

Policy Brief: Concurrent and Dual Enrollment

The terms “dual enrollment” and “concurrent enrollment” are often used interchangeably to represent partnerships between K-12 Local Education Providers (LEPs) and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) that enable high school students to take and earn college course credits before high school graduation.

To differentiate, the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) will refer to state programs created through the Concurrent Enrollment Program Act, passed in 2009, as “Concurrent Enrollment” and all other programs which offer college level courses in high school as “dual enrollment.”

Concurrent Enrollment in Colorado

Concurrent Enrollment provides (1) a specific structure for providing college courses to high school students; (2) Colorado Opportunity Fund (COF) eligibility; (3) tuition paid for up to the local community college rate (in most cases); (4) and coursework that applies to a degree or certificate.

Courses taken through Concurrent Enrollment must apply to a degree or certificate. **If the student successfully completes a course towards an academic degree, the course will transfer to other public IHEs in Colorado.** However, if a student takes a Career and Technical Education (CTE) course and then changes his/her program of study to an Associate or Bachelor of Arts or Science degree, the courses might not transfer or apply to their new program of study.

Dual Enrollment in Colorado

There are other education programs (such as CU Succeed and extended studies programs) offered to high school students by IHEs in Colorado that do not follow the state statutory guidelines. These programs, which are often also referred to as *other dual enrollment*, are usually cash funded (i.e. students/parents pay for the tuition), and course transferability may vary. Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH) and Early Colleges follow state statutory guidelines and, as a result, benefit from many of the tuition and course transferability benefits like Concurrent Enrollment Act programs.

Other Opportunities to Earn College Credit

High school students have other opportunities to earn college course credit outside of dual and Concurrent Enrollment. The most commonly used methods are through Advanced Placement (AP) exams, International Baccalaureate (IB) exams and College Level Education Program (CLEP) exams.

Colorado’s Success in Concurrent Enrollment

Dual enrollment has grown dramatically in Colorado from 5,000 participants in 2009 to nearly 42,000 in 2016-17. More than 28,000 of those students are enrolled in Concurrent Enrollment. Ninety-six percent of districts and 86 percent of high schools participate in this program. Concurrent Enrollment has grown even more dramatically among underrepresented minorities. **From 2012-13 to 2016-17, the percent change in participation was 81 percent among Hispanic/Latino students, 33 percent among African American students, and 48 percent for Native American/Alaskan Native students.**

Concurrent and dual enrollment are a key strategy for increasing attainment and closing equity gaps in Colorado, and more must be done to give all students equal access to the state’s Concurrent Enrollment program.

Research

State and national research indicates strong outcomes for dual enrollment students. CDHE releases an annual report on programs in Colorado, available on CDHE's website: <https://highered.colorado.gov/Data/Reports.aspx>.

Colorado

A 2004 study using Colorado data shows better outcomes on all indicators for dual enrollment students as compared to students who did not take dual enrollment courses. Participation in Concurrent Enrollment is associated with:

- An increased likelihood of enrolling in college after high school (**23 percentage points higher**)
- A decreased need for remediation (**11 percentage points lower**)ⁱ
- Higher earned cumulative credit hours by the end of their first year (**9 more credit hours**)
- Higher first-year grade point averages (**0.15 GPA higher**)
- Higher first-year retention rates (**3 percentage points higher**)ⁱⁱ

CDHE recently received a competitive, two-year \$400,000 federal grant to study dual enrollment. The study will investigate the relationship between dual enrollment in Colorado on college persistence and completion and cost estimates of implementing Concurrent Enrollment in K12 school districts. This will also provide a calculation of the return on investment for Colorado's Concurrent Enrollment program. Finally, CDHE is working with researchers to evaluate students outcomes based on where students took Concurrent Enrollment courses (on a high school campus vs. on a postsecondary campus).

Other State Examples

In other states, the impacts of dual enrollment are similar. A recent study of **Illinois** high school class of 2003 showed that students enrolled in dual credit were significantly more likely to obtain baccalaureate degrees than their peers who did not participate in dual enrollment.ⁱⁱⁱ

A study using **Texas** data showed that students enrolled in dual credit (dual enrollment) courses are: more likely to earn their baccalaureate degrees in three, four or five years, declare a major early compared to AP students, and change their major less often. The study also found that compared to students who passed AP exams, dual credit students are **more likely to be rural, have lower incomes, have lower SAT scores/high school GPA, and be African American or Hispanic.**^{iv}

National

A recent brief by the U.S. Department of Education, which reviewed the results of 35 studies that examined dual enrollment, showed consistent and positive outcomes for dual enrollment students. Dual enrollment programs were found to have positive effects on students':

- Degree attainment
- College access and enrollment
- Credit accumulation
- Completion of high school, and
- General academic achievement^v



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ⁱ Bautsh, B. (2014). *The Effects of Concurrent Enrollment on the College-Going and Remedial Education Rates of Colorado's High School Students*. Available at: https://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/Concurrent/ConcurrentEnrollmentEffectsAnalysis_2014.pdf.

ⁱⁱ Bean, B. (2015). Annual Report on Concurrent Enrollment 2013-14 School Year. Available at:

https://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Enrollment/FY2014/2014_Concurrent_Enrollment_Sep_2015.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Blankenberger, B., Lichtenberger, E., and Witt M. A. (2017). Dual Credit, College Type, and Enhanced Degree Attainment. *American Education . Educational Researcher*, Volume 46 (5), pp. 259-263.

^{iv} Sadler, S. and Tai, K. (2010). *AP: A Critical Examination of the Advanced Placement Program*. Harvard Education Press.

^v US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. (2017) *WWC Intervention Report: Dual Enrollment Programs*. Available at: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_dual_enrollment_022817.pdf