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TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

DEEP Insights

**Redesigning Dual Enrollment as
a Purposeful Pathway to College
and Career Opportunity**

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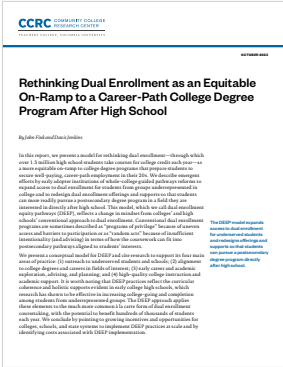
Introduction

In the past decade, the number of high school students enrolling in college coursework at their local community college has nearly doubled to over a million students. At the same time, hundreds of community colleges across the country have used guided pathways reforms to better connect students to clear program pathways and keep them on track, helping them to complete programs that lead to good jobs and further education. As we detail in this report, leaders at some of these colleges—and at secondary schools they are partnering with—are also using guided pathways practices to rethink dual enrollment (DE) as an on-ramp to college programs of study that lead to family-supporting, career-path jobs for students who might not otherwise pursue education after high school.

We refer to this approach as dual enrollment equity pathways (DEEP), which involves community colleges and K-12 schools partnering in four practice areas to:

1. **outreach** to underserved students and families to encourage their participation in DE,
2. **align** DE course offerings to career-technical associate and bachelor’s degree programs in high-opportunity fields,
3. **advise** students in the exploration of their interests and the development of post-high school education and career path plans, and
4. **support** students by delivering high-quality instruction to build their confidence as college learners.

This report describes what we learned through field research at six promising community college–K-12 partnerships in Florida and Texas¹ that have begun to extend guided pathways practices to DE offerings and have achieved strong results using DE to expand college access and opportunities for Black, Hispanic, and low-income high school students. The high schools in these partnerships are all designated Title I schools because they serve high proportions of students from low-income families and in most cases are “open access” in that they do not use admissions tests or other screens to select their students. As for the colleges, some of those we visited and many others nationally have established early college high schools (ECHSs) or Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECHs).



Evidence for DEEP

DEEP represents a framework of principles and practices under a shared mindset that can be adapted to different state and local contexts. A companion CCRC report (Fink & Jenkins, 2023) reviews the evidence base for the DEEP approach and describes the need and emerging incentives and opportunities for colleges and K-12 partners to implement it on a large scale. The report also reviews how the DEEP framework builds on guided pathways practices.

Such programs have proved very effective in increasing college-going and success among students from underserved groups; yet, collectively, they are modest in size. Our research thus focuses on efforts to rethink dual enrollment coursetaking outside of formalized ECHS or P-TECH programs, given the potential for this broader form of DE to benefit large numbers of underserved students attending Title I high schools.

Although none of the sites we visited (see Table 1) have fully scaled reforms in all four areas of DEEP practice, our findings illustrate what colleges and their K-12 partners

have been able to achieve in each of the four areas. For each practice area, we organize the findings by component practices undertaken by the colleges and schools as reforms to conventional practice (see Table 2). What we describe may provide ideas for others. Leaders aiming to strengthen the potential of DE to expand college and career opportunities for students in their service areas can use strategies and examples described in this report to guide their own efforts. Our aim is not to prescribe changes but to inspire college and K-12 leaders to consider how they can achieve the goals reflected in the four areas of DEEP practice in their local contexts.

Table 1. Fieldwork Sites

College Site Visited	DE Program Size ^a (Fall 2021)	High School Sites Visited	High School Context ^b	DE Course Location
Florida				
Chipola College	465 DE students (26% of undergraduate enrollment)	Blountstown High School	Rural Comprehensive Public, Title I Small (~700 students, grades 6–12)	Primarily at college
Miami Dade College	2,716 DE students (6% of undergraduate enrollment)	Coral Gables Senior High School	City Comprehensive Public, Title I Large (~3,000 students, grades 9–12)	Mix of at high school and college
		Miami Central Senior High School	Suburb Comprehensive Public, Title I Medium (~1,500 students, grades 9–12)	Primarily at high school
		Hialeah Gardens High School	Suburb Comprehensive Public, Title I Large (~2,500 students, grades 9–12)	Primarily at high school
		Homestead Senior High School	Suburb Comprehensive Public, Title I Medium (~1,750 students, grades 9–12)	Mix of at high school and college
		William H. Turner Technical Arts High School	Suburb Public Technical, Title I Medium (~1,250 students, grades 9–12)	Primarily at high school
Tallahassee Community College	732 DE students (6% of undergraduate enrollment)	Crossroad Academy Charter School	Rural Comprehensive Public Charter, Title I Small (~500 students, grades PK–12)	Primarily at college
Texas				
Lee College	2,591 DE students (36% of undergraduate enrollment)	Goose Creek Memorial High School	City Comprehensive Public, Title I Large (~2,000 students, grades 9–12)	Primarily at high school
		Stuart Career Tech High School	City Public Technical, Title I Small (~500 students, grades 9–12)	Primarily at high school
Navarro College	2,373 DE students (36% of undergraduate enrollment)	Kerens High School	Rural Comprehensive Public, Title I Small (~500 students, grades PK–12)	Primarily at high school
		Mexia High School	Small Town Comprehensive Public, Title I Small (~500 students, grades 8–12)	Primarily at high school
San Jacinto College	6,455 DE students (20% of undergraduate enrollment)	C.E. King High School	Suburb Comprehensive Public, Title I Large (~3,000 students, grades 9–12)	Mix of at high school and college

^a Fall 2021 undergraduate enrollment of students age 17 or younger based on authors’ analysis of IPEDS data accessed via Fink (n.d.).

^b Based on Common Core data from the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.).

Table 2. DEEP Practices Implemented by College–K-12 Partnerships

1	<p>Outreach to underserved students and schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus outreach on underserved high schools, students, and communities. • Start outreach before high school. • Leverage community connections to build awareness. • Build trust with and educate parents and families.
2	<p>Align DE course offerings to college degrees and careers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory current DE offerings. • Map DE offerings to college degree programs in fields of interest. • Embed DE offerings in career-connected high school programs.
3	<p>Advise students to explore interests and develop plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use DE to showcase college programs and support exploration. • Help students develop a college program plan and provide checkpoint advising. • Coordinate advising roles across sectors.
4	<p>Support students by delivering high-quality instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaffold coursework and frontload supports. • Respond quickly when students are struggling. • Provide additional, structured support for online classes. • Support DE instructors and monitor quality.

In the next section, we describe the DEEP reforms implemented by the college–K-12 partnerships we visited. We then discuss insights from our research on how community colleges can work with K-12 schools to scale DEEP practices and overcome common challenges to building effective DEEP partnerships. Finally, we provide guidance on how colleges and K-12 schools interested in implementing DEEP reforms can get started.

DEEP Practices Across College–K-12 Partnerships

The practices of colleges and their K-12 partners that we describe here give a sense of what DEEP looks like in action. Under each of the four DEEP practice areas, we briefly highlight the problems or shortcomings of the conventional approach and explain what partnerships are doing to rethink and reform DE in ways that motivate and prepare students from underserved groups to pursue postsecondary pathways to careers after high school.

Practice Area

1

Outreach to Underserved Students and Schools

DEEP Outreach: Moving beyond “programs of privilege” through expanded outreach prioritizing underserved communities

- Focus outreach on underserved high schools, students, and communities.
- Start outreach before high school.
- Leverage community connections to build awareness.
- Build trust with and educate parents and families.
- Use high school grades as an alternative to placement testing for eligibility.

One of the reasons for widespread gaps in access to DE nationally by race and income is that DE is simply made available at many colleges without effective outreach to low-income students and families or to communities of color. The college and high school leaders we interviewed knew which students and communities were underrepresented in DE, and they were deliberate in their efforts to expand access to those communities. Their DEEP outreach has five components: (1) focusing outreach on underserved high schools, students, and communities; (2) starting outreach before high school; (3) leveraging community connections to build awareness; (4) building trust with and educating parents and families; and (5) using high school grades as an alternative to placement testing for eligibility.

Focus outreach on underserved high schools, students, and communities

Colleges typically serve a wide area that includes a range of under-resourced and wealthier high schools. The colleges we visited use data to gauge DE participation by high school in their area and prioritize outreach to high-poverty (e.g., Title I) and predominately Black- and Hispanic-serving high schools. Using this approach, college and high school partnerships can expand access to DE for students and families who might not think college is a viable option.

Leaders at **San Jacinto College** disaggregate data on students’ participation in DE and access to different college programs, identifying programs in which student subgroups are underrepresented. Noting a lack of representation of lower income students and students of color in their nursing programs, **San Jacinto College** and **C.E. King High School** partnered to create the King Nurses in Training (KNIT) program. KNIT is specifically designed to recruit and support underrepresented Black, Hispanic, and low-income students from their community to pursue a career path in nursing. Students in the program complete all prerequisite courses for nursing and are provided additional support to ensure they are successful in the program, including college-level advising, tutoring, work-based learning opportunities, a summer bridge program, and mentoring. San Jacinto College reserves space in its nursing program for graduates of KNIT to help ensure that participating students will continue their nursing education after graduating high school.

Start outreach before high school

College and school leaders can build awareness of DE starting in middle or even elementary school, which is especially important for students and families with limited information. Early outreach can help ensure that underrepresented students and their families understand how participating in DE can benefit them and what steps to follow so they can participate once in high school.

Most K-12 districts we visited implemented Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) in schools serving low-income students. Implemented at over 7,000 schools across 47 states, AVID provides school leaders and educators with resources to build college- and career-readiness among students who might not otherwise consider college. The K-12 leaders we spoke with identified AVID as crucial in supporting their efforts to broaden access to DE, as AVID typically includes a college-awareness and -planning course that students take in middle or even in elementary school.

Leverage community connections to build awareness

Colleges can use word of mouth, social media, and community events to expand awareness of dual

enrollment to students and families who might not otherwise be exposed to it. Awareness of DE opportunities can organically spread to siblings, cousins, and friends by tapping into community and familial networks.

During our visit to **Tallahassee Community College**, the college hosted a dual enrollment student night at a college basketball game both to help these students feel welcome on campus and to promote DE opportunities to community members attending the game. TCC staff also indicated that they regularly advertise DE at community events such as the annual Tallahassee Science Festival to provide information to families and community members in attendance. Leaders at **Miami Dade College**'s North and Hialeah Campuses also cited strong community outreach as a key component of their success in building awareness of DE in their service areas. The North Campus, for instance, regularly hosts thousands of local middle and high school students for a variety of events such as county-wide science fairs and campus tours to help students and families develop a college-going mindset and learn about programs offered at the campus. By welcoming community members to campus for local events, colleges can feature DE opportunities and increase students' and parents' familiarity with the campus.

Dual Enrollment as an Anti-Poverty Initiative in Tallahassee

To advance their mission of expanding college access, leaders at Tallahassee Community College (TCC) prioritize schools in marginalized communities and are proactive in building relationships with leaders from those schools to create dual enrollment opportunities. TCC's provost and former middle school teacher, Dr. Calandra Stringer, emphasizes how valuable it is to support underserved and Title I schools that lack the types of resources that schools in more affluent communities typically have greater access to. Dr. Stringer and other TCC leaders start outreach efforts by asking leaders in these schools what they need and how the college can help—whether it's related to dual enrollment or not. Through the college's Prosperity 32304 initiative, TCC is marshaling partnerships with K-12 schools and community organizations to address root causes of poverty in low-income communities in the college's three-county service area, including the college's home zip code, one of the poorest in the state. College leaders have invested time and resources in expanding dual enrollment opportunities at local Amos P. Godby High School through, for example, purchasing technology to enable Godby students to take synchronous online coursework. According to Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Sheri Rowland, TCC's success with Godby High School and other underserved schools in its service area is replicable: "It's not magic—it's just reputation, relationships, and commitment to doing what we can to provide good instruction and experiences for those students."

Build trust with and educate parents and families

Parents are essential partners in dual enrollment students' success, yet most parents are unfamiliar with the nuances of DE participation. Building trust and sharing information about what DE entails is critical, particularly for first-generation college families less familiar with how college works. Colleges and K-12 schools can intentionally design their outreach activities to help ensure that parents feel welcomed and involved in their children's education and to fully inform them about DE opportunities, benefits, requirements, and expectations.

Staff at **Miami Dade College**'s Hialeah Campus emphasized that they have worked for years to build a strong sense of trust within their community, particularly among immigrant and first-generation families, who may be unfamiliar with how DE operates or otherwise hesitant to send their children to classes on the college campus. Instead of rigidly keeping parents at a distance due to FERPA policies, staff have devised ways to build rapport and trust with parents and other family members while upholding guidelines. **C.E. King High School**, a partner of San Jacinto College, does extensive DE outreach to parents through regular parent information nights and financial aid nights where school personnel have one-on-one interactions with parents. C.E. King ensures that individuals identified to speak at parent outreach events are racially and linguistically diverse so parents and families can hear about DE from their community members and in their language. Because C.E. King primarily serves lower income students and many parents themselves have not attended college, the school also hosts a "parent university" where participants are provided more extensive information about what students should expect in DE as well as how parents can support their children while they are dual enrolled.

Use high school grades as an alternative to placement testing for eligibility

Relying on placement testing to determine eligibility for dual enrollment creates unnecessary barriers for students who could benefit from DE with the right supports (Mehl et al., 2020). There is increasing evidence that colleges can use alternative measures—and in particular high school grades—to determine eligibility for DE and thus help more students typically excluded from DE by testing requirements to participate.

During the pandemic, Texas, Florida, and most other states and colleges temporarily suspended the use of placement testing to determine eligibility for DE courses, often using high school grades instead. After seeing that access to DE increased and student success did not decrease, Florida policymakers codified the use of high school grades as an alternative eligibility method in state statute.² **Miami Dade College** and **Tallahassee Community College** have both taken advantage of this statute to use unweighted high school GPA (a minimum of 3.0) or other high school grade benchmarks to determine students' eligibility. College staff said that since shifting to the use of alternative measures for determining dual enrollment eligibility, they have observed a marked increase in the number of underrepresented students participating in DE without measurable declines in student success. Following this change, **Miami Dade College** went a step further and identified 12 courses—those with the largest enrollments and highest pass rates—and changed the requirements to allow high school students with a minimum GPA of 2.5 to take them through DE. Staff at Miami-Dade County Public Schools praised this strategy for expanding access and helping more students, such as those who had a difficult 9th-grade transition but bounced back, further build confidence by getting a taste of college through DE.

Practice Area

2

Align DE Course Offerings to College Degrees and Careers in Fields of Interest

DEEP Alignment:

Backward mapping high-opportunity college and career pathways to DE

- Inventory current DE offerings.
- Map DE offerings to college degree programs in fields of interest.
- Embed DE offerings in career-connected high school programs.

Dual enrollment is sometimes referred to as “random acts” because students take courses based on availability. As a result, some students graduate with, as one practitioner called it, a “Franken-transcript” (i.e., a mixture of unrelated courses). They do not have the opportunity to explore and progress into a postsecondary program of study. As a strategy for aligning DE coursework more closely with students’ strengths and interests in high school and using this coursework to encourage students to continue on to college, college leaders are working with their K-12 partners to backward map DE offerings as an on-ramp to college degree programs in fields that students are excited to pursue. Their DEEP alignment has three components: (1) inventorying current DE offerings, (2) mapping DE offerings to college degree programs in fields of interest, and (3) embedding DE offerings in career-connected high school programs.

Inventory current dual enrollment offerings

DE course offerings are typically constrained by the availability of instructors qualified to teach DE at a high school. In large school districts, this constraint can lead to a hodgepodge of DE offerings, which, layered on top of AP and other early college coursework, can be confusing for students and families. The result is an advanced coursework puzzle that can be difficult for K-12 and college leaders to align to college and career pathways or even keep track of in the first place. Inventorying advanced course offerings is thus a key first step to piecing together DE coursework to create on-ramps to college degree programs.

Dr. Lisette Rodriguez, the executive director of advanced academics overseeing DE, AP, and other advanced coursework for **Miami-Dade County Public Schools**, confronted a large and complex puzzle early in her tenure by inventorying DE and other advanced coursework offerings districtwide. This process helped to increase DE offerings by identifying qualified high school instructors, reduce duplicative offerings (e.g., AP English and English 1101), and highlight needs for new DE courses aligned to high school academies and magnet programs to, in Dr. Rodriguez’s words, “better tap into students’ interests and career goals.”

Map dual enrollment offerings to college degree programs in fields of interest

To help students and families understand how dual enrollment can lead to further education after high school, colleges can map their DE courses to postsecondary pathways at their colleges as well as to local four-year transfer destinations. By sharing these program maps, colleges can help students and families understand how DE offerings lead to and are aligned with college degree programs and career paths. Program maps can also be used as tools during advising appointments with students to help them choose DE courses and create educational plans aligned with their postsecondary goals.

One challenge for bachelor's-seeking DE students is knowing which courses will not only transfer to a four-year institution but also apply to a specific major field of interest. Both **Chipola College** and **Tallahassee Community College** (TCC) have mapped major-specific transfer pathways to their major transfer destinations. Students, high school counselors, and college advisors use these maps to ensure that students take DE courses that are degree applicable at their desired four-year institution. And DE students at TCC can take advantage of specialized guaranteed admissions programs with TCC's primary transfer partners, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) and Florida State University (FSU). These specialized transfer programs, FAMU Ignite and Aspire TCC2FSU, include dedicated transfer advisors and transfer orientations.

Embed dual enrollment offerings in career-connected high school programs

Several sites we visited were high schools with career academies. A career academy—sometimes referred to as “school within a school”—is a small learning community focused on a specific career area (e.g., healthcare or STEM). The goal of a career academy is to help create clearer paths from high school to further education and the workplace. Organizing high schools by broad career areas or fields of study through academies or other career-focused programs provides a structure that DE partnerships can use to embed DE coursework into the default four-year plan of a high school student.

Over the past several years, **Miami-Dade County Public Schools** (MDCPS) has brought high school career academies to neighborhood schools. Leaders of the schools we visited said that this has helped them retain families and students from their communities who might otherwise attend charter or outside-boundary schools by offering programs in fields that interest students.

Connecting the Dots From Dual Enrollment to Good Jobs in Miami

Miami Dade College (MDC), an early adopter of guided pathway reforms, is emerging as a national model for extending guided pathways to DE on a large scale—propelled by dedicated work from advisors, faculty, and campus leaders under the district-level guidance of Dr. Philip Giarrappa and Mr. Marcus Ortega. Giarrappa and Ortega are well suited to be DEEP “co-conspirators”: As executive director of articulation and academic pathways, Giarrappa oversees dual enrollment, transfer, and prior learning assessment, and Ortega is the director of student services, projects, and initiatives. Ortega, who previously oversaw school choice and magnet programs for more than a decade at Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS), knows from his experience at MDCPS that many parents want DE offerings in degree programs aligned with careers more than they want general education courses. They want paths for their children that lead to good jobs in the growing Miami economy. Giarrappa saw a need to connect the dots between the college's program-specific guided pathway maps and the set of articulation agreements with MDCPS that show how high school CTE courses count as articulated credit at MDC. Together, Giarrappa and Ortega are enacting a vision for DE they call MDC Connect, wherein Miami-Dade County high school students can use DE and other articulated credit as an on-ramp to an MDC associate degree that enables students to transfer into a bachelor's program at MDC, Florida International University, or other university partners, or to a career-technical applied associate degree leading to a good job in a field of interest. They are building these MDC Connect pathways program by program, partnering with MDCPS in 2023 to launch a public teacher pipeline program called the Dual Enrollment Teachers Academy.

Principals of the Title I schools in Miami applauded Miami Dade College’s (MDC) expansion of these DE pathways, saying that when DE “leads to something” it helps the school establish their “brand,” thereby improving retention of in-boundary students and attracting others to their school. Leaders at **Hialeah Gardens High School** (HGHS) have embedded dual enrollment and other professional certifications into their default four-year plans. For example, HGHS’s Academy of Education default four-year plan for grades 9–12 includes related MDC dual enrollment and other NAF courses leading to a child development certification. The goal of HGHS’s Academy of Education is to provide graduates with an associate degree in education from MDC (aligned to a bachelor’s degree at MDC or, via transfer, at partner Florida International University [FIU]) or to help them make progress toward a college degree at MDC or FIU after high school while also completing the proper certifications to work in childcare.

Many Title I high schools in Texas have adopted high school career academies (or, in smaller rural schools, program areas) that reflect the broad fields of study

(called endorsements) that students are required by state law to choose in eighth grade. The leaders at **C.E. King High School** have prioritized students “getting something” (i.e., an industry-based credential or short-term postsecondary certificate) from CTE programs. As part of this effort, they embed dual enrollment CTE coursework in their career academy curricula, insist that programs use industry-standard materials, and work with partner **San Jacinto College** (SJC) to encourage CTE students to continue pursuing applied associate and bachelor’s degrees in college after high school. This partnership also designed a series of DE maps aligned with SJC programs that show which DE courses are available for students to take at each grade level, as well as certifications and degrees that students can earn as they progress along the career pathway (from certifications through master’s degrees) and the median earnings of each credential. These maps—adapted from templates provided by the Texas Education Agency to also include embedded dual enrollment coursework—help students and families understand how dual enrollment fits into their high school academic plan and aligns to subsequent postsecondary credentials and degrees.



**C.E. KING
HIGH SCHOOL**


**Health Science
Academy**

Health Informatics PROGRAM OVERVIEW

<p>Program Courses</p> <p>9th Grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of Health Science <p>10th Grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Terminology <p>11th Grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual Credit: Health Informatics • Dual Credit: Healthcare Administration <p>12th Grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual Credit: Project-based Research 	<p>Work-based Learning and Exploration Activities</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Industry-based Certifications</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Postsecondary Degrees</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
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Aligned Occupations

Occupations	Median Wage	Annual Openings	% Growth
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**C.E. KING
HIGH SCHOOL**

**Architecture &
Construction Academy**

Plumbing & Pipefitting PROGRAM OVERVIEW

<p>Program Courses</p> <p>9th Grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Welding <p>10th Grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welding 1 <p>11th Grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual Credit: Welding 2 <p>12th Grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual Credit: Pipefitting Technology 1 & 2 • Dual Credit: Practicum in Construction Technology 	<p>Work-based Learning and Exploration Activities</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Industry-based Certifications</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Postsecondary Degrees</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
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Aligned Occupations

Occupations	Median Wage	Annual Openings	% Growth
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Practice Area
3

Advise Students to Explore Interests and Develop Education and Career Path Plans

DEEP Advising:

Moving from “random acts” to dual enrollment with a purpose

- Use DE to showcase college programs and support exploration.
- Help students develop a college program plan and provide checkpoint advising.
- Coordinate advising roles across sectors.

Aligning DE coursework to postsecondary programs, while essential, is insufficient if students do not also have support to explore options and develop a personalized education plan. The colleges and high schools we visited provide early career and academic exploration, advising, and planning so that students can use DE coursetaking to explore fields of interest and develop educational plans aligned to their longer term goals. Their DEEP advising has three components: (1) using DE to showcase college programs and support exploration, (2) helping students develop a college program plan and providing checkpoint advising, and (3) coordinating advising roles across sectors.

Use dual enrollment to showcase college programs and support exploration

In open-choice districts where high schools are organized into career-connected programs (e.g., career academies), middle school students and their families must select their high school and often their high school program by the end of eighth grade. In these contexts, college and K-12 leaders reported using dual enrollment offerings as a way to showcase their high school offerings to middle schoolers by showing prospective students and families how they could graduate high school with a jump start on a college degree in a field of interest. A common recommendation across the high schools we visited was to use current academy and DE students as ambassadors of dual enrollment.

Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District created [short videos](#) featuring current students in their high school and DE coursework to showcase each career academy to middle school students and families exploring high school options. At **C.E. King High School**, academies have dedicated administrators, counselors, and faculty to provide academy students with program-specific advisement, expertise, and support.

Miami Dade College (MDC) employs pre-college advisors (PCAs) who work with high school counselors to recruit, enroll, and advise DE students in particular high schools. PCAs are assigned to specific high schools and are embedded within the school campuses, where they hold office hours and information sessions and provide direct advising to students. Although the position has a general college-going and MDC recruitment focus, a major responsibility of the PCAs is raising awareness about how DE opportunities can be a first step toward an MDC degree or transfer pathway. MDC partner **Coral Gables Senior High School** offers students a robust set of DE, AP, and IB opportunities aligned to one of five academies, and leaders proudly state that “all our kids specialize in something.” To help prospective students and their families explore and select courses that align with their interests, school staff visit the middle schools with peer ambassadors to talk with students.

They host an academy night where students can talk to the head teacher for each academy and learn about related credentials they can earn and careers they can pursue. Moreover, students who want to explore across academies can choose electives from outside of their academy.

Help students develop a college program plan and provide checkpoint advising

Many community colleges implementing guided pathways reforms are redesigning advising to better help all students develop full educational plans aligned to their academic and career interests; the plans detail all program courses and requirements through degree completion and/or transfer to a four-year institution and document student progress toward these requirements (Jenkins & Lahr, 2022). To facilitate student progress on their plans, community colleges also ideally provide checkpoint advising for students, whereby students are required to meet with advisors at specified intervals, usually aligned to credit accrual (e.g., 15-, 30-, and 45-credit-hour checkpoints). These meetings ensure that students' progress toward degree completion is actively monitored and updated as needed by advisors and students themselves. Colleges that help students develop educational plans and provide checkpoint advising can apply these practices to their dual enrollment students to ensure that students are taking courses aligned to their interests and aspirations and are not accumulating unnecessary credits.

Texas statute requires that all college students who accrue 15 college-level credit hours meet with a college advisor; this statute also applies to dual enrollment. **Lee College**, **Navarro College**, and **San Jacinto College** follow this requirement and provide advisement to DE students at the 15-credit-hour checkpoint. Advisors reported that these advising sessions often focus on exploring students' longer term education and career goals and helping students to develop a full educational plan that sketches out the courses they would take

Advisors as Advocates of College Access at San Jacinto College

The college advisors (known as educational planners) who work exclusively with DE students at San Jacinto College's (SJC) North Campus said that it was hard to describe a typical day on the job because they provide multiple services to over 2,000 DE students every year across five independent school districts. They do behind-the-scenes work such as registering students, processing admissions documents, and hunting down proof of vaccinations. They also interact regularly with DE students and their families. On the SJC campus, they provide tours to DE students, familiarize them with transportation services, and help them obtain college IDs. On high school campuses, they present about the SJC program pathways to prospective DE students, advise DE students, conduct financial aid trainings, and give presentations at parents' nights. In advising sessions, they check in with students to see if their coursetaking is well aligned with their career goals and about their performance in DE courses; when necessary, they connect students with academic supports. One advisor noted that when interacting with DE students, advisors emphasize that they are real college students: "So, by giving them their IDs and touring and all that kind of stuff, we really try to drive home that fact that they are a college student to give them that experience ... so that when they leave high school, they have a better understanding." Providing an authentic college experience is particularly important for the population that SJC serves, the advisors said, which includes many low-income families and first-generation-in-college students.

through college graduation. **San Jacinto College** staff work with DE students to develop a preliminary educational plan for a degree in a field of interest. Students can see their plan and the courses they have taken on their college student portal.

Coordinate advising roles across sectors

Dual enrollment students need advising from both high school counselors and college advisors to ensure that they are taking courses aligned with postsecondary goals while meeting requirements for high school graduation. College and K-12 partners can use joint professional development activities and other cross-sector meetings to share information about their advising policies and practices so that students receive correct, consistent guidance from both college advisors and high school counselors.

Tallahassee Community College (TCC) hosts annual counselor breakfasts for all school partners in their service area. During this event, TCC advisors update high school counselors on new advising policies and procedures related to DE. This meeting is also used to clarify the types of advising that high school counselors and college advisors, respectively, provide DE students. **Lee College** and **Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District** (GCCISD) also have quarterly cross-sector meetings that include senior leaders from the college and district to review policies and procedures for advising DE students. To support this goal, participants collectively review sample transcripts of DE students and use these samples to illustrate how specific courses apply (or do not apply) to specific degree programs.

Lee College and **GCCISD** have created several advisor roles jointly hired and funded by the partners to advise DE students and support the high-school-to-college transition. These advisors spend the majority of their time on the high school campuses and are responsible for creating a college-going environment, advising DE students, supporting them in filling out the FAFSA, and helping them enroll at **Lee College** and other higher education institutions. These advisors have access to both the college and high school information systems to track students' progress; their presence on high school campuses helps DE students choose the correct courses with particular transfer destinations in mind.

Practice Area

4

Support Students by Delivering High-Quality Instruction

DEEP Support:

Providing college-level instruction with intensive supports to promote success

- Scaffold coursework and frontload supports.
- Respond quickly when students are struggling.
- Provide additional, structured support for online classes.
- Support DE instructors and monitor quality.

Broadening access to college opportunities through DE cannot be achieved without high-quality college instruction and academic support to ensure that all students can succeed. The community colleges and their K-12 partners we visited demonstrated high expectations for student achievement and instructional quality in their DE coursework while providing extensive support so that students were successful and instructors were effective. Their DEEP support has four components: (1) scaffolding coursework and frontloading supports; (2) responding quickly when students are struggling; (3) providing additional, structured support for online classes; and (4) supporting DE instructors and monitoring quality.

Scaffold coursework and frontload supports

To do well in dual enrollment, high school students must adjust to the expectations of college-level coursework, which demands a greater level of independence. Colleges and schools can help DE students meet these expectations by using a scaffolded approach to ease students into DE participation. This approach involves frontloading the most intensive instructional and academic supports into the first weeks of coursework and giving high school students more introductory DE coursework, including a college success course.

Cohorts as a Support System at Crossroad Academy Charter School

Mr. Jy'Shawn O'Neal, Crossroad's school counselor, tries his best to put all his dual enrollment students into the same classes at Tallahassee Community College (TCC). He does this not only because it makes it easier to coordinate the 20-mile bus ride from rural Gadsden County to Tallahassee but also because it provides a built-in support system for students—something he understands as a former TCC DE student. According to school leaders, sending DE students to classes on the college campus together in a cohort is particularly helpful for younger DE students who are visiting the large TCC campus for the first time—and for whom TCC feels like a world away. After more than 15 years as Crossroad's principal, Dr. Kevin Forehand stresses that for his students, taking DE courses is about more than the course readings and assignments. He prioritizes—and has the school pay for—students to take their courses at TCC so they can experience life on a college campus and develop the independence that will help them succeed in college after high school. It can be challenging to acclimate to college coursework far away from home, but Mr. O'Neal and Dr. Forehand have created a culture of support among the DE cohort. In the words of one student, "Anything I need, I can ask them. We all help each other out."

At **Mexia High School**, freshman and sophomore students receive test preparation so they can pass the placement test required to take most DE courses. Eligible sophomores can take a handful of foundational DE courses taught by qualified high school instructors on their high school campus to ease them into the experience; only juniors and seniors are permitted to take a wider set of DE coursework on the college campus. This scaffolding ensures that younger students are supported to meet benchmarks for participation in DE and exposed to the rigors of college-level coursework, while also positioning older students to succeed in critical courses essential for their desired majors. Leaders said that this scaffolding approach also helps ensure students are not only academically prepared for DE courses but also mature and independent enough to meet the expectations of college-level coursework.

As a part of guided pathways redesign, colleges have increased the focus of their college success courses on academic and career exploration and the development of a complete program plan for each student. The colleges and high schools we visited use the college success course similarly for DE students, providing a forum for students to explore academic and career interests and develop a preliminary educational plan. For example, at **Homestead Senior High School**, all DE students are encouraged to take Miami Dade College's student success course as an initial DE course. In this course, students learn about aspects of postsecondary education such as the degrees different higher education institutions offer (A.A., B.A., M.A., etc.) and the careers to which they lead.

Respond quickly when students are struggling

Colleges and their K-12 partners can coordinate efforts to systematically provide quick-response, targeted, and intrusive academic intervention and support when students struggle in their DE coursework. It is important for DE students to receive timely academic support because their grades will appear on their college transcript.

Chipola College offers targeted support for students with warning signs that they might drop or fail their DE courses. The college's DE advisor monitors students' grades and attendance using Dropout Detective, a tool within Canvas aimed at identifying struggling students. She sends alerts to the DE instructor and the **Blountstown High School** guidance counselor about students who need more support, and she sends personal messages to those students who appear to be falling behind, offering guidance, encouragement, and resources. This process occurs every three weeks, ensuring systematic and frequent checks on student progress and success. **Lee College** noted a similar joint practice with **Goose Creek Memorial High School**; they use an academic support referral system to identify students who need academic support. Every three weeks, DE instructors submit Pass/Fail flags for students, and students who receive an F flag are contacted by the DE advisor or their high school counselor to determine how best to support them moving forward.

Provide additional, structured support for online classes

Face-to-face instruction is often preferable to online instruction because it provides greater opportunities for interaction among students and instructors and may make it easier for students to ask questions. Yet, in some locations—especially at rural colleges and high schools—online courses can be easier to schedule and staff. Given these advantages, participants described how they implement online coursework to address potential challenges with student engagement, particularly in asynchronous online courses.

At **Kerens High School**, partner of **Navarro College**, school leaders view online asynchronous dual enrollment courses as a solution to scheduling concerns and difficulty recruiting Navarro College faculty to teach at the high school, which is in a rural area far from the college. To provide more structure, Kerens High School schedules online DE courses during a dedicated class period in the school day and makes sure a facilitator is present who can assist students and answer their questions.

Support dual enrollment instructors and monitor quality

Whether the DE courses take place at a college or a high school, students deserve a high-quality learning experience to ensure that they are benefitting as much as possible from participation in DE. To facilitate high-quality instruction in these courses, colleges can select DE instructors who are familiar with and interested in teaching high school students, conduct regular checks on instructional quality, and provide professional development specifically for DE instructors.

At **Tallahassee Community College** (TCC), the dean prioritizes selecting DE instructors with prior K-12 teaching experience and a pronounced interest in working with high school students. TCC found this to be an effective strategy for delivering high-quality DE coursework, since working with younger students may require different instructional techniques—and some familiarity with the high school classroom can be a big help. To support DE instructors, TCC offers multiple professional development options tailored to DE instruction. First, the college holds an annual DE instructor orientation in the fall, which outlines expectations of DE courses, describes logistics (attendance, grades, timelines, textbooks, etc.), and allows faculty to share best teaching practices. Second, TCC organized a year-long faculty institute with an online learning community, which also shared resources about teaching in the K-12 setting. The faculty institute used a hybrid model, meeting eight times over the year, and focused its activities on promoting access and equity in DE, connecting students to the college, and helping students understand course goals.

The colleges we visited took some steps to ensure instructional quality, such as observing new DE instructors in the classroom and ensuring that syllabi and assessments used for DE students were the same as those used for all students. We saw some cases in which colleges systematically monitored the quality of instruction for DE courses. For example, for its courses taught by qualified high school teachers in **Miami-Dade County Public Schools**, Florida International University (FIU) conducted two unannounced visits each year and an outside review of students' work at the end of each term. However, during our site visits in both Texas and Florida, we noted a need for more systematic efforts to ensure that DE courses offer students a high-quality learning experience.

Leadership Strategies for Building DEEP Partnerships

College and K-12 leaders stated that their efforts in DEEP outreach, alignment, advising, and supports would not be effective without a strong college–K-12 dual enrollment partnership. We observed that effective leaders—from college presidents to DE program directors, from superintendents to assistant principals—follow a common vision for DE and work together to ensure that DE offerings are mutually beneficial and financially sustainable. In the following, we describe two multifaceted leadership strategies that emerged from our fieldwork: (1) establishing a shared DEEP mindset and (2) enabling DEEP practices at scale.

Table 3. Leadership Strategies

1

Establishing a Shared DEEP Mindset

- Prioritize underserved communities and schools and position DE as a pathway for upward mobility and workforce development.
- Commit to doing what is best for students (even if not expedient).
- Believe in—and support—the potential of all students.
- Recast high school CTE as a college degree pathway to expand college and career opportunities.

2

Enabling DEEP Practices at Scale

- Negotiate college and K-12 interests to find “win-wins” that benefit students.
- Strengthen “back-end” business processes.
- Evaluate whether DE staffing is adequate and effectively organized.
- Develop a supply of qualified instructors, particularly for underserved schools.



1 Establishing a Shared DEEP Mindset

Dual enrollment cannot be implemented well without a clear vision and goals held by the college and K-12 partners. A common theme among the partnerships we visited was a shared vision of DE as promoting college access and opportunity for all students and a shared understanding that achieving this vision requires a special focus on underserved schools and communities. The partners' DEEP mindset has four components: (1) prioritizing underserved communities and schools and positioning DE as a pathway for upward mobility and workforce development, (2) committing to doing what is best for students, (3) believing in and supporting the potential of all students, and (4) recasting high school CTE as a college degree pathway to expand college and career opportunities.

Prioritize underserved communities and schools and position dual enrollment as a pathway for upward mobility and workforce development

College and K-12 partners can jointly commit to focusing DE on expanding socioeconomic opportunity for their communities. Leaders at the sites we visited envision DE not only as a head start on college but as an on-ramp to degree programs that lead to well-paying and rewarding careers.

For example, leaders at **Calhoun County School District** in Florida indicated that DE is a key mechanism to support social and economic advancement for the rural and low-income communities they serve. As noted by Dr. Debbie Williams, assistant superintendent of the district, "We [the district] are looking for students to invest in our community and live in Calhoun County and be productive citizens."

Partners at **Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District** (GCCISD) and **Lee College** agree about the potential of DE to support upward mobility in the communities they serve. GCCISD created a coordinator of P-16 initiatives to accelerate efforts to embed DE coursework into high school academic and career pathways and align these pathways to specific college degree programs leading to high-demand jobs in the region.

Commit to doing what is best for students (even if not expedient)

College–K-12 partnerships are complex, with many incentives and costs for various approaches to operating DE programs. Because of this, college and K-12 leaders emphasized the importance of sharing a common purpose and a commitment to doing what is best for students, even if this is not expedient for colleges and schools. For example, DE is typically one of many accelerated course offerings available to students. In some cases, it can be easier for schools to offer AP courses because of instructor availability, lower costs, or the need not to coordinate logistics for transporting students to the college campus.

Despite this relative ease, the leaders of **Kerens Independent School District** said they encourage students to take DE. In their experience, colleges and universities in Texas are more likely to accept credits earned through dual enrollment than through AP. One senior leader said that earning credit through AP is conditional upon students earning a satisfactory

score on the AP exam (usually a 4 or 5), noting that “there’s not a whole lot of 4s or 5s that are scored on AP exams every year.”

Similarly, before the DE expansion at **GCCISD**, AP was the primary advanced course offering. Many teachers were not interested in teaching DE because of the graduate credit hour requirement, and students sought out AP courses because of the weight they add to GPAs. But GCCISD leaders knew something had to change when they observed very low pass rates on the AP exams (less than 20%) compared to the 90% or better DE course pass rates. GCCISD leaders shared these results with students, families, and teachers. They also made DE courses weighted equally to AP courses for student GPAs and invested in DE teacher stipends to incentivize more instructors to teach the classes. The result was a substantial expansion of dual enrollment throughout the district.

For their part, leaders at partner **Lee College** have similarly prioritized students’ best interests over other institutional incentives. After hearing that DE students who completed their general studies associate degree were running into issues with credit transfer and applicability, college leaders committed to encouraging DE students (and their parents) to focus only on being “core complete” (in terms of the 42-credit-hour Texas core curriculum), despite performance funding incentives from encouraging associate degree completion.

Believe in—and support—the potential of all students

College and K-12 leaders we spoke with expressed a shared belief that any student can be successful in DE with the right support. The partners are committed to “high expectations, strong supports,” ensuring expectations are set high across the board for all students and that each student gets the support they need to succeed.

Leaders at **Hialeah Gardens High School** in Miami share a clear philosophy with their counterparts at **MDC-Hialeah**: (1) Assume all students can succeed in dual enrollment with the right supports and (2) ensure DE serves as a “purposeful pathway” for students. As with other schools we visited in Miami, leaders at MDC and Hialeah Gardens were focused on embedding DE into high school career academies so that, according to the assistant principal at Hialeah Gardens, “all of our students can have an end game connecting high school to a college program.” In addition to traditional academic supports like tutoring, leaders at Hialeah Gardens emphasized the significance of relevance, stating that “everything has to be purposeful.” Through this approach, school leaders share that students were more successful in their gateway math and English courses because “when taken in conjunction with their academy courses, students see the relevance.”

Recast high school CTE as a college degree pathway to expand college and career opportunities

Dual enrollment coursework should expand—not limit—students’ options for college and career pathways after high school. College and K-12 leaders implementing DEEP practices have embedded program-specific DE coursework into high school CTE programs, and they market purpose-focused DE to students and parents building on existing high school career-focused academies and programs. By leveraging DE courses to recast high school CTE programs as a step toward a related college degree, college and K-12 partners implementing DEEP practices can break down decades-old silos between secondary and postsecondary CTE and between vocational and college-going tracks.

Partnerships took on this important work because they share the understanding that the route to good jobs with family-sustaining wages requires some postsecondary training and, increasingly, a postsecondary degree. They value pathways not only because of where they lead but also because students are more engaged, inspired, and motivated to continue their journey. And because students' plans are in flux and experimentation is part of exploration, K-12 and college advisors and instructors show students how their DE coursework opens up college possibilities—by leading to credentials, stacking into college degrees, and/or helping students pay their way through college after high school.

Leaders at **Stuart Career Technical High School (SCTHS)** have a philosophy for DE: “Give students a head start on what they do after high school.” CTE dual enrollment offers students a chance to get for free both a short-term postsecondary certificate and, in some cases, the practicum hours they can use to secure a better-than-minimum-wage job after high school while continuing college. The skills they learn through CTE can benefit them in many ways even if they do pursue a college degree, which SCTHS leaders encourage them to do. Similarly, educators at **C.E. King High School** prioritize students earning a postsecondary credential from their high school CTE coursework and then encourage students to leverage that credential to pay their way to a college degree.



Enabling DEEP Practices at Scale

More than 1.5 million high school students take a dual enrollment course each year. The majority are not in specialized programs like ECHSs that may have DEEP practices already built in; rather, they are taking DE courses à la carte, outside of such specialized programs. The college and K-12 partnerships we visited had laid the groundwork to implement DEEP practices at scale—that is, for all DE students, across all high school partners—by (1) identifying “win-wins” for partners and students, (2) strengthening “back-end” business processes, (3) organizing DE staff effectively, and (4) developing a supply of qualified instructors.

Identify “win-wins” for partners and students

Colleges and their K-12 partners encounter a range of potential costs and incentives when running a DE program. K-12 schools, for instance, may have to pay for DE tuition/fees, but they also may want to expand DE to make gains in statewide accountability metrics. Colleges may be forced to offer DE courses at a steeply discounted rate, yet they may want to expand DE as a strategy to recruit students after high school. The calculus of each partner's costs and incentives is specific to the local context. In our fieldwork, we observed open discussion of each side's DE-related incentives and costs and a concerted effort among partners to identify win-wins that benefit all parties, students included.

For example, in Miami, college and K-12 partners developed a win-win to cap textbook costs. In Florida, K-12 districts are responsible for paying for students' textbooks and other course materials. Leaders at **Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS)** felt that textbook costs were getting “out of control.” They asked their **Miami Dade College** partners to work with them on a solution. As a result, the partners created the Shark Pack program, which provides course materials for the majority of DE courses at a fixed per-course fee (\$20 per credit). MDC

accomplished this by promoting the expansion of open educational resources and negotiating a deal with their bookstore to provide digital textbooks (MDC, n.d.). MDCPS has a limited budget for DE textbooks each year, so MDC’s work to cut the costs of course materials through the Shark Pack program enabled MDCPS to offer more DE with the same amount of resources.

Strengthen “back-end” business processes

Running a DE program requires complex systems to share student information and process course registration, scheduling, and billing. Without strong back-end business processes, even a well-staffed partnership can be overwhelmed when DE is offered on a large scale. The college–K-12 partnerships we visited emphasized the importance of streamlining these back-end processes and developing tools to share information on student registrations and outstanding requests in real time.

Since the pandemic started, **Miami Dade College** has strengthened its back-office systems to move DE processes from paper-based and manual to electronic and automatic formats. Through their shared DE portal—created using the college’s existing student information system—college advisors and K-12 counselors can now access DE information, manage student registration, and approve course enrollments. The shared DE portal is accompanied by public websites where students and counselors from any high school can see which DE courses are offered and how these align with any academies at the school. Furthermore, to ease the processing of articulated credit (high school coursework, typically CTE, for which MDC also grants college credit), MDC has organized existing articulation agreements with MDCPS high schools on their high school websites to show students how their articulated credit can be combined with DE and AP coursework to accelerate completion of an MDC certificate or degree. To achieve this at a large scale, MDC implemented an online request-and-approval system for articulated credit that streamlined these processes from over several weeks to under 48 hours.

Organize DE staff effectively

It is not uncommon for DE to be managed by a small staff at the community college, even as enrollments among DE students have increased dramatically. As a result of this growth, staff responsible for DE can be spread thin trying to share information and build partnerships among dozens of high school partners, and advising caseloads for DE students can be very large, which limits the amount and quality of support provided. The colleges we visited took different approaches to organizing and staffing DE-related functions, with some hiring more dedicated staff for DE programs and others integrating DE-specific responsibilities into existing college positions. But across the sites, college leaders have invested in adequate DE staffing, enabling DEEP outreach, alignment, advising, and support on a large scale.

For example, **Tallahassee Community College** uses a combination of staffing approaches. At the institutional level, the associate vice president of academic affairs and other academic and student affairs leaders help to oversee dual enrollment programs and ensure that college-wide student success reforms include DE students. Also, TCC’s DE coordinator advises DE students and manages day-to-day communications with high school counselors. **San Jacinto College** employs dedicated advisors who work specifically with DE students as they explore college program and career options and plan their DE coursework. At **Lee College** and **GCCISD**, the college and K-12 district have jointly invested in shared dual enrollment

advisors who are co-supervised by college and K-12 staff and work specifically with DE students in the partnership.

Develop a supply of qualified instructors

High schools nationwide face challenges finding qualified instructors to teach DE courses on high school campuses, especially in rural schools and in the fields of math and science. To recruit and retain qualified instructors—for both academic and CTE DE courses—the partnerships we visited are building their own supply of qualified instructors by streamlining pathways to teaching careers, and they have attracted and retained DE instructors by offering additional pay and other incentives.

The high school leaders we spoke with described how, in their recruitment and screening of new teachers, they explicitly prioritize job candidates certified to teach DE courses. Yet, given K-12 teacher shortages and difficulty finding qualified DE instructors, it can be challenging to garner many teacher applications, let alone applications from those qualified to teach DE courses. To address the K-12 (and DE) teacher shortage by creating more efficient pathways into the teaching profession, **Miami Dade College** is aligning DE with its teacher education programs, which are closely linked to transfer to partner four-year colleges. After early successes at high schools such as Hialeah Gardens High School, MDC and **MDCPS** have had their teaching academy model scaled to 51 high schools across the county.

The Academy of Education at **Hialeah Gardens High School** (HGHS) has helped lay the groundwork for scaling the teaching academy model. The Academy of Education utilizes DEEP outreach, alignment, advising, and support to leverage DE as an on-ramp to the teaching profession for high school students. And to recruit more qualified DE instructors, school leaders offer free childcare through the HGHS Garden Sprouts and Busy Bees Preschool. The principal hires current education academy students and recent HGHS graduates who completed the DE early childhood education pathway, gained certification (for which the school pays the \$200 testing fee), and have earned or are working toward a bachelor's degree. This benefit has been a successful recruitment tool—the school now has a waiting list for teaching positions.

The school and district leaders we spoke with also used pay incentives and created conditions for DE instructors' salaries to increase. For example, **Lee College** had been paying qualified high school teachers in the **Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District** as adjuncts, but this meant that instructors could only teach a maximum of two classes per semester or a total of five classes per year. To circumvent this limitation, Lee College implemented a stipend model whereby the college reimburses the district to pay instructors. This change in compensation allows some teachers to instruct five to six DE sections a term, totaling as much as \$10,000–\$15,000 on top of the teacher's salary. According to leaders at GCCISD, this incentivizes high school teachers to become qualified to instruct DE courses, as the stipend can significantly augment compensation. Furthermore, GCCISD financially supports teachers to pursue master's degrees or gain the necessary graduate hours to qualify to teach DE courses.

Getting Started

Discussion Questions for College Leaders to Ask Their K-12 Partners

Implementing DEEP practices at scale requires a strong partnership and shared vision between college and K-12 leaders, but as the institutions that confer dual enrollment credit, colleges need to lead the implementation of DEEP practices. The following discussion questions are designed to open up college discussion and planning with K-12 partners around the DEEP framework.

Improving access to college and career opportunities

- What are your high school's goals for DE, and how does this fit into your broader mission?
- How can our college support what your high school is trying to achieve for students and our community through DE?
- What are the biggest barriers to accessing DE, and which students are most impacted?
- How might students benefit from a more intentional, collaborative approach to DE focused on increasing access and preparing students for postsecondary college and career paths?

Incentives and costs

- What incentives are there for your school, staff, and students to participate in DE?
- What win-wins can we arrange to support our organizations and benefit students?

Strengthening DE processes

- What are some of the challenges with the current way our college is offering and managing DE?
- What are the steps students, parents, counselors, and other school leaders take to schedule and register for DE courses? Where do these processes slow or break down?
- What is the most important change that we could make to improve these processes? Can we use our existing systems and tools?

Purposeful dual enrollment

- What courses are DE students taking, and what advising do we provide to students to help them see how well their DE courses match with the courses required for major fields they might be interested in entering after high school?
- How can we better communicate to students, parents, and community members how DE can be an on-ramp to affordable college degrees and high-demand jobs in our area?

Conclusion

While no partnership we studied had implemented at-scale practices in all four areas of the DEEP approach, we did see examples of key components that had been scaled. Furthermore, we observed college and K-12 leaders at all levels who are advancing a vision for dual enrollment to better engage and support students who might not otherwise consider college so they can pursue career-path degree programs after high school. The reformers we have profiled in this report illustrate how DEEP ideas are being put into practice in their communities, but taken together the broader themes of DEEP outreach, alignment, advising, and support; of establishing a shared mindset; and of enabling reforms at scale can be applied across state and local contexts. We hope these examples inspire college and K-12 leaders across the country who are seeking to better utilize dual enrollment to create more equitable on-ramps to postsecondary college and career paths for students and a supply of talent for their communities.

Endnotes

1. See the Appendix for details on our site selection and fieldwork methodology.
2. Ohio also found favorable results from the pandemic-related shift to alternative measures for DE eligibility and codified the change in state regulation. Texas has since reverted to the use of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA2) placement test, which was commonly cited among both college and K-12 leaders in our fieldwork as a barrier to access. Lee College is one of a handful of colleges that has had permission from the state to use alternative measures during a research study, and college leaders shared that not requiring that students pass the TSIA2 test was essential to their success in broadening access to dual enrollment.

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Appendix

To learn how colleges and high schools are implementing DEEP practices, we partnered with the Success Centers at the Florida Department of Education’s State Colleges Division and at the Texas Association of Community Colleges to identify sites based on two criteria. First, drawing on analysis of student-level administrative data on cohorts of public high school students in each state tracked over time into public postsecondary education, we identified community college–K-12 partnerships that were most effective in both broadening access to DE for Black, Hispanic, and lower income high school students and supporting DE course success and immediate post-high school college outcomes among students from these groups who participated in DE. Second, we used data on the scale of adoption of guided pathways assessments conducted by the Success Centers and CCRC to identify community colleges in the two states that were further advanced in implementing guided pathways reforms. We prioritized effective college partnerships with Title I, comprehensive (neighborhood schools that are completely “open access”), and career-technical high schools, and we balanced the sample to visit schools of varying sizes and geographies (i.e., rural and urban) in both states.

We visited six colleges (three in Texas and three in Florida) and 12 of their high school partners. During each multi-day visit, we spoke to DE instructors, directors and coordinators of DE programs, college DE advisors, high school counselors, and current DE students. In total, we conducted interviews and focus groups with 98 college stakeholders, 71 K-12 stakeholders, and 120 DE students. After each visit, we identified major takeaways and thematic findings, which were detailed in individual site visit reports. Once all site visits were completed, we analyzed themes from the six site-visit reports to produce the findings in this report.

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