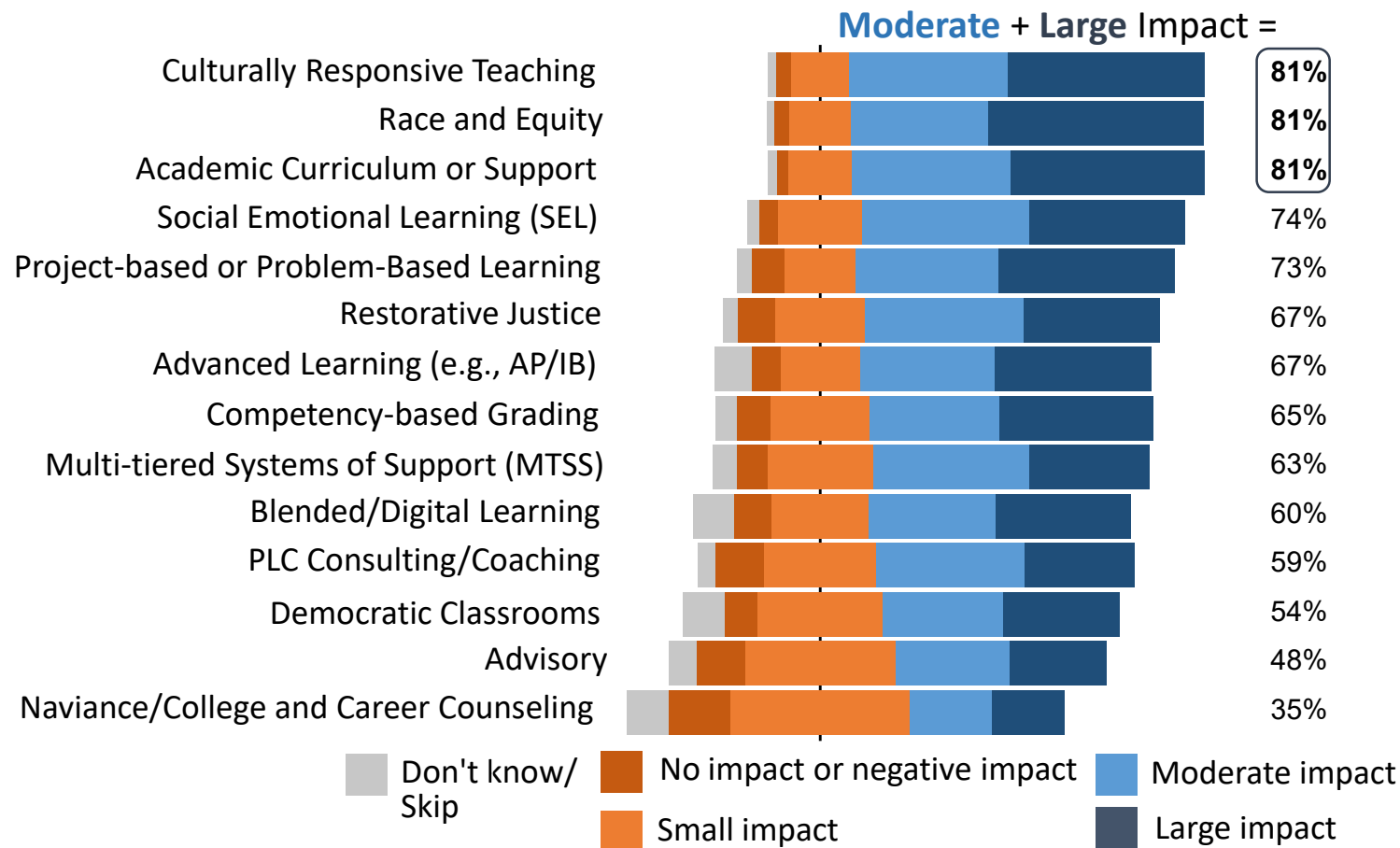
Finding 4: The majority of teachers reported that professional development experiences supported through Revisioning had a moderate-to-large positive impact on their professional practice.

Teachers rated the extent to which PD experiences completed over the previous five years **“had a significant and lasting impact” on their instructional practice.**

Across all funded PD areas, the majority of teachers reported PD experiences in 2018-19 positively impacted their teaching practice.



81% of teachers reported **culturally-responsive teaching, race & equity training, and academic curriculum-based PD** had a moderate or large positive impact on their instruction.



Strand 1 Baseline Findings: Teachers

Finding 5: Teachers in 4 of 6 schools independently reported that strategies to increase instructional rigor and student choice improved student engagement.

“**Project-based learning** [provides] the opportunity for different modes of demonstrating their understanding and their growth. My 11th graders have the choice of doing a very traditional PowerPoint presentation, or a very traditional paper, or a podcast, or a video, or Piktochart. Just giving them some **flexibility** in terms of what shape this things takes has been a way to release that mandate, so they have **some choice and some creative buy-in**. I think that increases their output.”

- 11th Grade Teacher

“I [used to] teach an 11th grade IB course. I got an idea of what the IB 11th to 12th graders do, and it’s helped me sort of work backwards. **With my freshmen, we do a lot of analysis**, like taking two different kinds of texts and looking at the similarities and the differences so that I can get them thinking about how to [do that in IB]. It feels to me like there was **a lot more engagement** and that the **expectations were higher**. Like **they enjoyed being challenged** in that way.”

- 9th Grade Teacher



Strand 1 Baseline Findings: Teachers

Finding 6: Teachers strongly supported the aims of Revisioning while indicating a need for clear, common expectations for student college and career readiness.

82% of surveyed teachers agreed that they **support the district's plan** to improve students' college and career readiness via the four strands of HS Revisioning (N = 421).

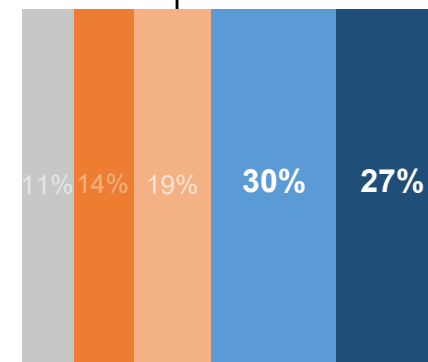
Most teachers **did not agree** that their school **does enough to prepare all students** for college (43% agreement) and careers (35% agreement).

Only 27% of teachers agreed that their school has **clearly defined, common expectations** for student college and career readiness.



“Does your school have a clear set of common expectations for student college and career readiness?”

Certificated Teachers, Grades 9-12



Don't know / Skip

No common expectations

Common expectations are under development

Yes, has common expectations, but not clearly defined

Yes, has clearly defined common expectations

Strand 1 Findings: Students

Finding 7: Students perceive that they are most engaged when learning about topics of ‘real world’ relevance with clear connections to future career pathways.

In focus groups, students expressed a strong preference for:

- **Collaborative, problem-based learning environments**
- Courses and assignments demonstrating clear connections to potential career pathways of ‘real-world’ relevance, like **health, personal finance, and climate change**

“Classes [here] are giving me an idea of what I would like to do and what I wouldn't like to do. And also, they're **just really interesting, especially during research projects.**” – Nova 10th Grade Student

“I hear a lot of students talking about like, yo, I don't even know **how to do my taxes...real-world skills.** If we had something like that, [that] they could take home and teach at home...It's more of a skill to build them as a person.”

“I feel like at Cleveland...**they set us up for success** because we're young and we're taking classes that not a lot of people get to take, especially for our **career pathway classes.**”
-9th Grade Student

On engagement: “[They] could make **stuff more hands on and more relatable to real life**...because not everybody learns the same way. Some people might like it when we get a lot of packets...but **not everybody learns like that.**”

“Some of the classes, they teach you valuable things, and others are just - not really a waste of time, but...**if you were assigned to the right class for your career path,** I feel like that would've been **a lot more helpful.**”
- 10th Grade Student



Secondary Revisioning Strand 2: Key Findings

Student Support and
Intervention Activities
to Improve On-time
Graduation Rates



Strand 2 Baseline Findings

Finding 1: Teachers and staff report that Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) processes should be further systematized at the high school level to ensure all struggling students receive targeted supports based on identified academic, behavioral, or social-emotional needs.



In focus groups, wraparound support staff reported:

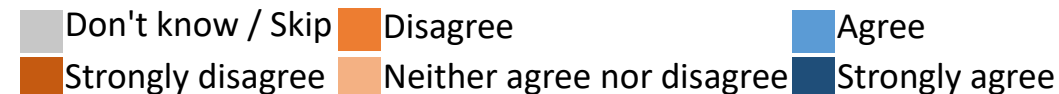
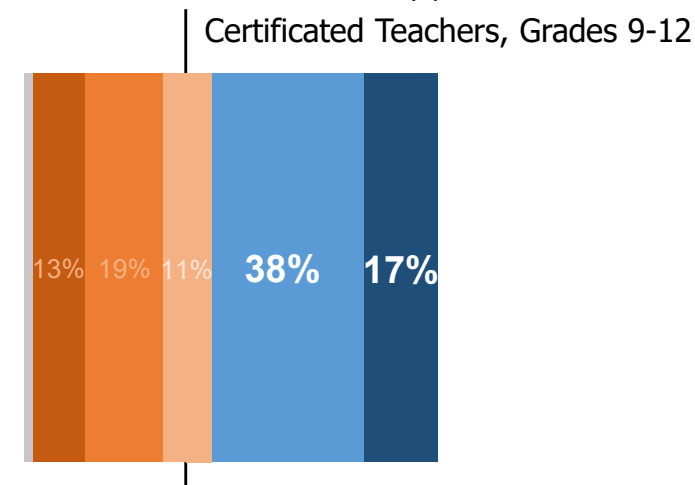
- ongoing **resource gaps**
- **challenges closing the communication loop** between teachers, community-based organizations, and in-school support staff
- difficulty identifying **effective Tier 2 interventions**



“There is not a system-wide response to supporting kids with mental health issues in this district.” – Building Leader



“I have a clear understanding of how my school identifies students who are struggling and connects them to targeted academic and/or social-emotional supports.”



Strand 2 Baseline Findings

Finding 2: Ninth grade teachers support attempts to increase rigor. However, teachers in 4 of 6 schools felt they had inadequate supports to differentiate instruction for all learners, particularly in math and science – and highlighted differences in middle school preparation as a key challenge.



In focus groups, 9th grade teachers at 4 of 6 schools reported that **differences in middle school preparation** adversely impact efforts to increase academic rigor.

Schools have adopted **varying Tier 2 student intervention strategies**, but do not always monitor how supports impact student outcomes.

Teachers who received **professional development in digital/blended learning and problem-based learning** noted that strategies from those approaches were particularly effective in supporting differentiation.

“We have kids who are coming in at pre-algebra levels [who are enrolled in algebra], and so **we've been doing some differentiation**, trying to get them in math labs, trying to get this extra help. [At the same time], we have kids who are pretty on top of it, but **we can't necessarily go to the really deep abstract stuff because we need to skill build.**”

- 9th Grade Math Teacher

“I **don't think the difficulty is having mixed ability kids in a classroom**. In a science classroom in particular, I think it actually really helps them think deeply because **mixed ability means that they'll have mixed ideas, and that really helps** in a lab - having these other questions. It's the fact that the overwhelming majority of my students come in **below grade level.**” – 9th Grade Science Teacher

Strand 2 Baseline Findings: Students

Finding 3: Ninth grade students facing academic challenges in 9th grade expressed low interest in pursuing advanced, college level courses. Providing more effective, personalized supports, including mentorship and encouragement from caring adults and role models, will be a critical component of any effort to close college-bound opportunity gaps for these students.



Inadequate preparation and support in earlier grades may discourage some students from pursuing advanced AP, IB and Honors courses. In focus groups with 9th grade students currently receiving academic interventions, we found that many students had already made the decision to **avoid advanced courses**.

When probed, students frequently indicated that **course difficulty** and **afterschool commitments like work and sibling care** dissuaded them from pursuing college-level advanced coursework.



Although students did not highlight socioemotional factors in their discussions, **sense of belonging** has been shown to influence student engagement in national studies and may factor in to student decisions about advanced coursetaking.

“When I started [9th grade] they gave me **geometry honors** [even though] I didn’t pay attention last year in school. Everyone was like, **“Just stay in there. It looks good.”** I was like, “She’s writing all these...shapes on the board and I don’t know how to measure them. **I don’t how to calculate.** I’ve never used a calculator with all those numbers and symbols,” so **I said, “Yeah, no,” and I switched to Algebra I.**”

- 9th Grade Student

Strand 2 Baseline Findings

Finding 4: Teachers, staff and students worry that ensuring on-time graduation for all students will be difficult in the absence of additional credit earning opportunities.



During site visits, focus group participants consistently noted the difficulty of improving on-track rates, particularly in schools offering **6-period schedules**. As one participant put it, **“There is no margin for error for our kids.”**

Students described barriers that impede their ability to recover credits in summer or after school, including **transportation obstacles, family care commitments, and out-of-school jobs**.

Students also cited credit earning concerns as a reason they do not pursue Running Start and worksite learning opportunities (e.g., internships).

“We're in a position where we are so strapped because **we have to get them the credits and they have to earn every single credit**. We don't have a lot of ability to offer, maybe, some of the classes that I think the kids would actually respond to more.” – 9th Grade Teacher

“It would also be nice to have up to **seven periods a day**, because then you can get another class and **experiment** a little bit more.” – 9th Grade Student

“It's **ridiculous** to assume that every kid is going to pass every class every semester. That is just ... **we need more opportunities for credits.**” – Counselor

Strand 2 Baseline Findings

Finding 4, continued: Teachers, staff and students worry that ensuring on-time graduation for all students will be difficult in the absence of additional credit earning opportunities.



Teachers were skeptical that online **credit recovery platforms** can close credit gaps for off-track students, highlighting the **mental stamina** required for struggling students to complete credit recovery before or after a full school day.



Building leaders noted the **difficulty of finding qualified staff to monitor and provide instructional support** in credit recovery classrooms, where student learning can span multiple content areas.

“I think you have to be more thoughtful about recovery of credits and not offer something that **exacerbates the weaknesses** that the student already had. - 9th Grade Teacher

“They struggle in school, and now they're **self-guiding through a computer program in isolation**. That's not ... I don't know what the answers are, but you got to think about those students and what they really need to recover.” - 9th Grade Teacher

“If a kid who goes one through six [periods] and can't pass those six classes, adding [credit recovery] adds more classes to their day. **Nobody has the stamina for that.**” - 9th Grade Teacher

Strand 2 Baseline Findings

Finding 5: Teachers and staff see family engagement as a critical lever to improve outcomes for struggling students. Although many schools described challenges connecting with caregivers, a subset of schools were optimistic about their progress.



Schools have adopted varied strategies to increase family engagement, including:

- Inviting families to engage in **on-site 'bridge' programming** for incoming 9th grade students
- Developing **systems to track communication efforts** across teachers, counselors, and case managers
- Offering **Saturday meeting times**

"I have a lot of families reach out to me, I also will reach out to families if I know already that the student is coming in. If a counselor from another school has said, 'This is a student that you want to **build rapport with early on**', then I make a point to reach out to their family to **build that relationship.**"
– Case Manager

"Teachers here are **really willing** and **always available** for email, phone calls, and wraparound with the parents. The teachers and staff members in the building are always willing to work." – Case Manager

"How many times I have parents contact me and say, "**My kid is failing four classes, and I haven't heard from any teachers.**" And what do I do?" And I'm a little like, "Oh my gosh! You haven't heard from anybody yet!" [We need to] **involve our community more, involve our parents.**" – Counselor

Secondary Revisioning Strand 3: Key Findings

Enhanced Career-
Connected Learning
Opportunities



Strand 3 Implementation Findings

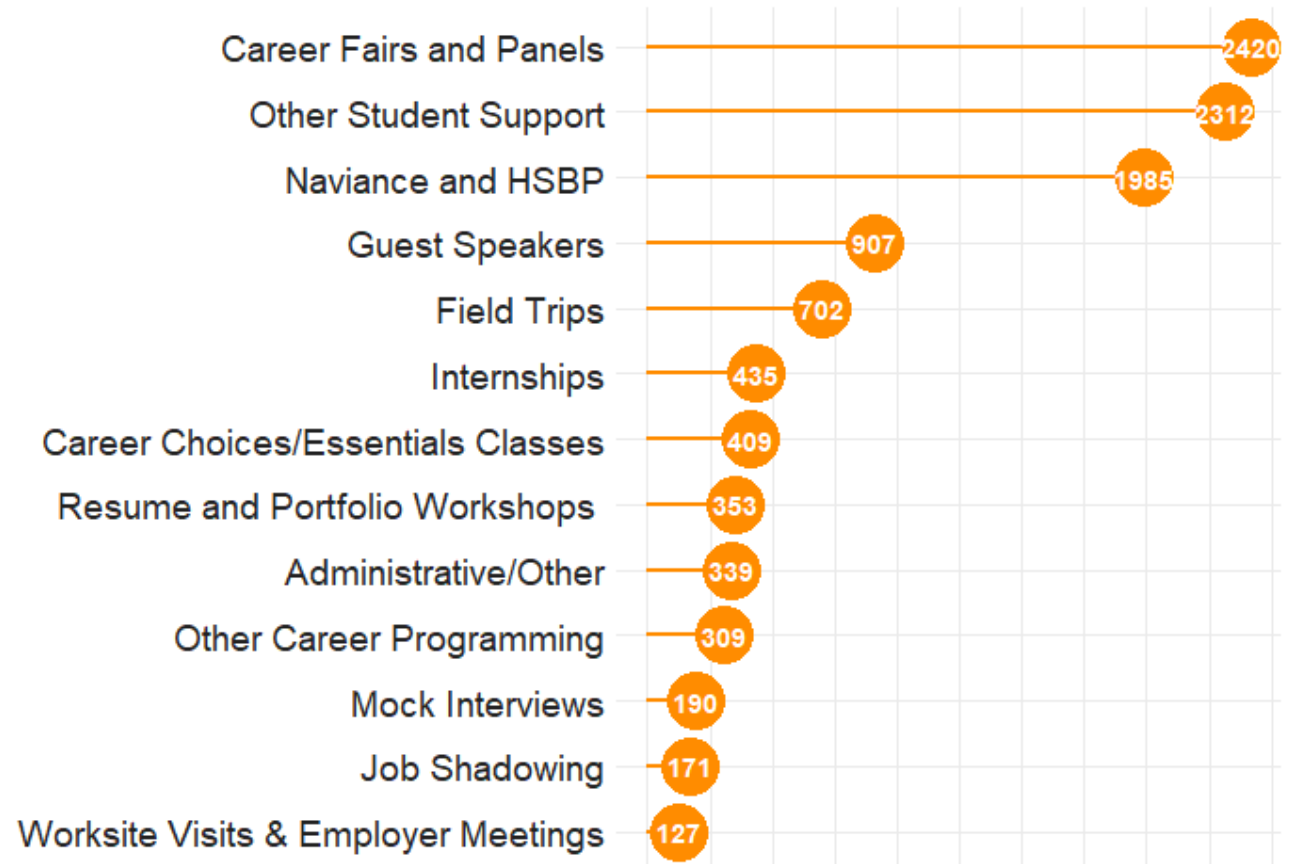
Finding 1: In 2018-19, SPS funded new Career Connected Learning Coordinator (CCLC) positions in each high school. CCLCs collected baseline data on student participation in CCL activities in 2018-19. These data will be used to benchmark program expansion in future years.



2018-19 CCLC reports* indicate that students were **most frequently exposed** to career-related content through:

- career fairs and panels
- Naviance and High School and Beyond lessons
- career-related student support services like one-on-one appointments and internship application support

*Total Students Participating in Selected Career-related Activities, 2018-19**



*Data collected and reported by school-based CCLCs.

Strand 3 Baseline Findings: Students

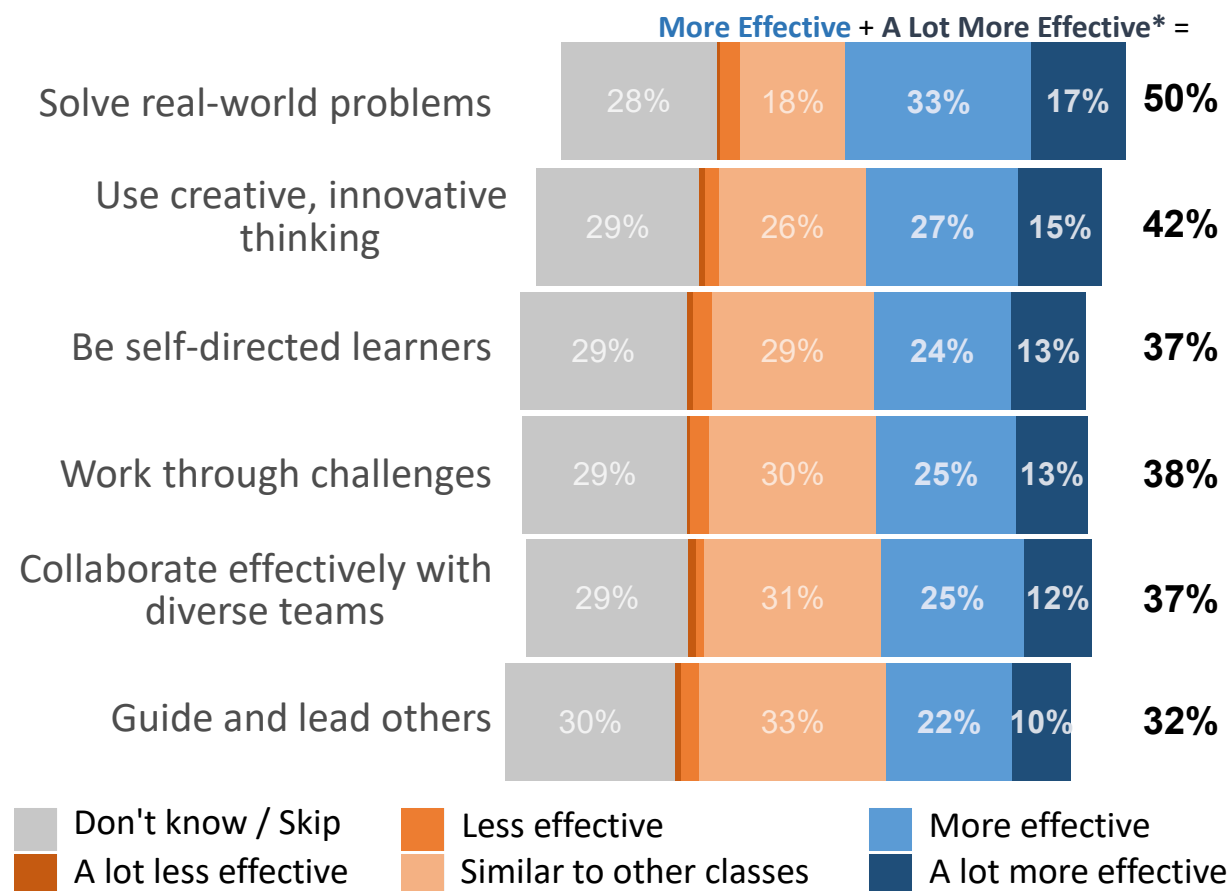
Finding 2: Teachers and staff who are familiar with SPS Career Technical Education (CTE) courses largely perceive those courses to be academically rigorous, relevant, and authentic.

On the survey, **48% of teachers perceived CTE courses to be more effective** in teaching students to **solve real-world problems** than other high school courses.

45% of teachers agreed that CTE courses are **“generally considered to be as rigorous as most other courses”**, compared to 19% who disagreed with this statement, and 37% who weren’t sure.



“Relative to other high school courses, how effective do you think CTE courses are in teaching students to...”



Strand 3 Baseline Findings: Students

Finding 3: Students overwhelmingly report that real-world, one-on-one interactions – like college visits and fairs, mentoring programs, and job shadowing – have had the most impact on their postsecondary planning.



“I feel like **if we had opportunities to go out in the real world and explore more**, it would better prepare us—”

“—And it would give us better knowledge for what we want to do when we get older.”

“[Especially] **if we relate to a person** we could ask them how they got there...and what we can do to get where we want to be. I have to figure everything out by myself – **I have to reach out myself**, without the school’s help.”

- 9th and 10th Grade Students

“Yeah, so it’s kind of crazy. **Three months ago, I wasn’t even going to college**. Like college was just gone. And then during my firefighting program, we had a “What Next” night, you know, like what’s coming in the future? And we **had a couple of college guys come in**, and now I’m going to [college redacted]....**And it changed my life**. Because my entire experience, my entire life, I’ve been like, **I don’t really know** what I want to do and **I don’t have any money**. That’s why I wasn’t going to college. But my life is set now. And it feels so good.”

- 12th Grade Skills Center Student

Strand 3 Baseline Findings: Students

Finding 4: Most students reported that they rely on word-of-mouth to find out about career-connected learning (CCL) opportunities. Ninth and tenth grade students frequently lacked awareness of worksite learning opportunities and CTE pathway options.



In focus groups, students indicated **worksite learning experiences** – including internships and job shadowing – provided opportunities for **employer interactions** that supported their postsecondary planning.

Most students felt career-connected learning opportunities were **difficult to find out about**, happened **too late to inform postsecondary planning** and were **hard to accommodate** because of conflicts with job, school, and home commitments.

“I actually heard about Skills Center from another student. They were mentioning it and...convincing other people to join and explaining it, but **I really didn't hear it from the school.**”

- 12th Grade Student

“Seniors are independent, so they [have] their own jobs. It would [be] better if they were **introduced to internships earlier**, to know what they're looking to do. And **to prepare them for the real world** if they're really going to get a job.”

- 12th Grade Student

Strand 3 Baseline Findings: Staff

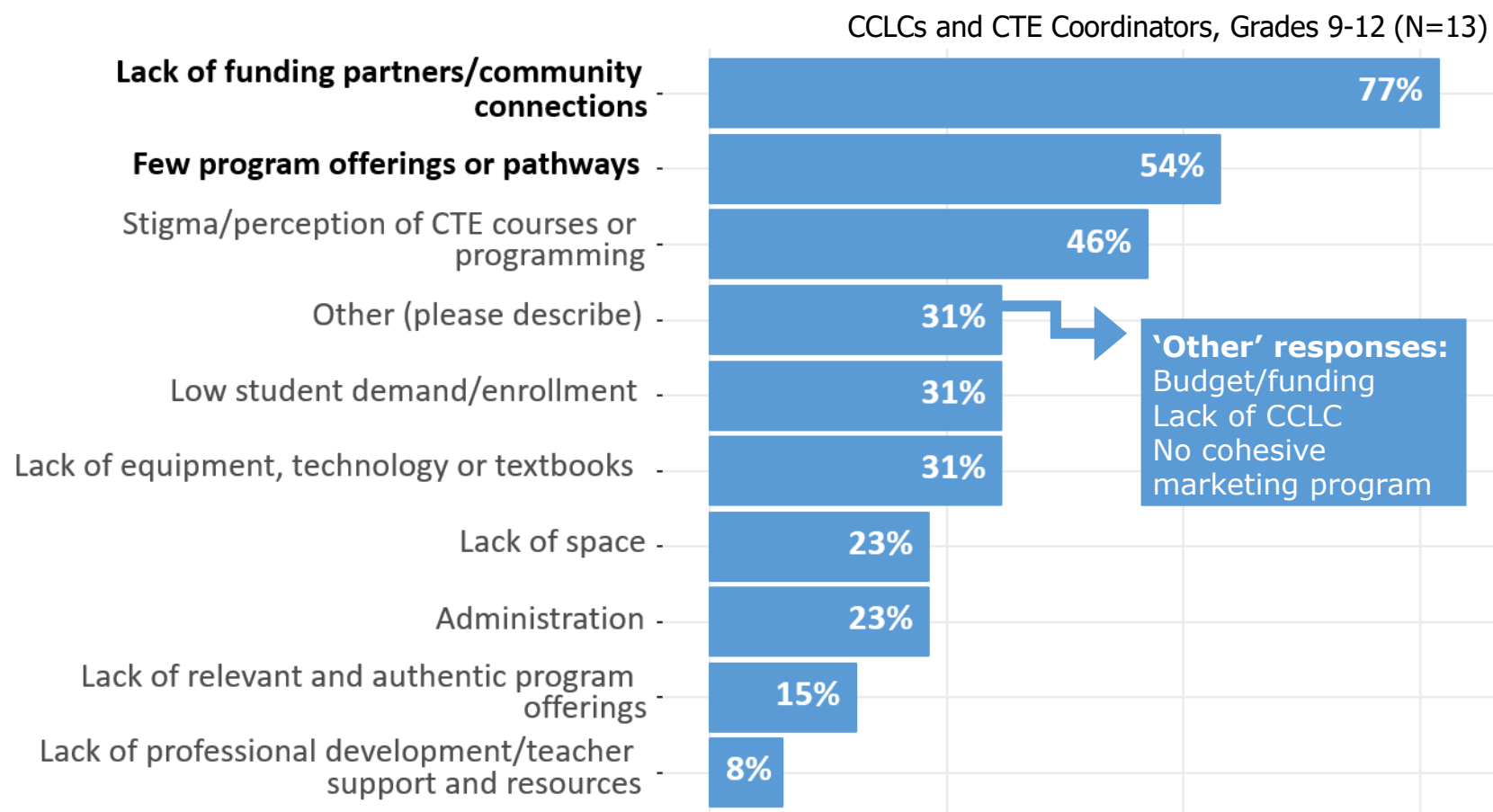
Finding 5: Building CCLCs and Career Specialists report that insufficient community connections and program offerings pose the biggest challenges to their CTE programs.



The CTE program is developing expanded course and pathway options in 2019-20.



“Which of the following obstacles are challenges to the building-wide CTE program at your school?”



Secondary Revisioning Strand 4: Key Findings

Enhanced Advisory and
High School & Beyond
Planning



Strand 4 Implementation Findings

Finding 1: Although most high schools adopted some form of advisory in 2018-19, delivery models and content varied across schools. Ten of 17 schools taught advisory lessons in each of three District areas of focus: social-emotional learning, high school and beyond planning, and general academic support.

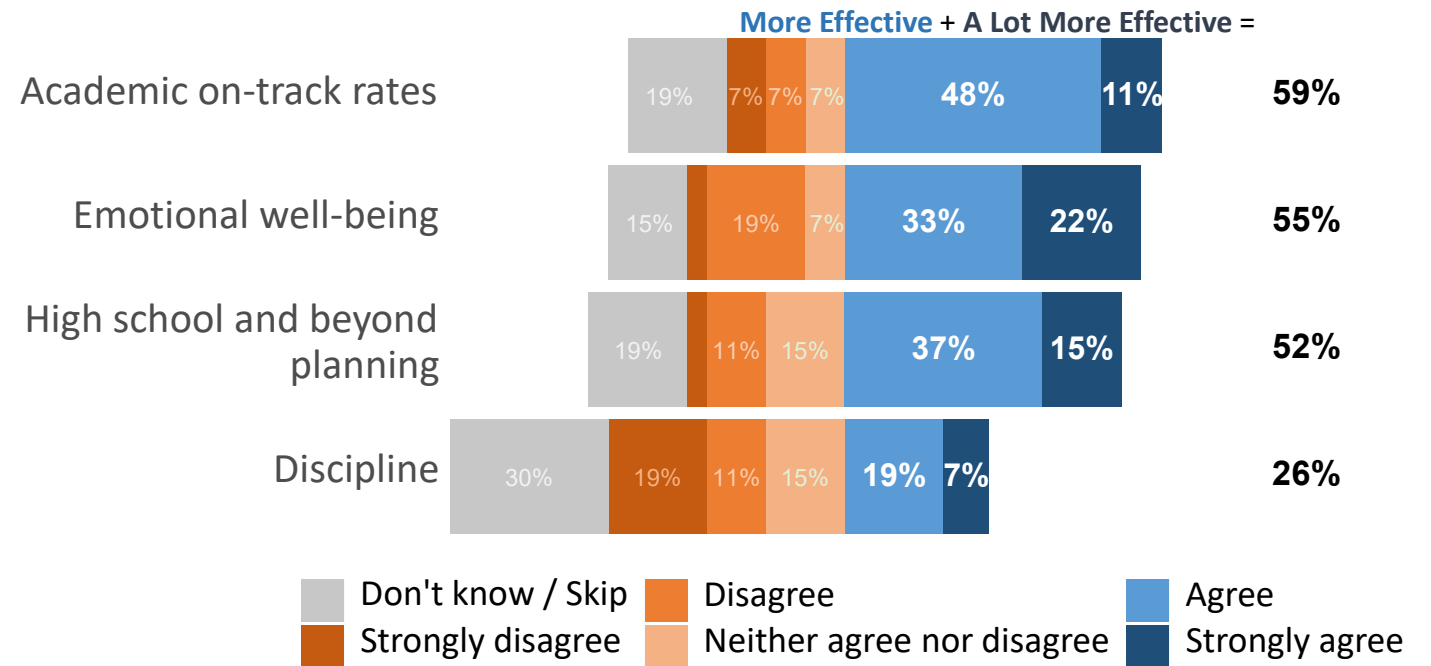
68% of teachers surveyed indicated that they taught some form of advisory in 2018-19.

School counselors (N = 27) indicated that the advisory programs in their building were **most effective in supporting student academic on-track rates** (59% agreement) and **least effective in improving student discipline** (26% agreement).



“My school’s advisory curriculum improves students...”

School Counselors, Grades 9-12



Strand 4 Implementation Findings

Finding 2: In its first year of district-wide adoption, Naviance usage was widespread across the district. 78% of District ninth grade students completed a career-related High School and Beyond module in Naviance.



In Year 1 of the Naviance adoption, all high school students began completing annual High School & Beyond lessons online.



In focus groups, 9th grade students reported familiarity with Naviance, and most had already completed at least one module.

% of Students Completing Required High School & Beyond Module on Naviance

School	9 th Grade: Strengths Explorer	10 th Grade: Career Exploration	11 th Grade: College & Career	12 th Grade: College Applications
Ballard	96.1%	90.3%	90.2%	94.9%
Chief Sealth	87.3%	76.4%	64.2%	26.6%
Cleveland STEM	99.6%	76.7%	72.0%	47.7%
Franklin	78.6%	66.9%	82.8%	94.6%
Garfield	92.5%	75.3%	41.4%	27.9%
Ingraham	30.9%	16.7%	74.6%	56.7%
Middle College (Northgate)	N/A	100.0%	75.0%	62.5%
Nathan Hale	72.0%	76.8%	68.0%	11.2%
Nova	83.7%	76.0%	55.2%	89.4%
Rainier Beach	82.6%	81.4%	75.0%	63.2%
Roosevelt	88.4%	75.0%	75.2%	89.0%
South Lake	100.0%	50.0%	66.7%	60.0%
The Center School	94.0%	88.3%	86.0%	93.0%
West Seattle	69.1%	82.9%	0.4%	39.5%
Seattle World School	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Average Completion Rate*	78.3%	70.9%	64.3%	54.1%

*Data provided by Naviance. Excludes data from Interagency programs.

Strand 4 Baseline Findings: Students

Finding 3: Many ninth grade students struggle to form relationships with adults that can provide academic support and inform their postsecondary planning.



In focus groups, 9th graders indicated that they were **more likely to approach caseworkers, coaches, counselors, or APs for academic help** than their classroom teachers.

Although 9th and 10th grade students could **identify academic support options within their school** (like learning labs and tutoring), many students **expressed reluctance** about using these supports.

“I feel **a little bit reluctant** to ask my counselors about anything. I feel like that's something that a lot of people don't like doing, is asking their counselors about [college and careers]. So I don't think enough people know about it, or have the type of personality to **go and ask a counselor for help**... there's a bunch of counselors, and they're all doing their own thing, and you don't really know them, or **you don't feel comfortable** with them.”

“— And they **change your counselors every year**, so even if you build a relationship with them, you're just going to be with a new person next year, so **it doesn't really matter.**”

- 9th Grade Students

Strand 4 Baseline Findings: Students

Finding 4: Students reported that receiving information about college and financial aid options earlier in high school – or middle school – would improve their postsecondary planning.



Several students indicated that **one-on-one conversations with counselors** were extremely helpful in their college decision-making process.

Many students indicated these **sessions were rare** given high student-to-counselor ratios.

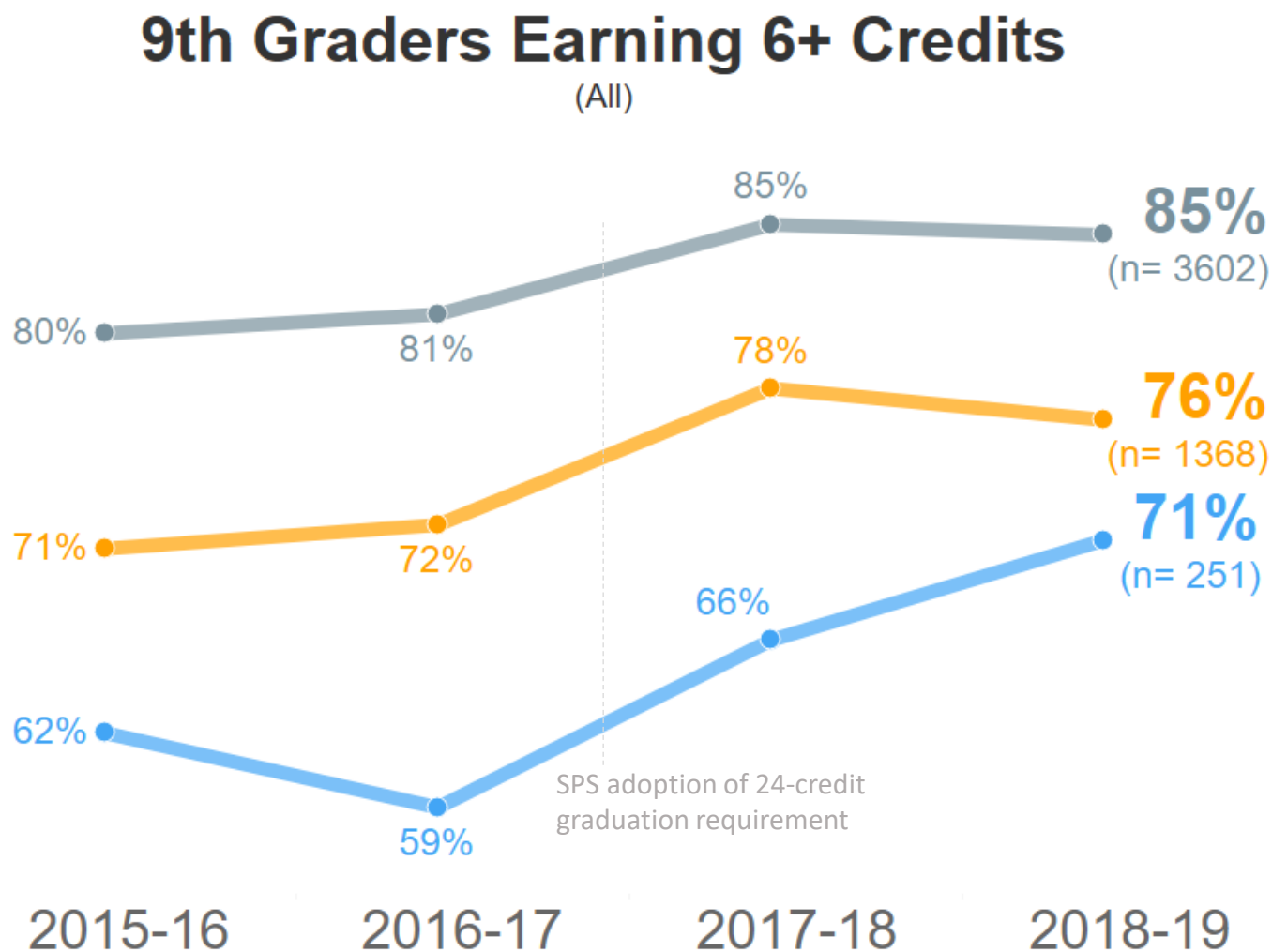
SPS has **made progress** in supporting seniors applying for financial aid: **73% of SPS students completed the FAFSA in 2018-19** – a 3% increase from 2017-18. Statewide, only 55% of students complete the FAFSA.

“People would come in [in 9th grade] and teach us about college, **tell us the difference** between a 4-year and a 2-year community college and then about transferring. **All that information really helped.** It’s the same thing, degree-wise. **It’s just less money.**”
- 12th Grade Student

“I just really wish that there were **more opportunities** for me to learn about [college and scholarship programs] **earlier in my high school career** because I got really scared about the future...I’m thankful for the help I got, I just wish I had gotten it **a little bit sooner.**” - 12th Grade Student

Baseline Student Data

9th Grade On-Track: Percentage of Students Earning 6+ Credits



- African American Males
- All Students
- Students of Color FFEJ

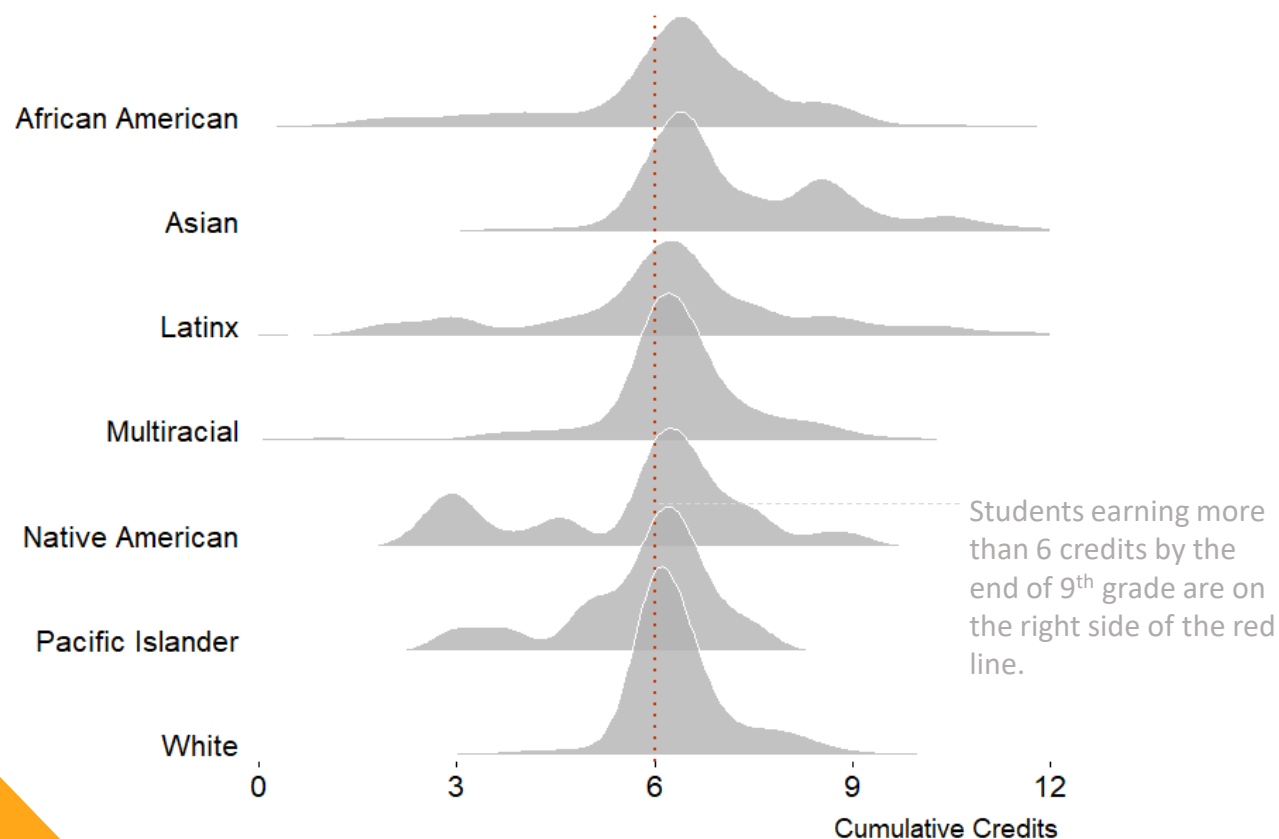
The percentage of 9th grade students earning 6 or more credits to stay on-track for on-time graduation showed **no change** from 2017-18 to 2018-19. On-track rates for African American male students **increased by 5%** over the same period.

2017-18 marked the first year that 9th grade students had to earn six or more credits to stay on track for 4-year graduation under new WA State requirements, which increased required credits from 20 to 24. Note: Credits earned the summer following 9th grade excluded from calculation. **Students of Color FFEJ** = Students of Color Furthest From Educational Justice; includes African American, Native American, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Southeast Asian students.

Baseline Student Data

9th Grade On-Track: Percentage of Students Earning 6+ Credits

9th Grade Credit Earning, 2018-19 (Distribution)



Although the **'typical' or median student earned at least 6 credits** in 2018-19, the 'spread' around this median varied by racial/ethnic group. Students furthest from educational justice were more likely to have earned fewer than 6 credits by the end of 9th grade.

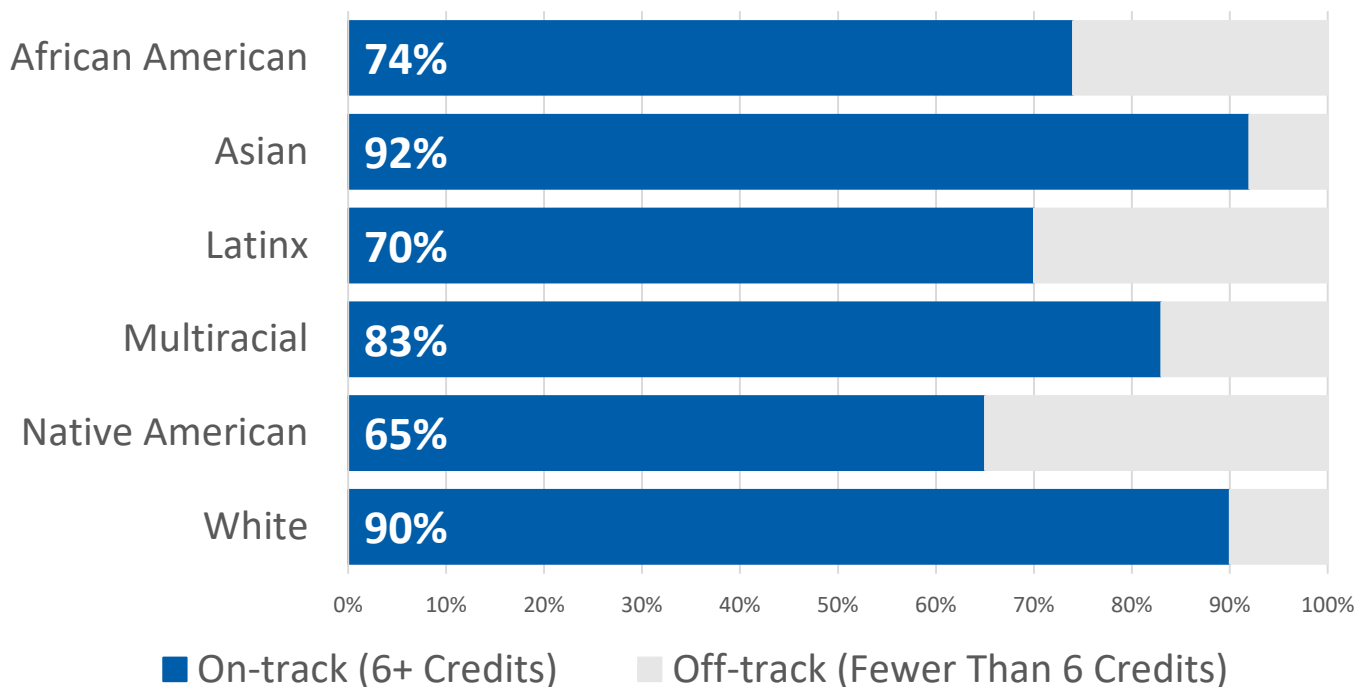
Some students end 9th grade with more than six credits because they apply eligible **middle school credits** to their high school transcripts or attend a school with **more than six credit earning opportunities**.

Note: Credits earned the summer following 9th grade excluded from calculation.

Baseline Student Data

9th Grade On-Track: Percentage of Students Earning 6+ Credits

9th Graders Earning 6+ Credits



Proportionally, students furthest from educational justice were **less likely** to end ninth grade on-track for graduation in 2018-19.

2018-19

Baseline Student Data

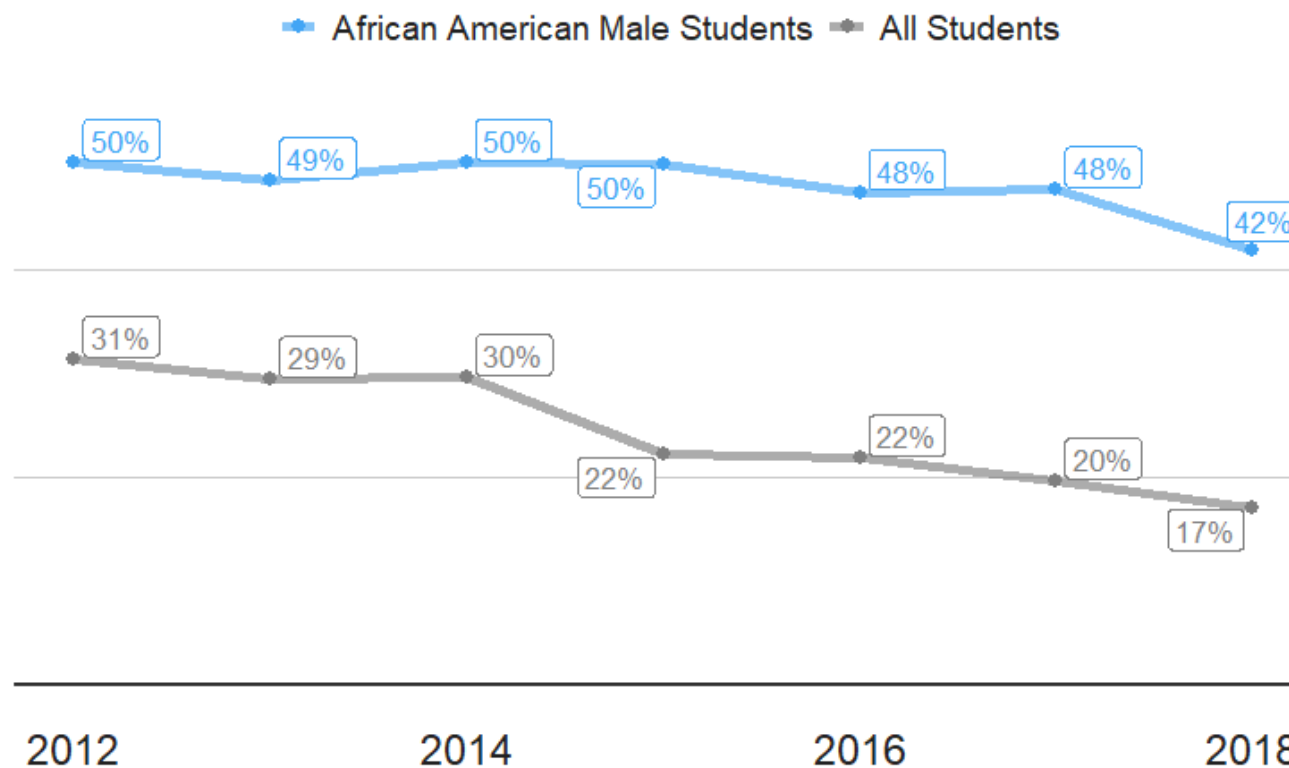
9th Grade On-Track: Percentage of Students Failing One or More Courses

The percentage of 9th grade students failing one or more courses **declined by 2.5%** in 2018-19, to 17.1%.

The percentage of **African American male students failing one or more courses decreased by just under 6%** over the same period.

9th Grade Course Failures

Students failing 1 or more courses 2012-2018



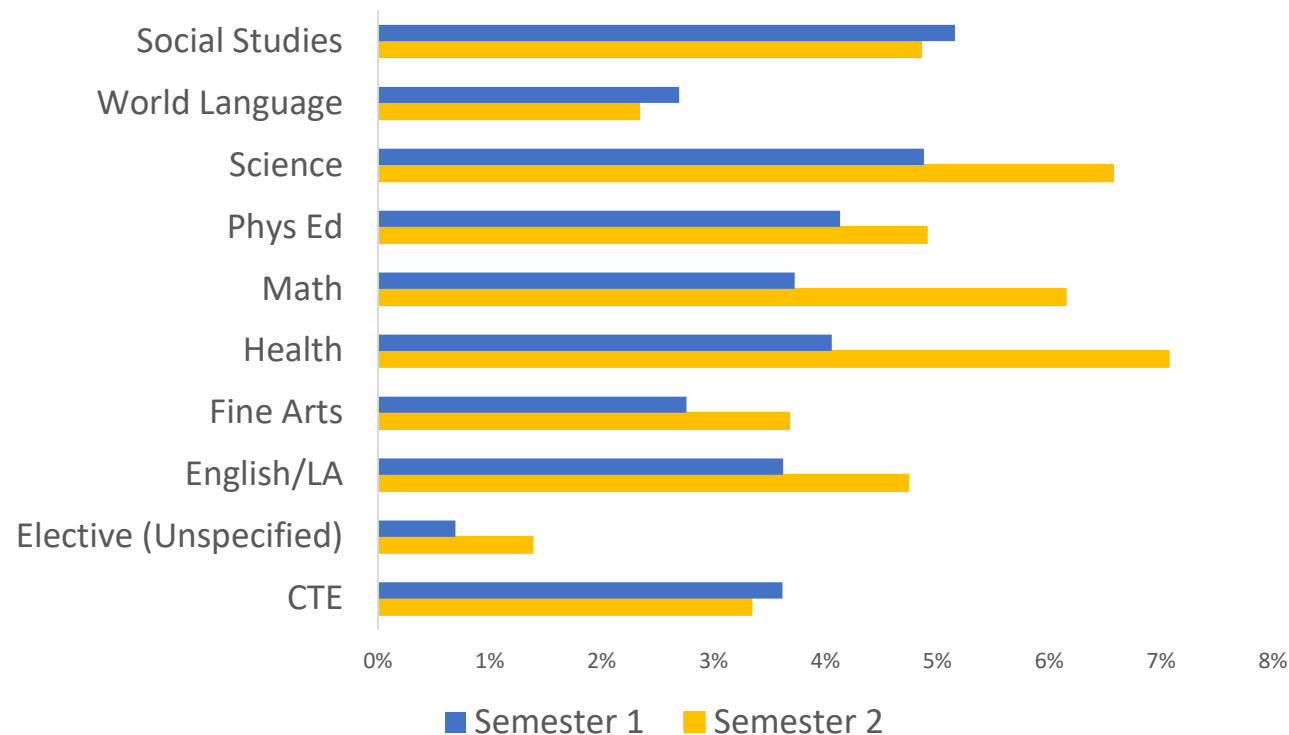
Baseline Student Data

9th Grade On-Track: Percentage of Students Failing 1 or More Classes

Ninth grade course failures rates were highest in **health, math, and science** in 2018-19.

Students were more likely to fail **spring semester** courses.

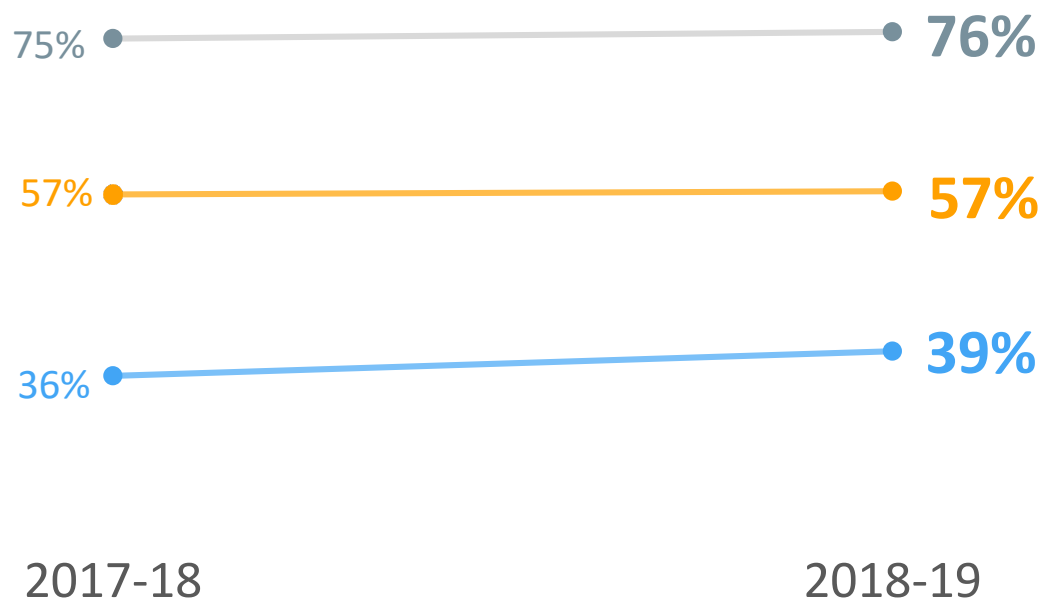
9th Grade Course Failure Rates, 2018-19



Baseline Student Data

10th Grade SBA: Percentage of Students Meeting College and Career Readiness Standard in ELA

10th Graders Meeting SBA ELA Standard



- African American Males
- All Students
- Students of Color FFEJ

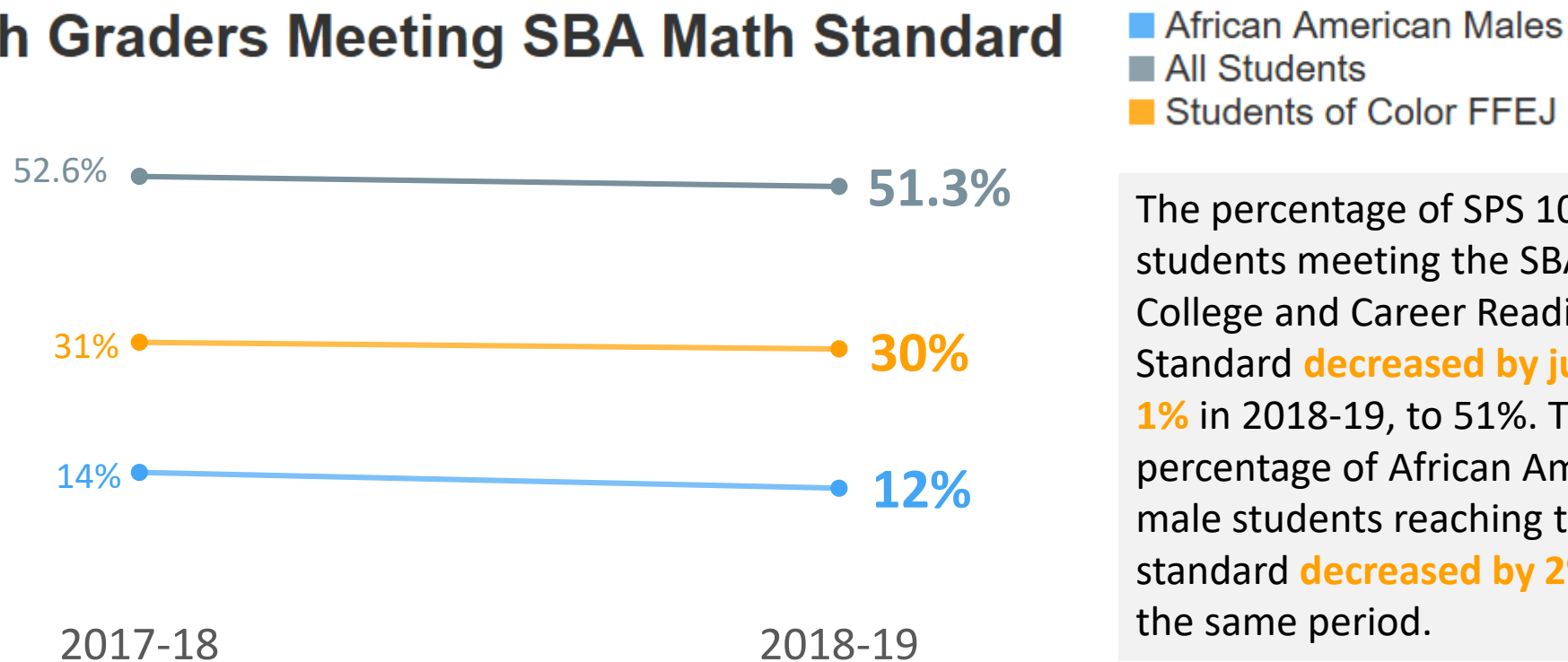
The percentage of SPS 10th grade students meeting the SBA ELA College and Career Readiness Standard **increased by 1%** in 2018-19, to 76%. The percentage of African American male students reaching the ELA standard **increased by 3%** over the same period.

The SBA was re-baselined in 2017-18. Percentages indicate students earning an L3 or L4.

Baseline Student Data

10th Grade SBA: Percentage of Students Meeting College and Career Readiness Standard in Math

10th Graders Meeting SBA Math Standard



The percentage of SPS 10th grade students meeting the SBA Math College and Career Readiness Standard **decreased by just over 1%** in 2018-19, to 51%. The percentage of African American male students reaching the ELA standard **decreased by 2%** over the same period.

The SBA was re-baselined in 2017-18. Percentages indicate students earning an L3 or L4.

Next Steps and District Actions

Finding: Teachers strongly supported the aims of Revisioning while indicating a need for clear, common expectations for student college and career readiness.

District Response

- The **2019-24 SPS Strategic Plan establishes college and career readiness as a priority goal**. The plan includes multiple indicators of readiness, including successful completion of advanced, college-level coursework (AP, IB or dual credit); meeting college and career readiness benchmarks on a standardized assessment such as the SAT, ACT, or SBA; and CTE course pathway completion.
- The SPS Strategic Plan Workgroup for college and career readiness is **developing initiatives that will support improved readiness for students furthest from educational justice**, with a specific focus on African American male students.

Next Steps and District Actions

Finding: Teachers and staff report that Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) processes should be further systematized at the high school level to ensure all struggling students receive targeted supports based on identified academic, behavioral, or social-emotional needs.

District Response → SPS College and Career Readiness is providing **professional development on MTSS and Early Warning Indicators Systems** for struggling students in monthly professional development sessions with high school principals throughout 2019-20.

Finding: Many 9th grade teachers felt they had inadequate supports to differentiate instruction for all learners, particularly in math and science, and highlighted differences in middle school preparation as a key challenge.

District Response → CCR is collaborating with the Digital Learning department to provide **training in digital and blended learning practices that support improved classroom differentiation** during monthly professional development sessions with principals.

Next Steps and District Actions

- **Findings:** Ninth grade students facing academic challenges in 9th grade expressed low interest in pursuing advanced, college level courses. Providing more effective, personalized supports, including mentorship and encouragement from caring adults and role models, will be a critical component of any effort to close college-bound opportunity gaps for these students.

District Response

→ The 2019-24 SPS CCR Strategic Plan workgroup has proposed a **new 9th grade mentoring initiative**. If funded, this program would connect students across the district who are furthest from educational justice to professional, school-based mentors.

Next Steps and District Actions

Finding: Teachers and staff see family engagement as a critical lever to improve outcomes for struggling students. Although many schools described challenges connecting with caregivers, a subset of schools were optimistic about their progress.

District Response

- The 2019-24 SPS Strategic Plan workgroup for College and Career Readiness has proposed an initiative to **improve partnerships and increase engagement with families furthest from educational justice.**
- As part of this work, the district plans to **scale-up innovative practices** observed in schools that have developed effective strategies to engage with all families.

Next Steps and District Actions

Findings: Students overwhelmingly report that real-world, one-on-one interactions – like college visits and fairs, mentoring programs, and job shadowing – have had the most impact on their postsecondary planning. Most students indicated that they rely on word-of-mouth to find out about career-connected learning (CCL) opportunities.

District Response

- The 2019-24 SPS CCR Strategic Plan workgroup has proposed a **new community mentoring initiative** that would connect students furthest from educational justice with representatives from local employers and colleges.
- The SPS CTE Program is also **building on successful practices to engage students** developed by Career Connected Learning Coordinators during the first year of program roll-out in 2018-19. Other initiatives include work with a marketing firm to improve District understanding of how to connect students with CCL opportunities.

Next Steps and District Actions

Finding: Building CTE leaders report that insufficient community connections and program offerings pose the biggest challenges to their CTE programs.

District Response

→ The **CTE Program is redeveloping program offerings in 2019-20** to ensure all students across the district have access to a variety of high-quality CTE programs and pathways.

For questions or more information about this study,
please email:

research@seattleschools.org

More information about the SPS Research & Evaluation
Department can be found at:

<https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/rea>



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