

Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment Research Series Brief 4: Recommendations for Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment

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Introduction

More and more community colleges and high schools are looking to dual enrollment as a strategy for increasing equitable higher education access and outcomes. Understanding ways to (a) increase the participation of students with low incomes, students of color, and students who are first in their families to attend college, and (b) strengthen their dual enrollment experience has become all the more pressing. And concretizing how to make these K12 and college partnerships most productive on behalf of students, families, and their communities has become just as important.

[RDP Consulting](#) is working with the *Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion (DE4EC)* initiative to learn more about what constitutes equitable dual enrollment and how it benefits students who are historically underrepresented in postsecondary education (see Sidebar 1.1). To inform this effort, RDP Consulting conducted interviews with nearly 100 dual enrollment program participants representing seven *DE4EC*-funded partnerships in 2022.

Participants included faculty, staff, and administrators from California high schools and community colleges. We also connected directly with students and parents who identify as African American/Black, Latina/o/x, and/or experiencing economic disadvantage to amplify their unique experience in dual enrollment programs. Interview questions explored the intersection of equitable best practices and effective K12 and college partnerships within *DE4EC* communities.

As part of the *Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment* series, this brief offers a sampling of recommendations related to the major findings from this initial research. We recap these findings and then include ideas for (a) strengthening equitable dual enrollment participation, (b) developing successful dual enrollment partnerships, and (c) implementing a dual enrollment student experience that is holistic in its approach and impactful on students' college confidence and self-efficacy. Some recommendations are specific to a key finding, while others cut across the research. High school or community personnel and policymakers interested in launching, developing, and scaling equitable dual enrollment programs can all benefit from reviewing these evidence-based recommendations.

Sidebar 1.1 *Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion* Overview

Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion (DE4EC) is a multi-year 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 students underrepresented in higher education, particularly African American/Black, Latina/o/x, and students experiencing economic disadvantage.

DE4EC includes the following 10 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. Each of these collaborations represents different levels of capacity and stages of dual enrollment program implementation.

Key Findings Recap

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.

Yet opportunities for strengthening participation remain, including addressing bias against the inclusion of low-performing high school students in dual enrollment programs, misalignment of community college and high school systems (i.e., enrollment processes), and a persistent lack of awareness among priority populations.

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.

At the same time, this research also surfaced systemic issues, structural barriers, and misalignment of business processes as impacting partners' collective dual enrollment efforts.

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.

However, most *DE4EC* students currently take dual enrollment offerings at the high school site with a high school educator. With limited on-campus contact, students reported feeling disconnected from the college. Partners reported challenges engaging students with academic supports. They also called out inadequate professional development for high school teachers focused on how to cultivate postsecondary preparedness and independence in dual enrollment courses.

Recommendations

Based on the three major findings from the initial research of the *Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion* initiative, RDP Consulting offers the following recommendations for carrying out equity-driven dual enrollment programs. We offer ideas for (a) building on the positive progress of the *DE4EC* dual enrollment partnerships, (b) addressing some of the

Sidebar 1.2 Dual Enrollment Advantages and Limitations

Besides earning college credit and saving money and time, students identified the following advantages:

- Gain critical time management skills
- Become aware of college and career options
- Complete some college admission requirements
- Enroll in an academically demanding curriculum with support
- Learn to seek help and support as a college student

At the same time, students noted the following limitations:

- Enrolling in an independent, self-paced college curriculum requires an adjustment from high school; assignments can be challenging to track and accomplish, given the self-paced structure dual enrollment coursework.
- Students must have strong, functional Wi-Fi to complete assignments and do research at home.
- Low performance in a dual enrollment course can have a lasting impact; grades below a C remain on a student's college transcript.
- Fluctuating between various LMS, such as Google Classroom and Canvas, can be challenging to manage.

obstacles impeding their collective action, and (c) jointly pursuing scaled and sustainable equitable dual enrollment approaches.








We organize these suggestions by the level of responsibility and/or primary impact and according to the possible timeline required for implementation (see key below). For each recommendation, we offer an example of the type of activity colleges and high schools involved in dual enrollment partnerships can implement.







Level:

- **Student and/or Families:** recommended activity or approach directly impacts students and their families
- **School or Program:** the K12 site or school district partner takes the lead on carrying out recommendation
- **College:** the community college partner takes the lead on carrying out the recommendation
- **Partnership:** K12 and community college partners must work together to address recommended change

Timeline:

- **Short-term:** over the course of one semester
- **Intermediate:** within an academic year
- **Long-Term:** over the course of several semesters/academic years

	Level	Recommendation	Example
Short-term		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove key participation barriers (e.g., eligibility requirements; textbook and materials costs; course-related fees) and adhere to an open-door policy, in line with the California Community Colleges mission. 2. Utilize culturally responsive outreach practices to reach all students and families. 	<p>Encourage students who express an interest in the dual enrollment program to participate, regardless of current academic standing, and support their application process.</p> <p>Translate all materials into Spanish and offer simultaneous Spanish-language interpretations during dual enrollment informational sessions.</p>
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Set specific goals for the participation of African American/Black, Latina/o/x, low-income, and other underrepresented student groups in dual enrollment programs. 	<p>Develop and deploy a strategic campaign through a collaborative and coordinated effort by all partners, encouraging dual enrollment involvement by groups that are historically underrepresented on college campuses.</p>
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Commit to language justice through the availability of translated materials and interpretation services for parents who may be monolingual Spanish or other language speakers. 	<p>Make costs associated with the provision of interpretation services and translated materials a line item in the operating budget for dual enrollment.</p>
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Organize campus visits to help students become familiar with and build connection to the college. 	<p>Seek out and arrange opportunities for students to visit the campus, especially resources such as career, tutoring, and transfer centers and health services to increase their knowledge and use of these services.</p>
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Expand enrollment of students attending alternative or continuation high schools. 	<p>Implement strategic, comprehensive, and coordinated outreach to students in alternative school settings, including their parents.</p>
Intermediate		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Coordinate with local, county, and state initiatives designed to increase college and career preparation (e.g., College Promise). 	<p>Establish dual enrollment as a “feeder experience” for college promise programs and incentivize participation as part of the college partner’s outreach efforts.</p>
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Offer dual enrollment courses during the high school day to allow students to participate in extracurricular activities and/or work. 	<p>Expand the number of college courses that students can complete at the high school before or during the regular school day.</p>

	Level	Recommendation	Example
Long-term		9. Develop a user-friendly application and enrollment process.	Established a single website where students only need to enter key information one time at the start of their dual enrollment participation to register for the program and their college coursework.
		10. Braid and leverage available funding to launch, maintain, and scale dual enrollment efforts.	Pursue additional equity-focused grants and funding opportunities to cover dual enrollment costs (e.g., CCAP funding, College Promise initiatives, Local Control and Accountability Plan, Student Equity and Achievement Plan, Title V grants).
		11. Institute high-level policies, procedures, and processes that encourage and facilitate scaled dual enrollment programming.	Engage school and college district trustees in articulating a commitment to equitable dual enrollment programming (e.g., the LAUSD board's Accelerating College Access, and Awareness, and Attainment through Dual Enrollment resolution).
		12. Build academic and personal support services into students' schedules to ensure the successful completion of college coursework.	Provide proactive, inescapable opportunities to receive support in college courses such as integrated advising (e.g., course assignments to support long-term educational and career planning) and academic assistance designed to help students to earn a C or better (e.g., embedded tutoring).
		13. Design and offer outreach activities that engage parents in supporting their students and promote postsecondary certificate, credential, and degree completion for the entire family.	Focus communications and marketing on informing families in communities where few residents have postsecondary credentials/degrees.
		14. Focus on aligning K12 to CCC curricular pathways to promote college and career readiness, college enrollment, major selection, and certificate/degree completion.	Develop educational pathways from middle/high school to and through the community college as part of a dual enrollment effort to increase students' post-secondary credential/degree completion.

Take Action

Advancing equitable dual enrollment programming will require high schools, community colleges, and dual enrollment partnerships to continue strengthening and scaling effective practices while simultaneously addressing the obstacles called out in this research.

Visit [Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment Research series, Brief 4: Recommendations for Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment](#) for possible actions to take at the school/program, community college, dual enrollment partnership, and/or student/family levels.

Find detailed findings and recommendations from this initial research in our full report, [Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment Initial Findings from the Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion Initiative](#).