

Year 2 Qualitative Research Overview



Research Questions

Building on Year 1 [Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion \(DE4EC\)](#) findings (Purnell et al., 2023), [RDP Consulting](#) designed our Year 2 qualitative research to continue understanding:

- How dual enrollment programs can intentionally increase equitable participation, particularly those who have been historically underrepresented in higher education (i.e., Black, Hispanic/Latina/o/x, economically disadvantaged, first-generation students).
- How dual enrollment experiences increase students' preparation for and success in college, particularly for focal student groups.

This research is part of the broader, multiyear learning effort led by RDP Consulting to support the initiative in (a) examining the impact of dual enrollment on equitable college access and completion, (b) lifting up effective practices among participating California community colleges and high schools, (c) contributing to continuous improvement among partners, and (d) strengthening equity-centered dual enrollment across the field.

Data and Methods

Our primary sources for this phase of qualitative research included student focus groups and interviews with representatives from *DE4EC* partnerships. RDP Consulting identified participants for these activities in collaboration with *DE4EC* community college administrators.

Student Focus Groups

These focus groups specifically focused on how students who have been historically excluded from dual enrollment perceived participation in this experience supported their preparation for and success in college. RDP Consulting collaborated with three of the 10 *DE4EC* partner community colleges—Fresno City, Hartnell, and Madera—to recruit high school graduates who previously participated in dual enrollment and were now attending college. The RDP Consulting team or a college representative distributed email invitations to students, encouraging them to participate in a virtual

focus group covering 14 questions over 1–1.5 hours. Participants received a \$50 gift card code.

Ultimately, 31 students participated across nine focus groups. All were currently enrolled in a California community college, California State University, or University of California. Demographically, over half of indicated they were first in their families to attend higher education (55%). A majority also identified as Hispanic/Latina/o/x (58%). Participants represented a range of majors and career aspirations.

Over half took their dual enrollment courses at their high school (58%). High school faculty taught most of their classes, either on their own (33%) or in collaboration with a community college instructor (48%). These students completed an average of 3.9 courses through their dual enrollment experience via a mix of modalities (i.e., in-person, remote, hybrid), covering a range of subjects (e.g., animation, transfer-level English, medical terminology).

Interviews with *DE4EC* Partnership Representatives

These interviews focused on how to develop equitable dual enrollment programming, exploring how their *DE4EC* partnerships developed and function, the benefits and challenges of their approach, and factors impacting their program's scalability. RDP Consulting collaborated with five of the 10 *DE4EC* partner community colleges—Berkeley City, Contra Costa, Cuyamaca, Gavilan, and Madera—to recruit community college representatives responsible for designing, managing, and implementing dual enrollment programming. Researchers asked the representatives 12–18 questions during a .75–1 hour Zoom call. Ultimately, 14 high school and community college administrators, counselors, district leaders, and instructors participated.

Data Analysis

RDP Consulting recorded student focus groups and partnership representative interviews to accurately capture participants' experiences. We then analyzed these transcripts to capture broad themes and examine the magnitude of the perspectives and ideas shared. We then synthesized these results, made corresponding recommendations, and identified areas for future research.

Limitations

While we were able to engage the desired number of interviews with DE4EC partnership representatives, participants skewed toward administrators, with limited participation by high school and college faculty. We also experienced two primary issues when conducting student focus groups. Despite multiple different outreach efforts in collaboration with DE4EC partners, participant recruitment was a challenge overall. The overall number of participants was smaller than hoped, and in turn, the total number of historically underrepresented college students we reached was lower than expected. Despite this challenge, we successfully recruited a substantial number of first-generation students. We also attempted to engage participants who joined the workforce after high school graduation to understand how dual enrollment prepared them for employment; however, we did not reach enough to write about this demographic confidently.

Finally, most students in the study completed their dual enrollment classes at their high school campuses. Taking college courses at the high school versus the college campus skews one's perspectives on the experience.

References

Purnell, R., Rodriguez-Kiino, D., Redix, A., Cooper, D., & Karandjeff, K. (2023). *Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment: Initial Findings from the Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion Initiative*. https://www.r-d-p-consulting.com/files/ugd/348955_eace07f-1daa445d7a7b13fb85a5d93ff.pdf

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Find a summary of our Year 2 qualitative research in the following *Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment Research Series* briefs:

➤ [Brief 5: Student Insights on How Dual Enrollment Helped Them Succeed in College](#)

➤ [Brief 6: Activating Dual Enrollment Partnerships for Equitable Student Opportunities](#)

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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