

Advancing Postsecondary Opportunity Through Dual Enrollment in Louisiana

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This state case summary is part of a [series](#) produced with the support of the National Comprehensive Center to highlight connections between equity and state policy. This case summary aligns with the National Academies [equity framework](#) within Domain F — Equitable Access to High-Quality Curricula and Instruction, Indicator 11 — Disparities in Access to and Enrollment in Rigorous Coursework.

Dual enrollment programs offer high school students the opportunity to gain credits for postsecondary-level coursework. Research has demonstrated a variety of [positive effects](#) that dual enrollment might have on participating students, including heightened postsecondary aspirations, increased high school graduation rates, and improved postsecondary affordability, persistence and attainment.

Despite the well-documented benefits of dual enrollment participation, research also shows inequitable access to these programs. Students who are Black and/or Latine have significantly [lower rates](#) of participation than their white peers, and [research also shows](#) that schools with lower enrollment and public high schools with more students living in low-income households are less likely to offer programs. Further, students whose

parents do not have postsecondary degrees were less likely to participate in dual enrollment programs than students whose parents have [postsecondary degrees](#).

Identifying ways to boost participation in these programs represents a potential lever to increase equitable access to postsecondary education for historically underrepresented students. [Studies](#) have found that the positive impacts of dual enrollment are more pronounced for grade 12 students from traditionally underrepresented groups in the college-going population.

State Policy Strategies in Louisiana

Many states have [enacted policies](#) to increase participation in dual enrollment programs. Strategies include legislative mandates to expand course availability, broaden eligibility criteria, increase student financial support and ensure credit transfers. To more explicitly [address equity](#), some states have designed policies targeting disparities in access, affordability and quality across student demographics, school size and geography.

Louisiana, specifically, has implemented several policies related to dual enrollment as part of a larger vision to boost participation, especially among historically underrepresented student groups. In 2019, the Legislature passed [S.B. 243](#), which created the [Dual Enrollment Framework Task Force](#) and launched a statewide conversation about dual enrollment. Spurred by a collaborative cross-agency effort, the task force engaged stakeholders across the state to build support for a unified vision for dual enrollment. As the group gathered feedback and examined the current state of dual enrollment, clear disparities arose in program participation rates.

Soon after the task force submitted its [recommendations](#) to the Legislature, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and exacerbated students' barriers to dual enrollment access. With standardized college readiness tests suspended across the nation, Louisiana established an emergency policy to expand eligibility requirements for student participation in dual enrollment courses. This allowed students to bypass the more restrictive policy requiring a minimum score on the ACT standardized entrance exam. The Legislature also enacted [H.B. 374](#) to implement a statewide dual enrollment framework recommended by the task force. It was designed to assist high schools and public postsecondary institutions in implementing new or existing dual enrollment programs that provide equitable access and participation.

Additional policy changes that followed those created during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- **An online dual enrollment portal.** The Louisiana Board of Regents website now hosts a [hub](#) designed to streamline the application process and provide basic information to students and their families.
- **Counseling and advisement.** [H.B. 333](#) established a policy to ensure that school counselors have the skills and information to advise students and families on advanced coursework, including dual enrollment.
- **Access for underserved schools.** [S.B. 50](#) allows students in high schools not offering dual enrollment programs to access programs at other schools within the school system regardless of attendance zones.
- **Permanent eligibility expansion.** The emergency policy expanding student eligibility criteria at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a de facto pilot program for two years, leading the board of regents to [permanently enact](#) those changes in January 2023.

Outcomes and Progress

Prior to the policy changes made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, stricter eligibility requirements enacted in 2017 decreased dual enrollment participation by 8%. While participation continued to decline slightly during the pandemic, data from the 2021-22 school year showed a net increase in the number of students participating over pre-pandemic rates. In addition to boosting overall participation, the [2022 annual report](#) showed a 5% increase in program participation among students of color, reducing — but not eliminating — the racial participation gap. The report attributed much of this growth to increased engagement from the Southern University system, a historically Black public university that has fostered partnerships with high schools with large populations of Black students.

Although Louisiana has made progress through targeted statewide efforts, there remains work to be done in reducing disparities in dual enrollment participation. Aligning with a shared vision for every student to graduate from high school with college credit, the Louisiana Board of Regents and Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education are committed to continuing collaborative efforts to ensure that students have equitable access to dual enrollment opportunities.

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This case summary was informed in part by interviews with Mellynn Baker, assistant commissioner for strategic planning and student success with the Louisiana Board of Regents, and Adam Lowe, advisor with Education Strategy Group. No direct attributions were made by the authors.