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The Progress of Education Reform 2005

Dual Enrollment

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What's inside

- How state policies affect quality and availability of programs
- Credit-based transition programs
- College-level learning at the secondary level

New Programs, Policies Aim To Improve Students' Preparation for and Access to Postsecondary Education

Opportunities to earn college credit in high school, once limited to a few programs available only to a small percentage of students, have grown dramatically over the last decade. More and more states are adopting policies designed to create a wider array of opportunities – for a broader range of students – to get a head start on college.

These opportunities range from “college-like” Advanced Placement courses that traditionally have been used to accelerate the progress of high-achieving 11th and 12th graders; to programs that allow students to take actual college courses, for credit, while still enrolled in high school; to innovative new options for a broader range of students – from tech-prep programs to distance learning to early and middle college high schools.

Dual enrollment exists in some form or other, in nearly every state – 18 states mandate that dual enrollment opportunities be provided to students. But eligibility and tuition requirements, funding streams and program features vary widely from state to state. Courses may or may not be designed specifically for high school students; they may be offered at the high school or at the college; they may be taught by regular college faculty or by specifically certified high school teachers. Some programs offer college credit immediately upon completion of the course, while others offer the credit only when the student enrolls in postsecondary education.

This issue of *The Progress of Education Reform* summarizes the findings of three reports:

- A review of existing research on the effectiveness of dual enrollment programs in increasing college access and success for a broad range of students
- An in-depth look at state dual enrollment policies, and how they affect the quality and availability of programs
- An analysis of differing views within the higher education community on the role and value of college-level learning in high school – Advanced Placement courses and school- and college-based dual enrollment programs.

Be sure to check the ECS Dual/Concurrent Enrollment Issue Site <http://www.ecs.org/DualEnrollment> and the ECS P-16 Issue Site, <http://www.ecs.org/P-16>.

Both provide overviews, recommended readings, “quick facts,” research summaries and links to additional sources of information.



State Dual Enrollment Policies: Addressing Access and Quality

(Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, September 2004, <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/cbtrans/statedualenrollment.doc>)

This report takes an in-depth look at the scope, structure and regulation of dual enrollment programs across the nation. It begins by summarizing dual enrollment policies in each state, and the extent to which they address 10 major program features: target population, admissions requirements, program location and structure, student mix, instructors' qualifications, method of credit-earning, course content, tuition and funding.

The 36 states that have adopted dual enrollment policies take a variety of approaches – some offer detailed regulation and others provide only minimal guidance. In 12 other states, oversight and implementation of dual enrollment programs is left to the state board of education or postsecondary institutions.

No state, according to this analysis, comprehensively addresses all aspects of dual enrollment. Program structure is the least-governed area, while state policy most often addresses student admissions and program finances. This emphasis, the report says, reflects states' concern that (1) their financial investment in dual enrollment is wisely used and (2) the standards of postsecondary education are not diluted.

The report goes on to examine how state policies affect the quality and availability of dual enrollment programs. For instance, the spread of dual enrollment programs may be inhibited by policies – such as limits on course location – that complicate implementation and discourage innovation at the institutional level. At the same time, the tuition and admissions requirements of many programs serve to screen out the very students – those with economic and educational disadvantages – who might benefit most from them.

The report concludes with several recommendations for policymakers and program regulators:

- *Tailor dual enrollment policies to the differing goals of programs* – those that offer enrichment for high-achieving college-bound students and those targeted at a wider range of students.
- *Develop stable, equitable funding mechanisms.* Arrangements such as those used in North Carolina and Michigan – where high schools and colleges share the funding burden for dually enrolled students – ensure that economically disadvantaged students will not be excluded from programs because of their inability to pay tuition.
- *Identify the needs of students beyond course taking.* Funding streams that provide only the minimum support for dual enrollment may prevent programs from providing counseling and other services that can promote student success.
- *Balance the needs of academically oriented students with those of technically oriented students.* One way to broaden participation is the creation of career and technical pathways that offer dual enrollment credit for both technical and academic courses.



Promoting College Access and Success: A Review of Credit-based Transition Programs

(Office of Vocational Education, U.S. Department of Education, November 2003, <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/crdbase.pdf>)

The authors of this report reviewed 45 studies, articles and books on dual enrollment, the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, tech-prep and middle college high schools to determine what is known about these programs' ability to increase college access and success for a wide range of students.

The effectiveness of such programs has yet to be rigorously evaluated – let alone conclusively documented, the authors say. But the largely positive findings of the studies they reviewed – coupled with the obvious appeal of such programs – are sufficient to justify “continued support and experimentation.”

The authors list a number of unanswered questions about credit-based transition programs. Is the material taught in such programs really college level, or is it “watered down”? How do the location of credit-based courses and other program features affect student outcomes? And do such programs truly enroll a broad range of students, or are they primarily limited to the college-bound?

The report recommends that policymakers and educators push for the following:

- More comprehensive and reliable information on the characteristics of credit-based transition programs and the students who participate in them. (Many states are unable to give even rough estimates of how many students are involved in such programs, the authors note.)
- Methodologically sound research that both evaluates program outcomes and explores the mechanisms and program features that have a positive influence on students' transitions into and through postsecondary education.

Resources

Advanced Placement, administered by the College Board, allows students to earn college credit or advanced standing by taking an end-of-course exam. <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html>

The **International Baccalaureate** program started as a liberal arts course of study for students in international schools around the world. Students take exams in six specific fields and earn credit, at the discretion of colleges, based on cutoff scores. <http://www.ibo.org/ibo/index.cfm>

Tech prep is supported, at the federal level, by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. The legislative framework calls for a program of study that combines at least two years of secondary and two years of postsecondary education. <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cte/tpreptopic.html>

Middle college high schools, located on college campuses, help students at risk of dropping out meet graduation requirements and transition to college. Students usually take high school courses and, when ready, take courses at the partnering postsecondary institution. <http://www.laguardia.edu/mcnc/>

Early college high schools are small schools from which all students graduate with an associate of arts degree or enough college credits to enter a four-year baccalaureate program as a college junior. <http://www.earlycolleges.org/>

Dual Enrollment of High School Students at Postsecondary Institutions: 2002-03 provides data from a nationally representative survey of Title IV degree-granting institutions. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005008>

Dual Credit and Exam-based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2002-03 provides enrollment estimates, course characteristics and other data on dual credit courses. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005009>



College-Level Learning in High School: Purposes, Policies and Practical Implications

(D. Bruce Johnstone and Beth Del Genio, Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2001, <http://www.aacu-edu.org/publications/execsummary.cfm>)

The rapid growth of dual enrollment programs has created “a new arena of educational practice” that could profoundly affect both the high school curriculum and the academic experiences and opportunities of virtually all high school students.

But it is an arena in which state and federal authorities, individual schools and districts, and higher education institutions are “too frequently acting in isolation, and in the absence of either clear principles or an appreciation of unintended consequences.”

That’s the conclusion of this analysis of the significance and potential impact of steadily rising enrollments in Advanced Placement courses and dual enrollment programs. It reveals widely varying views on the role and value of college-level learning, particularly within the higher education community.

A recent analysis of policies and practices at 450 postsecondary institutions showed great differences between two- and four-year colleges and universities in the extent to which college-level learning – in whatever form and by whatever criteria – is accepted and credited toward graduation.

Highly selective colleges and universities are considerably less likely to allow “credit to be extended ... or the four-year undergraduate experience to be truncated,” the authors note. Many question whether the grading standards, particularly in high school-based dual enrollment programs, are rigorous enough, or whether “high school teachers, however pedagogically talented, know what is genuinely ‘college-level’ in assessing the learning of their students.”

Less-selective institutions, and especially community colleges, are “much more encouraging and accommodating of all forms of college-level learning in high school, especially the school-based form, where the college itself is frequently sponsoring courses given in the high school,” the report says.



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