



Dual Enrollment in California

APPLYING NATIONAL LESSONS TO STATE CHALLENGES

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INTRODUCTION: EXPANDING DUAL ENROLLMENT NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY

An ample body of research suggests that, when implemented well, dual enrollment is associated with increases in college enrollment and completion and can be especially effective for students who are underrepresented and underserved in higher education. Compared with their peers, high school students who completed a dual enrollment experience, including those from underrepresented backgrounds, had more positive educational outcomes, including these:

- Higher rates of high school graduation (7 percentage points greater on average).
- Higher rates of college enrollment (15 percentage points greater on average).
- Higher rates of subsequently completing a college degree (25 percentage points greater on average).¹

When dual enrollment courses are designed as part of pathways leading to degrees and are articulated for transfer, they also can reduce the costs of degree completion for states and decrease college costs for students by improving intersegmental transitions and alignment.² However, states vary widely in their policies and infrastructures for implementing and supporting dual enrollment, and recent research shows that the differences matter.

For more than a decade, JFF, a national nonprofit working to drive change in the US workforce and education system, has been integrally involved in helping policymakers develop state and federal policies that promote improved high school and postsecondary success for underserved students, including through dual enrollment partnerships, early college high school designs, and college and career pathways. The purpose of much of our work in this area has been to provide research and advice to state leaders on best practice principles and implementation strategies that expand high-quality dual enrollment opportunities to a wide range of students.

In 2014, JFF expanded its influence to the West Coast by opening a satellite office in Oakland, California, with the express purpose of assisting partners in California and other western states in harnessing solutions to help more people get the educations they need, leading to a stronger workforce and a more vibrant economy. Our move west has also introduced us to a number of new, like-minded partners in the education and workforce arenas like the College Futures Foundation. Through annual grants of nearly \$20 million, College Futures works to increase bachelor's degree attainment among low-income and historically underrepresented students in California.

Both JFF and College Futures believe in dual enrollment as an effective strategy for improving educational outcomes in California. With support from College Futures, JFF launched a three-part research project to 1) uncover the historical and political contexts that both support and

hinder the expansion of dual enrollment in California, 2) analyze the development of dual enrollment policies in other leading states that might provide instructive lessons for California, and 3) develop a set of recommendations, based on the local and national research, for scaling high-quality dual enrollment across the state.

Dual Enrollment in California: Historical Challenges, Future Opportunities

The potential impact of scaling dual enrollment in California—with attention to quality and access for underserved students—is substantial. If dual enrollment in California community colleges was scaled to reach 10 percent of the state’s high school students, an additional 132,700 students would be able to take part in such programs. That is approximately the size of the entire ninth grade cohort in Los Angeles County.

If the dual enrollment programs rolled out as part of such an expansion were high quality, we would expect them to yield benefits similar to those seen in prior national studies of dual enrollment programs, such as a 7 percentage point increase in high school graduation rates,³ a 15 percentage point increase in community college enrollment rates,⁴ and a 1.6-fold improvement in students’ odds of enrolling in four-year colleges.⁵ Based on available data, we are able to project that increasing dual enrollment to reach 10 percent of California’s high school students would translate to approximately 14,170 new bachelor’s degrees earned annually, and that low-income students would earn 45 percent of those degrees (6,350). The number of new bachelor’s degrees would represent a better than 60 percent increase from baseline levels.

Unfortunately, California is behind other states in realizing the positive impacts that dual enrollment could have on students’ educational achievements and on the state’s postsecondary completion agenda. While dual enrollment is increasing, as a state, California still faces systemic barriers that make high-quality dual enrollment unavailable to many people, and access and equity gaps persist.

In the past, many California schools and colleges participated in dual enrollment partnerships, either through national models like Early and Middle College High Schools, California state models like California Partnership Academies, or customized local partnerships between a high school or K-12 district and a community college or a community college district. However, California law limited the number of courses that students could take per term and put caps on participation in summer courses. Moreover, colleges were not allowed to offer “sheltered” courses on high school campuses; instead, classes needed to be open to the broader community and were typically taken by dual enrollees during afterschool hours.

State fiscal constraints affected colleges' appetites for expanding concurrent enrollment. During the post-2008 recession, community college enrollments increased at a time when state funding was declining, leading schools to cut course sections and increase waiting lists. Given the fact that institutions were facing limitations on their ability to serve "traditional" community college students, the notion of expanding college course offerings for high school students could not gain much traction.

California's dual enrollment history has also been shaped by a fear of running afoul of state funding regulations. A 2003 audit of the community college system revealed that colleges had potentially misused public money by taking advantage of dual enrollment to claim extra apportionment funds for physical education courses. That finding contributed to a perception that colleges and school districts were "double dipping" in claiming state funding, so some lawmakers turned against dual enrollment and colleges feared that they might have to reimburse funds improperly claimed for dual enrollees. By the late 2000s, the effects of recession and lingering repercussions from the earlier fiscal missteps combined to impede the development of dual enrollment in California at a time when it was increasing in popularity as a policy strategy in many other states.

Because of those challenges, dual enrollment has not yet been built out as an intentional, well-structured strategy to improve college transition, success, and completion in California, and the lack of system-level support has led to lost potential. In the fall of 2017, 62,121 students participated in dual enrollment in California community colleges—3.2 percent of all California students in grades 9 to 12.⁶ This is below the national average of 10 percent.⁷ Compared with nationwide averages for students who participated in dual enrollment programs, California students who did participate in dual enrollment were less likely to complete a college degree within five years.⁸ Gaps in completion outcomes between lower-income and higher-income dual enrollees were larger in California than in the US overall.⁹

In response to this lost potential, state leaders proposed legislation that would help create a policy foundation for statewide dual enrollment. The bill, AB 288, the College and Career Access Pathways Partnerships Act, which was signed by Governor Jerry Brown in October 2015, sought to expand dual enrollment by creating a clear policy framework designed to alleviate the threat of fiscal penalties and other barriers that had discouraged the development of dual enrollment programs in the past. By systematizing dual enrollment through formal partnerships between schools and colleges, AB 288 intended to encourage expanded and improved dual enrollment initiatives at the local level. The bill was introduced by California State Assembly Member Chris Holden (D-Pasadena) in February 2015. According to legislative staff, the spirit of the bill was aligned with Holden's commitment to increasing access to higher education for traditionally underrepresented students. The bill was based on the idea that if more students, especially academically lower-achieving students, could participate in dual enrollment, then students,

families, and the state would reap benefits, including a reduction in the high school dropout rate, increases in the two- and four-year college completion rates, a decrease in the amount of time and money necessary to attain a college degree or certificate, and an improvement in the overall college readiness of high school students.

AB288 created new guidelines and data reporting requirements for voluntary dual enrollment partnership agreements, and it allowed secondary-postsecondary partnerships that followed those reporting guidelines to do the following:

- Increase the maximum number of college credits a high school student can earn from 11 to 15.
- Waive certain college fees for dually enrolled students and make textbooks and other course materials available to those students at no charge.
- Provide dual credit courses on the high school campus during the regular school day (dropping requirement that such courses be made accessible to the public).

While the College and Career Access Pathways Partnerships Act served as a starting point for systematizing school-college partnerships in California, a preliminary review of school and college administrators' experiences suggests that the law has not by itself generated strong enough incentives to significantly expand dual enrollment or enhance quality. Such programs still face barriers at the local level, including a lack of institutional capacity and challenges with data collection and enrollment processes. System-level barriers, meanwhile, include the lack of a common framework for either defining best practices or giving the parties involved a reason to follow those best practices, and the lack of a coherent vision or strategy for using dual enrollment to advance a statewide college completion goal.

Based on our conversations with K-12, community college, and state-level leaders, we uncovered, several factors that have limited the appetite for dual enrollment in California. We hypothesize that dual enrollment would gain considerable momentum in California if the state could address these issues:

- Lack of a coherent vision or strategy for using dual enrollment to advance a statewide college completion agenda, and lack of coordination across the state agencies responsible for implementation (e.g., the K-12 system and the two-year college system).
- Lack of a common framework for defining (or providing incentives to adhere to) best practices to ensure the quality of dual enrollment programs and advance a sense of shared purpose that would strengthen postsecondary success.
- Lingering concerns about “double dipping” by school districts and community colleges in claiming state funding for dual enrollees, and an overall fiscal environment in which state funding for dual enrollment is limited and tightly regulated.

- Concerns within the state’s K-12 and community college faculty unions regarding perceived threats to the autonomy and job security of educators on each side of the secondary-postsecondary divide.

National Lessons with Local Implications

As part of our research, we conducted in-depth interviews with state, community college and K-12 leaders from a number of other states who have worked to develop and implement dual enrollment policies. Our conversations revealed that California is not alone in encountering cultural and policy-related challenges. Even states with exemplary policies had to overcome obstacles similar to those that have stymied dual enrollment in California. And while no state compares to California, given its size, geographic diversity, and decentralized education governance system, other states’ experiences with dual enrollment programs may still provide instructive lessons for California policymakers.

Based on the local and national research we have conducted, we compiled the following list of recommendations for California policymakers and educational leaders interested in scaling high-quality dual enrollment initiatives across the state.

Lead from the top. Colorado, Indiana, Texas, Ohio, and Kentucky all cited leadership from the governor’s office as the key driver of dual enrollment policy buy-in. Kentucky took a further step when its legislature also mandated that state education agencies collaborate in the development of dual enrollment policies and programs.

Tie dual enrollment to statewide strategic plans. Leaders in Texas, Colorado, Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky also suggested that demand for dual enrollment increased because such programs were seen as means of making visible progress toward state and institutional goals for college success, economic development, and high school reform. In some cases, as in Texas and Indiana, state K-12 accountability systems provide incentives for participation in dual enrollment (and recently that has been the case in California, as well).

Clearly define quality standards. Minnesota, Iowa, Indiana, and Washington crafted policies encouraging or requiring dual enrollment programs to adhere to a specific set of measurable quality standards, such as those defined by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP).

Design quality frameworks that align with—and are shaped by—other state initiatives and priorities. Indiana’s dual enrollment policies include incentives for colleges to offer dual enrollment classes from a specific list of community college courses that are designed to transfer seamlessly to four-year universities, reflecting a broader cross-agency focus on improving statewide transfer policies and outcomes. Texas developed a statewide quality

blueprint and an intensive designation process for its Early College High Schools, which drove the broader dual enrollment field toward a shared definition of what constitutes a high-quality program.

Legislate program consistency and access. In order to quell stakeholder concerns about uneven program quality across the state’s numerous types of dual enrollment partnership agreements, Iowa passed the Senior Year Plus Act in 2008 to create one unifying framework for dual enrollment programs and implement stronger quality standards for all courses. Similarly, Ohio enacted the College Credit Plus Act of 2014 to transform dual enrollment from an opportunity provided to select students in certain districts into a clearly-defined program that is accessible to all. The legislation mandated that all high schools provide pathways for participating students to earn 15 to 30 college credits toward a college major or career path.

Analyze long-term cost benefits. In Colorado, analysts drafted a 10-year return on investment report suggesting that an up-front investment in dual enrollment would generate cost savings in the form of a decline in the high school dropout rate, a reduction in the need for college remediation, and an increase workforce readiness over time. Stakeholders cited the positive findings from this analysis as a key factor in achieving unanimous legislative support for Colorado’s Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act of 2009, which transformed the state’s dual enrollment policy and its dual enrollment funding model to allow both high schools and colleges to claim per-pupil appropriations for dual enrollees—a strategy referred to as “hold harmless” funding.

Make a case for “hold harmless” and other creative funding policies. Lawmakers in Texas, Colorado, and other states have made a number of arguments in favor of hold harmless dual enrollment policies, reasoning that “double investments” (where both a high school and a college claim per-pupil funding for the same dual enrollees) will reap long-term savings for the state. Those savings can come from accelerating the time it takes students to earn college degrees: Those who finish their degrees earlier will enter the labor market earlier and start contributing to the tax base sooner. Another argument is that covering the cost of a college course a student takes in high school will be less expensive for the state than covering the cost of the same course taken by the same student a few years later at an inflated price. In some states, hold harmless funding—which is based on per-pupil revenue—is accompanied by other funding mechanisms intended to cover the cost of college tuition. In Iowa, the state’s K-12 funding formula includes an additional weight for dual enrollees, and districts use the additional funding to pay tuition for college courses.

Use high school adjunct faculty to mitigate the concerns of K-12 educators. States such as Minnesota have relied predominately on high school faculty members to teach concurrent enrollment courses on high school campuses. This approach is more popular for high

school teachers because it eases tensions about unlicensed college instructors teaching classes in K-12 schools.

Reduce the concerns of college faculty members by engaging them in program design and quality assurance. College systems in Minnesota and Iowa have eased the concerns that postsecondary educators have about the quality of concurrent enrollment courses by engaging college faculty members, often through the NACEP accreditation process, in decision-making and oversight of course delivery—often by offering them faculty liaison or “mentor” roles. In Minnesota, negotiators included modest compensation for faculty mentors in the faculty association contract, which carved out a dedicated role for college faculty members even when they are not teaching dual credit courses.

Promote collaboration among high school and postsecondary education professionals. Indiana and other states have created facilitated spaces in which high school and college faculty members could collaborate as partners in the development of dual enrollment policies and programs. In general, we heard that that union concerns can be appeased when both high school and college faculty have a role to play in dual enrollment course design, course delivery, and quality control.

It is important to note that it would be unlikely for California to attempt to adopt another state’s approach or policy framework wholesale. The California education landscape is simply too complex, and top-down policy mandates would likely be met with resistance. Nevertheless, as the list of lessons from other states demonstrates, recent and emerging state policy and system-level trends may present viable opportunities for California leaders to take dual enrollment to the next level. With committed leadership and vision, dual enrollment would ideally be integrated into and aligned with broader goals for higher education access and completion, along with frameworks for defining quality and disseminating best practices. Specifically, there are a few strategic opportunities for advancing dual enrollment policy and leadership in California. Here’s a look at five of them:

- 1) The upcoming gubernatorial election:** Leadership from the governor’s office was essential to driving dual enrollment policy in states that have had success with such programs, and in the 2018 election, Californians have a chance to vote for a candidate who has articulated a clear vision for the economic future of the state—a future that embraces innovative approaches to college and career preparation, including dual enrollment.
- 2) Guided pathways reforms in California community colleges:** The recent investment in guided pathways could present an opportunity to more intentionally connect K-12 school districts and community colleges. One way to forge such connections is through strategic dual enrollment partnerships and related efforts to define, codify, and incentivize best practices.

- 3) New high school accountability provisions:** California's new accountability system for K-12 schools contains a College and Career Readiness Indicator, which takes into account students' participation in dual enrollment courses, along with other data points such as Advanced Placement test scores and A-G course completion. The inclusion of the dual enrollment participation as part of the college and career readiness metric provides an incentive for high schools to increase the number and variety of dual enrollment courses they offer. However, the success of this strategy depends on whether postsecondary institutions will have similar incentives to expand dual enrollment, and whether stakeholders are able to maintain a focus on the quality—not just the quantity—of courses offered.
- 4) Regional consortia:** Policymakers may want to look to regional consortia—especially those that have created some momentum around dual enrollment via CCPT grants—for promising, replicable practices and models. State funding could seed demonstrations and elevate strong practices.
- 5) Governor's office review of the state's Master Plan and future workforce needs:** As part of its deliberations on the 2017-18 state budget, the state legislature directed the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to conduct a study reviewing the Master Plan for Higher Education. This review could provide a strategic opportunity to forge a more coherent, cross-segmental college success vision, and dual enrollment could play a central role in that vision.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Institute for Education Science's What Works Clearinghouse recently identified five studies on dual enrollment that meet their highly rigorous standards.

² Haskell, R. E., "The Effects of Dual-Credit Enrollment on Underrepresented Students: The Utah Case," *International Journal of Economics and Finance*, 8(1) (2015): 144.

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³ Institute for Education Sciences, "WWC Intervention Report: Transition to College, Dual Enrollment Programs" (Washington, DC: 2017).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Giani, M., Alexander, C., and Reyes, P., "Exploring Variation in the Impact of Dual-Credit Coursework on Postsecondary Outcomes: A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Texas Students," *The High School Journal* 97 (4) (2014): 200.

⁶ California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Management Information Systems Data Mart. Accessed April 27, 2018: <http://datamart.cccco.edu/datamart.aspx>.

California Department of Education, DataQuest. Accessed April 27, 2018: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.

⁷ National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, "Fast Facts About Dual and Concurrent Enrollment." Accessed April 27, 2018: <http://www.nacep.org/research-policy/fast-facts/>.

⁸ Fink, J., Jenkins, D., and Yanagiura, T., "What Happens to Students Who Take Community College 'Dual Enrollment' Courses in High School?" Community College Research Center (2017).

⁹ Ibid.