

Dual Enrollment for All: Reasons and Ways to Make It Work

Lessons for Educators and Administrators from the Concurrent Courses Initiative



Find the full report *Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment* and other resources at www.irvine.org

A three-year study tracking outcomes for approximately 3,000 students across California shows that career-focused dual enrollment programs can provide important benefits for those who are underachieving and underrepresented in higher education. Dual enrollment, which allows high school students to take college courses and earn college credit, was once geared primarily toward high-achieving students seeking greater academic challenge.

Better Outcomes for Students

The Concurrent Courses initiative comprised eight programs involving 10 colleges and 21 high schools across California. Among participating students, 60 percent were students of color and 40 percent came from non-English speaking homes. Extensive evaluation shows that program participants, compared with other students in their districts, were:

- More likely to graduate from high school
- More likely to transition to a four-year college rather than a two-year college
- Less likely to take basic skills courses in college
- More likely to persist in postsecondary education
- Accumulating more college credits

ABOUT THE CONCURRENT COURSES INITIATIVE

The three-year Concurrent Courses initiative was created in 2008 to demonstrate the feasibility of using dual enrollment programs to enhance college and career pathways for low-income youth who are struggling academically or who are within populations historically underrepresented in higher education. Funded by The James Irvine Foundation, this \$4.75 million initiative provided financial support and technical assistance to eight secondary-postsecondary partnerships in California for approximately three years as they developed, enhanced and expanded their career-focused dual enrollment programs.

Participating Dual Enrollment Program Sites

Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School, Sacramento, in partnership with Sacramento City College

City College of San Francisco, San Francisco, in partnership with San Francisco Unified School District

Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach, in partnership with Long Beach City College and California State University Long Beach

Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles, in partnership with Hollywood Senior High School, Downtown Business Magnets High School and Miguel Contreras Learning Complex

North Orange County Regional Occupational Program, Anaheim, in partnership with Anaheim Union High School District, Cypress College and Fullerton College

Santa Barbara City College, Santa Barbara, in partnership with Santa Barbara High School District, Carpinteria High School District and South Coast Regional Occupational Program

Shasta Union High School District, Shasta, in partnership with Anderson Union High School District, Shasta College and Shasta-Trinity Regional Occupational Program

Tulare Joint Union High School District, Tulare, in partnership with College of the Sequoias

Program Recommendations

Essentials for Program Success

The Concurrent Courses initiative evaluation suggests that the following elements are essential to success in reaching disadvantaged, underrepresented students and measurably improving their academic performance and attainment.

Connect high school and college. Dual enrollment brings together secondary and postsecondary teachers, faculty and administrators to prepare students for college and to support them in their first college experience. In doing so, the adult participants gain a better understanding of students' needs and ways to promote their ongoing success in college.

Convey a clear pathway to career. Embedding dual enrollment opportunities within career-focused small learning communities encourages student participation by giving coursework focus and relevance — and it broadens, rather than narrows, students' expectations for themselves.

Create an authentic experience. A dual enrollment class should be perceived by students as an authentic college experience where they can “try on” the college student role and view themselves as capable of doing college work, eventually creating a new norm and expectation for college-going.

Key Considerations for Program Format

The delivery of dual enrollment programs in the initiative varied in a number of dimensions, resulting in observations about program format that educators and administrators should consider as they start and evolve dual enrollment programs.

Location of classes. On college campuses, students find a highly authentic experience and access to college support services. But because the cost and time needed for travel can make these arrangements difficult to manage for schools and students, some programs successfully locate dual enrollment classes at the high school.

Type of instructor. College instructors teaching high school students for the first time often need help in understanding and connecting with them, while high school instructors teaching college courses may need to change their pedagogy to create an authentic collegiate environment. Professional development can help both types of instructors improve student persistence and success.

Course offerings. Appropriate course selection is informed by program priorities and student needs. Student success classes, in which students develop study skills, establish career goals, and investigate colleges and majors give students tools for postsecondary success. Hands-on career-technical courses appeal to student interests and offer relevance to future employment.

Mix of students. When dual enrollment students are mixed in classes with regular college students, they are likely to display greater maturity and feel their college experience is authentic.

Type of credit. The opportunity to receive credit for both high school and college is a significant incentive for students to participate in dual enrollment programs, as doing so can save money and time. Additionally, high schools should obtain student consent to view college transcripts so they can play an active role supporting success.

Timing of courses. Similar to location, the timing of classes presents trade-offs. Integrating dual enrollment courses into the regular school day on the high school campus generally broadens the pool of students able to participate. However, in this arrangement, students may not strongly distinguish college courses from their high school courses. Offering courses after school on the college campus provides an authentic college experience but may conflict with students' other after-school responsibilities.