

DUAL ENROLLMENT IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACCESS AND ENROLL IN college courses while still in high school. It has been found to prepare students academically, emotionally, and socially for postsecondary success. However, too often dual enrollment is limited to serving those students already on the college track. Equitable dual enrollment involves comprehensive and strategic efforts that are focused on engaging, enrolling, and supporting first-generation, African American/Black, Latina/o/x, low-income and underrepresented students. The goal of equitable dual enrollment is to offer college courses to high school students from historically underserved and underrepresented backgrounds during their standard "school" day. Common practices associated with equitable dual enrollment include focused, culturally responsive, and strategic outreach, comprehensive supportive services, structured and clear pathways to and through college, and continuous and long-term educational planning.

The Research

Over a three year period (2021-2024), RDP Consulting will employ mixed methods research to explore how CCC and K12 partnerships within the DE4EC initiative design, provide, and work toward equity-focused dual enrollment. The goals of these partnerships' efforts are to increase African American/Black, Latina/o/x, and low-income high school students' access to and enrollment in dual enrollment courses. Likewise, DE4EC partnerships have a shared understanding that effective and timely academic support across dual enrollment will promote high school and postsecondary retention, persistence, and completion. This report summarizes emerging findings from the first year of research. RDP Consulting's Theory of Change postulates that learner-centered activities that focus on recruiting, supporting, and guiding African American/Black, Latina/o/x, and low-income high school students will increase their access to dual enrollment. This achievement underscores a college-going culture, supports career and job readiness, and ultimately, leads to more positive academic, economic, and personal outcomes.

Mixed-methods research on dual enrollment is inherently collaborative. In year one of this initiative, RDP Consulting relied on its research partner, Educational Results Partnership (Ed Results) and the Cal-PASS Plus program to conduct a comparative analysis of academic

Sidebar 1.1 Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion Overview

Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion (DE4EC) is a multiyear collaborative initiative among the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, College Futures Foundation, and Tipping Point Community, carried out with research support from RDP Consulting. DE4EC helps California community colleges and their high school partners build dual enrollment programs centered on strengthening equitable access and completion outcomes for those underrepresented in higher education, particularly African American/Black, Latina/o/x, and students experiencing economic disadvantage.

DE4EC supports 10 community colleges and their high school partners: Berkeley City College, Compton College, Contra Costa College, Cuyamaca College, East Los Angeles College, Fresno City College, Gavilan College, Hartnell College, Madera Community College, and Skyline College.

Career Ladders Project (CLP), an organization focused on promoting equitable community college redesign and an expert on dual enrollment practice and policy, supports the work of each partnership by convening a community of practice and providing capacity building as needed. The CLP team is currently preparing an emergent framework and set of design principles for high quality dual enrollment focused on equitable completion informed by the *DE4EC* community of practice. This framework will represent the collective aspirations, learnings, and work of the sites to re-conceptualize dual enrollment as part of an overall strategy for equitable college completion. CLP's framework will inform the learning and evaluation agenda moving forward.

For this funder-supported endeavor, <u>RDP Consulting</u>, the initiative's learning and evaluation partner, employed quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore and address the following overarching research question:

How did the partnerships ensure that historically underrepresented and excluded students were engaged, participated, and successful in dual enrollment... and beyond?

outcomes of statistically matched groups of dual enrollment and non-dual enrollment students. Likewise, the qualitative researchers leaned on central leaders across the *DE4EC* partnerships to arrange focus group interviews. Ultimately, the qualitative findings emerged from deductive analysis, using predetermined codes to examine the interview transcripts.

Quantitative

A series of quantitative analyses are being conducted by Educational Results Partnership and the Cal-PASS Plus program examining various data points including high school grade point average (GPA) and graduation rates; college units attempted and successfully completed/earned; dual enrollment course offerings, enrollment, and attendance and their relationship to major selection; and first-year college success rates. All information will be disaggregated by ethnicity/race, gender, and first-generation status with comparative analysis of the same information for a matched group of non-dually enrolled peers attending the same schools/ with the same districts. A summary of findings from the Ed Results and Cal-PASS Plus analyses will be released in a separate brief in early 2023.

Qualitative

Conducted in spring and summer of 2022, the qualitative research entailed interviewsz with 27 partner representatives from both the participating high school and CCC, 52 dually enrolled students, and 10 parents. Questions were designed to understand (a) which dual enrollment outreach strategies and messages resonate, (b) which program elements help or hinder students' progress and success, (c) what constitutes an effective partnership, and (d) how the college's reputation, enrollment, culture, and equity agenda are impacted by dual enrollment efforts. The coded transcripts generated three high-level findings related to equity-driven approaches, successful dual enrollment partnerships, and the role of counselors and instructors. These findings are presented next.

The Findings

Finding 1: Equity-driven outreach, recruitment, and enrollment efforts are central to creating successful dual enrollment communities.

DE4EC partnerships are taking intentional steps to foster equitable dual enrollment participation, ensuring historically underrepresented students know about dual enrollment offerings and benefits and practically make it through the enrollment process. They build rapport with students and their families by communicating, listening, and acting in culturally responsive ways. Strategies include making dual enrollment information easily accessible, using inclusive recruitment messages, and engaging high school counselors to lead recruitment efforts.

Sidebar 1.2 Levels of Reflection and Analysis

The recommendations related to the key findings are organized below by the level at which the recommendation can be executed, followed by the recommendation itself. Levels are defined as follows:



Student-Family Level

Individual or cohorts of students and/or their parents are likely to be impacted by the recommended changes in this area.



School or Program Level

The high school site or school district partner should take the lead or has the most responsibility for or control in this area.



College Level

The postsecondary partner should take the lead or has the most responsibility for or control in this area.



Partnership Level

A concerted effort by both the CCC and high school partners will be necessary to address recommended changes in this area.

Finding 2: Successful dual enrollment partnerships are supported by strong coordination, communication, and collaboration.

Community college and high school personnel alike underscored the indispensable role strong relationships play in their collective efforts to advance equitable dual enrollment programs. This research indicates that intentional coordination, communication, and collaboration are all key to the success of these *DE4EC* partnerships. Interviews spotlighted the critical role dedicated program coordinators and staff play in achieving this functionality. And, they called out how partners' sustained focus on alignment at the district, program, and classroom levels—supported by the regular review of disaggregated data—can ultimately promote the success of dual enrollment participants.

Finding 3: A holistic dual enrollment experience can improve students' academic self-efficacy and college confidence.

High school students are motivated to take dual enrollment courses primarily because they can work toward completing college admissions requirements and get a jumpstart on earning college credit for free. This research indicates that a variety of approaches contribute to

a positive dual enrollment experience for students. Participants called out strong student relationships with counselors and instructors; student connections to the college campus and access to support services; and coursework that introduces them to professional pathways. Combined, this type of dual enrollment experience can increase students' confidence in their ability to succeed in college and beyond.

Taken together, this first year of *DE4EC* research revealed that historically underserved and underrepresented students thrive in dual enrollment communities undergirded by strong CCC and high school partnerships. Effective partnerships are those that are laser-focused on equity-driven outreach and recruitment and work collaboratively to examine student opportunities and outcomes. Fundamental to

Level Recommendation 1. Design and offer outreach activities that engage parents in supporting their students and promote postsecondary certificate, credential, and degree completion for the entire family. 2. Remove key participation barriers (e.g., eligibility requirements; textbook and materials costs; courserelated fees) and adhere to an open-door policy, in line with the California Community Colleges mission. 3. Build academic and personal support services into students' schedules to ensure successful completion of college coursework. 4. Braid and leverage available funding to launch, maintain, and scale dual enrollment efforts. 5. Institute high-level policies, procedures, and processes that encourage and facilitate scaled dual enrollment programming. 6. Focus on aligning K12 to CCC curricular pathways to promote college and career readiness, college enrollment, major selection, and certificate/ degree completion.

effective partnerships are counselors and instructors. On an individual level, they accelerate students' confidence in themselves to succeed in college-level coursework. On a collective level, counselors and instructors fortify a college-going culture among high school students.

Recommendations

RDP Consulting shares six high-level recommendations for CCC and high school communities aiming to expand dual enrollment opportunities. These recommendations cut across outreach, enrollment, support services, funding, and scaling.

Conclusions

In the first year of this three-year learning and research endeavor, the majority of the partnerships signaled an equitable agenda by clarifying who dual enrollment is for, elevating policies and practices that support dual enrollment as an equity strategy, and catalyzing dual enrollment as a contributor to improved student, family, and community outcomes. Year One research findings highlighted ways in which campuses are institutionalizing dual enrollment (e.g., installing coordinator and director level positions, adopting new policies, and dedicating funding to dual enrollment, etc.). However, time will tell if these efforts impact broad institutional transformation related to student engagement and success for the participating CCC and high school partners.

For now, RDP Consulting found that *DE4EC* partners espouse two big ideas. First, *dual enrollment is for everyone:* Dual enrollment is guided by the mindset and philosophy that it can prepare *all* students, especially those who may be historically underrepresented on college campuses and lower- or middle-performing, for college and/or career. **Second**, *dual enrollment is an opportunity to increase economic and social mobility:* Dual enrollment provides opportunities that not only benefit individual students, but can advance a broader equity agenda to promote and communicate the benefits of postsecondary education in communities with low college-going rates.

DUAL ENROLLMENT FOR EQUITABLE COMPLETIONLEARNING AND [E]VALUATION TEAM



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