

Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment Research Series

Brief 7: Ready, Set, Launch – Baseline High School Outcomes for DE4EC Participants

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Introduction

Dual enrollment is gaining steam in California as a strategy for ensuring more high school students pursue college and make early progress toward completion of postsecondary credentials. While historically positioned as a way for high achievers to get a head start on higher education, a shift is taking place in the state toward a more inclusive and equity-centered approach.

DE4EC launched in 2021 to support 10 California community colleges and their high school partners in advancing equitable dual enrollment (see Sidebar 1.1). To identify the initiative's impact over time, DE4EC's learning partner, RDP Consulting, conducted baseline analyses of (1) how many high school students participated in these dual enrollment programs and (2) how they performed academically in the five-year period before its start (2015–2020).¹

Students' high school graduation—as well as their grade point average (GPA) and early completion of college units and credentials before they finish—can all contribute to their success in college. We looked at these metrics for cohorts who entered the 9th grade at a DE4EC partner high school between 2013–2014 and 2017–2018. Students involved dual enrollment consistently outperformed their peers.²

Find below our key findings, starting with participation levels, followed by students' high school graduation rates and GPAs, and average college units and credentials earned by the time they graduate from high school. We conclude with ideas for action based on these results.

Key Findings

Dual enrollment participation rose among students at DE4EC partner high schools between 2013 and 2021 (see Figure 1).

¹ Find a detailed information on data and methods and key findings from these analyses in [Ready, Set, Launch: Baseline Academic Outcomes for Students Participating in Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion Partnerships Compared to Their Peers, 2015–2020](#).

² The baseline analyses are descriptive in nature; due to data limitations, we are not able to determine whether dual enrollment *caused* differences in outcomes. In future research, if we are able to access students' high school GPAs prior to dual enrollment experience, we will incorporate that into the analysis to address selection bias.

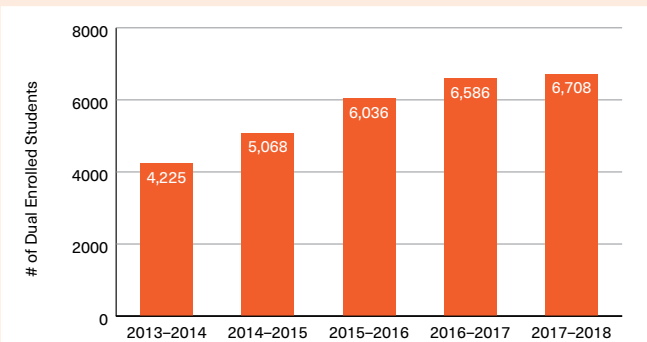
Sidebar 1.1 Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion (DE4EC) Overview

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 supports 10 California community colleges and their high school partners in advancing equitable dual enrollment. These partnerships are building programs designed to increase access and completion outcomes for students underrepresented in higher education, particularly African American/Black and Latina/o/x students and those experiencing economic disadvantage.

Find more information at <https://www.r-d-p-consulting.com/de4ec>.

Figure 1. Number of Partner High School Students Participating in Dual Enrollment (Entering 9th Grade Cohorts, 2013–2017)



California’s 2015 College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) Act (AB 288, 2015; AB 30, 2019)—legislation to expand access to dual enrollment for high school students who might not be college-bound and/or who have been historically underrepresented in postsecondary education—likely contributed to this trend.

Dual enrollment participants graduated from high school at much higher rates than students who did not take part (see Figure 2). Generally, dual enrolled students experienced graduation rates that are 20+ percentage points higher than their peers who did not participate. While graduation for all students in the 2017 entering cohort (who were poised to graduate in 2021) dipped—likely due to COVID-19 pandemic impacts—dual enrollment participants continued to finish high school at higher rates than their counterparts.

Dual enrolled students had consistently higher high school GPAs at the time of their graduation than their peers who did not participate (see Figure 3). Moreover, their GPAs rose steadily over time compared to their counterparts without dual enrollment experience, whose GPAs remained flat during the same period (2015–2016 to 2019–2020). The average GPA among dual enrolled students increased by 0.19 points compared to the minimal gain of 0.04 points seen among their peers. These findings signal an area for future analysis to further understand the interaction between students’ prior academic performance and participation in *DE4EC* dual enrollment programs.

The average number of college units dual enrollment participants completed by high school graduation grew in recent years (see Figure 4). The 2015–2016 graduating class earned an average of 6.61 college units compared to the 7.62 units completed by those graduating in 2018–2019. The average dropped to 6.96 units for the 2019–2020 graduating cohort, likely due to COVID-19 pandemic impacts during the spring 2020 term.

Many *DE4EC* partnerships have a strong foundation for accelerating degree attainment among dual enrollment participants. Half of the colleges involved in *DE4EC* had dual enrollment participants complete college credentials by the time they graduated from high school (see Figure 5). The partnerships that awarded associate’s degrees and/or certificates continued to see successful participation and steady matriculation of student participants. Most of the colleges that did not have dual enrolled students attaining college credentials upon high school graduation were newer to this programming during the period studied. However, these baseline results related to students’ achievement of credentials indicate their partnerships hold promise for increasing these outcomes.

Figure 2. High School Graduation Rates by Dual Enrollment Participation (Entering 9th Grade Cohorts, 2013–2017)

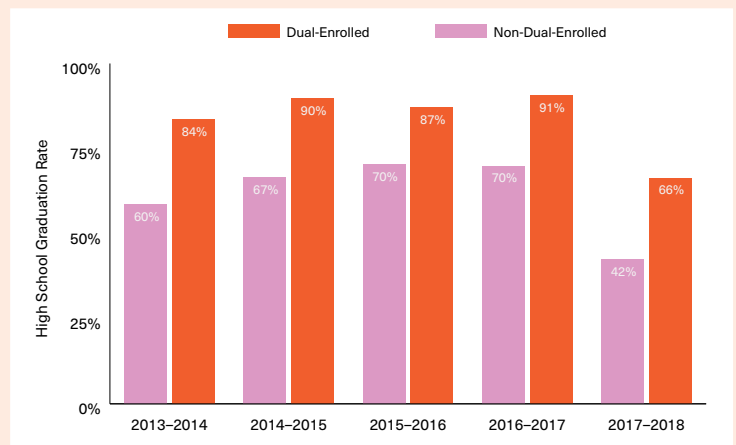


Figure 3. Average Number of College Units Earned by Dual Enrolled Students upon High School Graduation (Graduating Cohorts, 2015–2016 – 2019–2020)

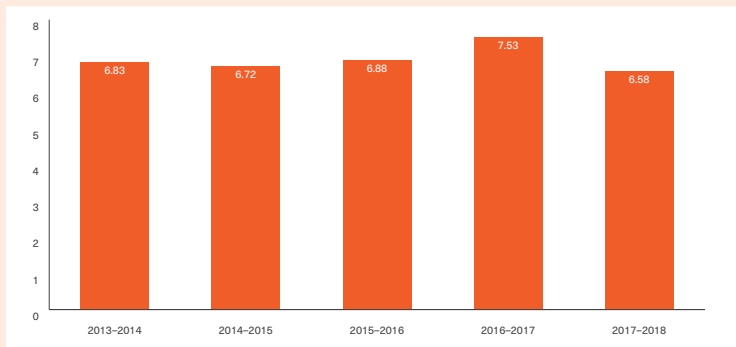
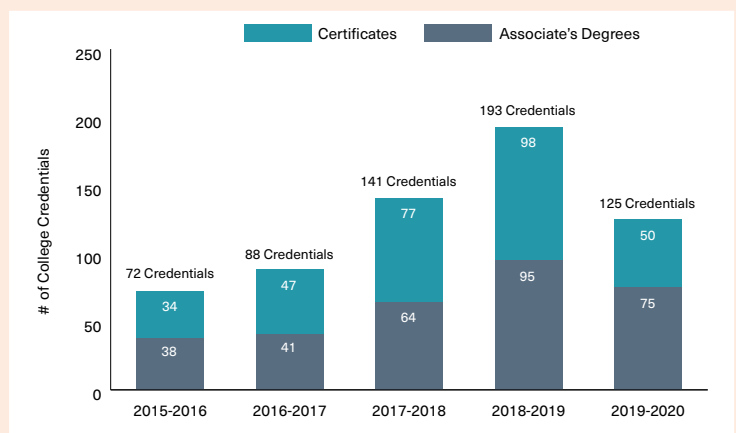


Figure 4. Dual Enrollment Student Completion of College Credentials upon High School Graduation (Graduating Cohorts, 2015–2016 – 2019–2020)



TAKE ACTION

Positive high school outcomes for dual enrollment participants in the period leading up to *DE4EC*'s launch suggest these 10 partnerships created a strong foundation for equitable higher education access and completion. Students involved in these dual enrollment programs consistently outperformed their peers on measures such as high school GPA and graduation. Dual enrolled students also got a head start on their postsecondary education, completing college units and credentials by the end of high school. These baseline outcomes also point to additional areas of examination moving forward, including looking at the high school performance of students prior to their dual enrollment participation to determine if *DE4EC* partners are succeeding in increasing access for those with all levels of achievement.

Community college and high school partnerships can use this baseline assessment of dual enrollment impact as a template for gathering their own quantitative data. Dual enrollment collaboratives can examine the high school metrics outlined in these analyses at the local level to inform their own program planning and implementation. In addition, determining trends in high school students' engagement with dual enrollment can help leaders and practitioners with both case-making and improvement efforts over time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This brief and two others in the *Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment Research Series* provide highlights from a detailed quantitative analysis of baseline outcomes, disaggregated by student population, in the period leading up to *DE4EC*'s launch (2015–2020). The full set of briefs includes:

- [Brief 7: Ready, Set, Launch – Baseline High School Outcomes for DE4EC Participants](#)
- [Brief 8: Ready, Set, Launch – Baseline College Enrollment and Outcomes for DE4EC Participants](#)
- [Brief 9: Ready, Set, Launch – Baseline Outcomes for Historically Underrepresented DE4EC Participants](#)

Find these briefs and the full report at <https://www.r-d-p consulting.com/de4ec>.

DUAL ENROLLMENT FOR EQUITABLE COMPLETION LEARNING AND [E]VALUATION TEAM



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