



# DESIGN MATTERS

## USING DUAL ENROLLMENT POLICY TO IMPROVE COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

A WEB TOOL FOR DECISION MAKERS

---

A POLICY BRIEF

BY DIANE S. WARD AND JOEL VARGAS

MAY 2012



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE



## USING DUAL ENROLLMENT POLICY TO IMPROVE COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

### A WEB TOOL FOR DECISION MAKERS

BY DIANE S. WARD AND JOEL VARGAS

---

As demand for a highly educated and skilled workforce grows, many governors have made student college and career readiness a priority in 2012. In their State of the State addresses, governors in Mississippi, Missouri, Virginia, and Wisconsin promoted the expansion of dual enrollment programs as a key strategy for strengthening academic preparedness. Dual enrollment provides high school students with opportunities to take college courses while completing their high school program, giving them an experience of college-level work, a better understanding of what it takes to succeed in that academic environment, and a head start on earning college credits.

In Kentucky, the chief executives touted progress in strengthening their dual enrollment program. North Carolina is implementing a governor's initiative that consolidates dual enrollment programs and establishes structured high school-to-college pathways. And in Maine, the governor has introduced legislation to better align the state's career and technical education (CTE) and community college programs.

For the most part, dual enrollment programs across the United States have focused on high-achieving high school students. But now these governors are looking to use these accelerated learning programs to get more young people to and through college and into workforce. Their sense of urgency is well founded, given that the nation's demand for workers with postsecondary credentials is growing faster than the supply (Carnevale & Rose 2011).

This brief looks at some of the dual enrollment approaches that states are advancing this year. Because governors' addresses are blueprints for action in the new year, the fate of many of these proposals will be revealed in the months

to come. Also, some initiatives are relatively developed, while others are new or general, which makes it difficult to assess their potential impact. Nevertheless, one pattern that seems to have emerged this year is a growing interest by states in the creation of pathways that include dual enrollment for high school students enrolled in career and technical programs as a workforce readiness strategy.

From Jobs for the Future's experience partnering with and advising states on dual enrollment policy and practice, we know it takes more than tinkering at the margins to promote broader access to and success in higher education. While many of the governors' proposals in 2012 establish a vision for dual enrollment, each would be strengthened by adding critical elements of an effective policy, such as eligibility rules, student supports, quality control, adequate funding and data tracking capacity. It is the task of education policymakers and legislatures to incorporate such policies and practices into state statutes and regulations to ensure that all students complete high school ready for college and careers.

---

This policy brief draws on Jobs for the Future's extensive work helping states develop and promote sound policies and practice that create stronger pathways from high school to and through college for low-income, minority, and first-generation students.

Diane S. Ward directs state education policy at JFF.  
Joel Vargas is Vice President, High School Through College, at JFF.



## NEW ONLINE TOOL FROM JFF WILL IDENTIFY KEY POLICY ELEMENTS

In these challenging fiscal times, policymakers are under pressure to invest resources wisely. Jobs for the Future has developed an interactive Web tool to provide education leaders with guidance as they make informed decisions about the cohesive policies needed to expand and sustain accelerated learning opportunities for students who are not already college bound. Policymakers can assess the extent to which their states' policies align with model elements needed to support these programs.

See a preview of JFF's interactive Web tool at: <http://application.jff.org/dualenrollment>

## WHY DUAL ENROLLMENT?

Research suggests that dual enrollment can improve the preparation of high school students for college by exposing them early to the academic demands of postsecondary education. Moreover, it can be a powerful academic motivator for young people who did not previously envisage themselves in college.

Research also shows that these programs improve the likelihood of students entering postsecondary education, continuing in college, and acquiring degrees (Swanson 2008). In a rigorous study of Florida dual enrollment students, 67 percent enrolled at a postsecondary institution after high school as compared to 50 percent of their peers; 76 percent of dual enrollment students persisted to a second year versus 71 percent of non-dual enrollment students (Karp et al. 2007).

The evidence supporting the use of dual enrollment in early college high schools as a strategy to close readiness gaps is even more compelling. Early colleges bridge the gap between high school and college through institutional partnerships, and they provide the instructional strategies and support systems that prepare students for college coursework while in high school. In 2010-11, 93 percent of graduates from an early college high school earned college credit, signaling they gained the knowledge and skills to succeed in postsecondary education; 56 percent of graduates earned two or more years of transferable college

credit; and 24 percent earned an Associate's degree or college certificate.

*For additional research on the impact of dual enrollment and early college high schools, see the references on page 5.*

## STATE INITIATIVES

To better prepare students for life after high school, states are embarking on new approaches to their dual enrollment programs. The initiatives cited in these governors' 2012 State of the State addresses strive to better align programs with state priorities by:

- Creating academic road maps and career pathways that accelerate high school students to a postsecondary degree or credential, providing potential high school dropouts with an opportunity to enroll in college courses;
- Expanding accelerated learning options specifically for career and technical education; and
- Developing and strengthening partnerships between high schools and colleges.

## NORTH CAROLINA

Governor Bev Perdue's Career & College Promise program restructures the state's dual enrollment programs by creating defined pathways for students. High school juniors and seniors can choose either a college transfer pathway or a technical career path. A third route targets students who are often underrepresented in higher education. The program encourages low-income and minority students and those who are first in their families to go to college to enroll in what the state calls Cooperative Innovative High Schools.

Gov. Perdue specifically cited early college high schools in this category, and North Carolina is a national leader in establishing them as a model. Through partnerships between high schools and community colleges in practically every county, North Carolina students are earning high school diplomas and up to two years of transferable college credit or an Associate's degree within five years.

*For more information, see: <http://www.careercollegenc.org/>*



## MISSISSIPPI

As part of his “Mississippi Works Agenda,” Governor Phil Bryant has proposed the state create a dual enrollment/ dual credit option program targeting students who have dropped out of high school or who are at risk of dropping out. Students completing the program would obtain a high school diploma while also earning a certificate in a career-technical program or an Associate of Applied Science degree. The state would cover tuition and other costs for earning postsecondary credits. If the legislature approves Gov. Bryant’s proposal, the state will establish pilot programs in five school districts during the 2012 school year and expand the initiative statewide in the 2013 school year.

*For more information, see: <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2012/pdf/history/HB/HB0864.xml>*

## MISSOURI

Governor Jay Nixon’s administration provided \$10 million in grant funding to establish Innovation Campuses throughout the state that will create a pathway to prepare high school students for career opportunities in information technology, applied science, and other high-demand fields. Students enrolled in a technology high school will receive intensive guidance and increased opportunities to earn 30 college credits or more through dual enrollment programs with nearby colleges. The grant funding will help underwrite the apprenticeship training with local business partners and cover costs associated with on-the-job training for students.

*For more information, see: [http://governor.mo.gov/newsroom/2012/Gov\\_Nixon\\_President\\_Ambrose\\_launch\\_new\\_Innovation\\_Campus](http://governor.mo.gov/newsroom/2012/Gov_Nixon_President_Ambrose_launch_new_Innovation_Campus)*

## VIRGINIA

The Virginia General Assembly has approved Governor Bob McDonnell’s “Opportunity to Learn” agenda, which includes a provision that will promote participation in dual enrollment programs. Each school district and a partner community college will be required to establish written

agreements specifying a pathway for students to complete an Associate’s degree or a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies concurrent with a high school diploma.

*For more information, see: 2012 HB 1184  
<http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?121+ful+HB1184ER>*

## KENTUCKY

In his annual address, Governor Steve Beshear highlighted Kentucky’s adoption in fall 2011 of a comprehensive dual credit agreement providing high school students with a seamless pathway to postsecondary education. The pact between the Kentucky Department of Education, the Office of Career and Technical Education, and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System provides specifics on a number of important aspects of a successful dual enrollment program, including academic quality, course requirements, student eligibility, faculty credentialing, tuition, and roles.

*For more information, see: <http://migration.kentucky.gov/newsroom/governor/20111006dualcredit.html>*

## MAINE

Governor Paul LePage followed up on a pledge he made in his State of the State address to improve Maine’s career and technical education by introducing legislation that would require the state’s community college system to review courses and award college credit to students who complete college level work at a career and technical school. The goal is to bring CTE and community college systems in to better alignment and create more opportunities for students.

*For more information, see: LD 1865  
[http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display\\_ps.asp?LD=1865&snum=125](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?LD=1865&snum=125)*

## WISCONSIN

Governor Scott Walker created a College and Workforce Readiness Council and directed it to examine ways to improve students’ college readiness. Among the options



to be studied are expanding dual enrollment opportunities that enable high school students to earn college and workforce training credits while in high school.

For more information, see: [http://docs.legis.wi.gov/code/executive\\_orders/2011\\_scott\\_walker/2011-56.pdf](http://docs.legis.wi.gov/code/executive_orders/2011_scott_walker/2011-56.pdf)

## DESIGN MATTERS

As illustrated by the inclusion of accelerated learning proposals in a number of state education agendas, many policymakers see dual enrollment as a strategy to put students on a pathway to postsecondary education. If designed properly—that is, in part through the adoption of a set of cohesive policies—these programs can help close the readiness gap in a state, smooth students' transition to college, and increase their rate of degree attainment.

Looking at all 50 states, JFF has analyzed state-level policies governing the implementation of dual enrollment options and early college designs to determine how well states enable and encourage high schools and postsecondary institutions to enroll qualified students in college-level coursework while in high school. The resulting tool is a resource that state policymakers can use as they develop sound strategies to meet their goals for improving the readiness of high school graduates for success in college and careers.

As our analysis shows, nearly every state permits high school students to earn college credit. Forty-seven states have policies, rules, and regulations that regulate some aspects of dual enrollment programs. However, only a few have established sufficient mechanisms to ensure that all students, including those underrepresented in higher education, have access to these vital pathways to college.

To help state leaders, JFF has drawn on our extensive work in the field to identify six design principles that characterize the best dual enrollment policies:

- **OFFER HIGH-QUALITY COURSE OPTIONS:** College credit substitutes for high school credit and is fully transferable across public institutions.
- **COORDINATE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS:** A memorandum or cooperative agreement defines roles and responsibilities for school districts and institutions of higher education. Partnerships are supported by a liaison between the high school and college partners, with responsibilities for advising students and assisting with course scheduling and academic and social support services.
- **ENSURE ADEQUATE FUNDING:** Funding principles are based on the principle of no cost to students and no financial harm to either the secondary and/or the postsecondary partners.
- **ESTABLISH TRANSPARENT DATA SYSTEMS TO MONITOR QUALITY AND OUTCOMES:** The state collects individual student and statewide data to monitor student progress longitudinally across the K-12 and higher education systems.
- **BUILD A SYSTEM FOR ACCOUNTABILITY:** Schools and districts report annually to the public on dual enrollment participation, and they are rewarded for the success of students who earn college credits.
- **PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESS AND ELIGIBILITY:** Students can enroll in credit-bearing college courses as soon as they are ready, with eligibility determined by a combination of tests, end-of-course grades, teacher recommendations, and portfolios of student work.



## REFERENCES

- Barnett, Elisabeth & Liesa Stamm. 2010. *Dual Enrollment: A Strategy for Educational Advancement of all Students*. Washington, DC: Blackboard Institute.
- Berger, Andrea R. & Susan Cole. 2009. *Fifth Annual Early College High School Initiative Evaluation Synthesis Report—Six Years and Counting: The ECHSI Matures*. Prepared for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research and Arlington, VA: SRI International
- Carnevale, Anthony P. & Stephen J. Rose. 2011. *The Undereducated American*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.
- Edmunds, Julie. 2010. *A Better 9th Grade: Early Results from an Experimental Study of the Early College High School Model*. A Policy Brief. Greensboro, NC: SERVE Center.
- Edmunds, Julie, et al. 2010. *Expanding the College Pipeline: Early Results from an Experimental Study of the Impact of the Early College High School Model*. Greensboro, NC: SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
- Jobs for the Future. 2012. *Early College High Schools Get Results with Students Who Have Been Underrepresented in Higher Education*. Boston, MA: Author.
- Karp, Melinda et al. 2007. *The Postsecondary Achievement of Participants in Dual Enrollment: An Analysis of Student Outcomes in Two States*. St. Paul, MN: University of Minnesota, National Research Center for Career and Technical Education.
- Klopfenstein, Kristin. 2010. "Does the Advanced Placement Program Save Taxpayers Money? The Effect of AP Participation on Time to College Graduation. Promise and Impact of the Advanced Placement Program." In Sadler, Philip M., Gerhard Sonnert, Robert H. Tai, & Kristin Klopfenstein, eds. *AP: A Critical Examination of the Advanced Placement Program*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Michalowski, Sam. 2007. *Positive Effects Associated with College Now Participation*. New York: Collaborative Programs Research & Evaluation, The City University of New York.
- Speroni, Cecilia. 2011. *High School Dual Enrollment Programs: Are We Fast-Tracking Students Too Fast?* An NCPWR Working Paper. New York: National Center for Postsecondary Research.
- Speroni, Cecilia. 2011. *Determinants of Students' Success: The Role of Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Programs*. An NCPWR Working Paper. New York: National Center for Postsecondary Research.
- Spurling, Steven & Robert Gabriner. 2002. *The Effect of Concurrent Enrollment Programs Upon Student Success at City College of San Francisco*. San Francisco, CA: Office of Research, Planning and Grants, City College of San Francisco.
- SRI International. 2010. *Evaluation of the Texas High School Project: Second Comprehensive Annual Report*. Menlo Park, CA: Author.
- Swanson, Joni L. 2008. *An Analysis of the Impact of High School Dual Enrollment Course Participation on Post-Secondary Academic Success, Persistence and Degree Completion*. Iowa City, IA: Graduate College of The University of Iowa.
- Young, V. et al. 2010. *Evaluation of the Texas High School Project. First Comprehensive Annual Report*. Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency.

---

This paper was made possible through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

---

**JOBS FOR THE FUTURE** identifies, develops, and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states, and the nation compete in a global economy. In more than 200 communities across 43 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers.



**JOBS FOR THE FUTURE**

TEL 617.728.4446 FAX 617.728.4857 info@jff.org

88 Broad Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02110  
122 C Street, NW, Suite 650A, Washington, DC 20001

[WWW.JFF.ORG](http://WWW.JFF.ORG)

