

Barriers to Improvement

Students identified several interconnected barriers that can prevent young people from getting the academic support, opportunities, and learning experiences they need to succeed.

Students Don't Always Feel Heard or Advocated For
Some students said they do not feel that adults consistently listen to their concerns, respond to their needs, or advocate for them. This can be especially important for students who may not have another adult helping them navigate school or pursue academic opportunities.

Support Can Be Hard to Access or Come Too Late
Students described difficulty getting tutoring, one-on-one help, counseling, and credit-recovery support when they need it. Some are unsure where to go, feel uncomfortable asking for help, or receive support only after they have already fallen significantly behind.

Staffing, Time, and Capacity Limit Individualized Support
Students pointed to limited counselor availability, insufficient academic support, and classroom environments where teachers may not have enough time to provide additional explanations or one-on-one attention. English Learners may also need more bilingual or ELL-trained educators and instructional approaches that better support participation and understanding.

Information and Guidance Are Uneven
Students do not always know about tutoring, credit recovery, advanced classes, college and career opportunities, volunteer experiences, or other available supports. Without clear, proactive guidance, students who have fewer resources or less support at home may be especially likely to miss opportunities.

Structural Barriers Make Opportunities Unequal
Transportation, work and family responsibilities, scheduling, cost, and access to basic needs can affect whether students are able to participate in tutoring, enrichment, field trips, credit recovery, and other opportunities, even when those programs technically exist.

Learning Doesn't Always Reflect or Engage Every Student
Students called for learning environments that are welcoming, culturally representative, engaging, and responsive to different learning needs. They emphasized the importance of seeing their histories and communities reflected in school, having meaningful voice in their learning, and receiving instruction that helps every student feel capable of succeeding.