

The Case for Dual Enrollment:
Access, Benefits, and Opportunities

2024

FLORIDA
COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

Table of Contents

Overview 2

The Case for Equitable Dual Enrollment Access 3
Making the Case for Public Policy 3
Benefits for Students 4
Postsecondary Institutions 5

Current Designs and Incentive Models for Dual Enrollment 5
Current Designs 5
Incentive Models 6

Barriers to Dual Enrollment Expansion 7
Financial 7
Public Awareness 8

Best Practices and Policy Recommendations 8
Best Practices 8
Policy Recommendations 9

Additional Dual Enrollment Resources 11
FCAN Information 12

Overview

Florida's dual enrollment system is a beacon of opportunity amid declining national community college enrollments. While the state has made significant strides in enhancing educational access and equity, critical challenges threaten its potential. Financial complexities, inconsistent policy implementation, and limited public awareness hinder further expansion and student success. However, best practices from Florida institutions offer valuable lessons. To seize the opportunity, policymakers should consider streamlining funding mechanisms, standardizing eligibility criteria, enhancing public information campaigns, clarifying expectations for collaboration, and improving the depth and breadth of student advising. Addressing these challenges, especially for students currently underrepresented in dual enrollment courses, is essential to sustain and significantly expand dual enrollment and student success programs. By focusing on inclusivity and accessibility, Florida can leverage dual enrollment to revitalize declining postsecondary enrollments, foster a more equitable educational landscape, and – ultimately – increase educational attainment beyond high school.

Florida's dual enrollment system is a beacon of opportunity amid declining national community college enrollments.

The Case for Equitable Dual Enrollment Access

MAKING THE CASE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Nationally, the community college sector has been in a deep enrollment recession for ten years, down over 1.8 million students or nearly 25% since 2011, according to a Community College Research Center (CCRC) analysis of IPEDS data from 1996 to 2021. CCRC reported, "[i]n fall 2021, 850,000 fewer students were enrolled in community colleges nationally than in fall 2019, and there were substantial enrollment declines among Native American (-15%), Black (-14%), White (-13%), Hispanic (-12%), and Asian (-11%) students." Taking this further, the population with the most significant decline was recent high school graduates. "From fall 2019 to fall 2021, 586,000 fewer recent high school graduates were enrolled in community college compared with 277,000 fewer older adults," according to CCRC. In contrast, dual enrollment participation appears to be growing nationally.

In *Stay Informed with the Latest Enrollment Information*, the National Student Clearinghouse reports a 10.6% increase in dual enrollees under the age of 17, suggesting there is an opportunity to reverse the enrollment crisis through the advancement of dual enrollment policy.

Dual enrollment contributes to the public good by enhancing educational access, equity, and overall educational outcomes for a broader population segment. Dual enrollment programs expand access to college-level coursework for middle and high school students who might otherwise not have the opportunity to experience college-level classes. This can be especially significant for students from underserved communities or those facing financial constraints, thereby reducing educational disparities. While Florida out-performs the nation

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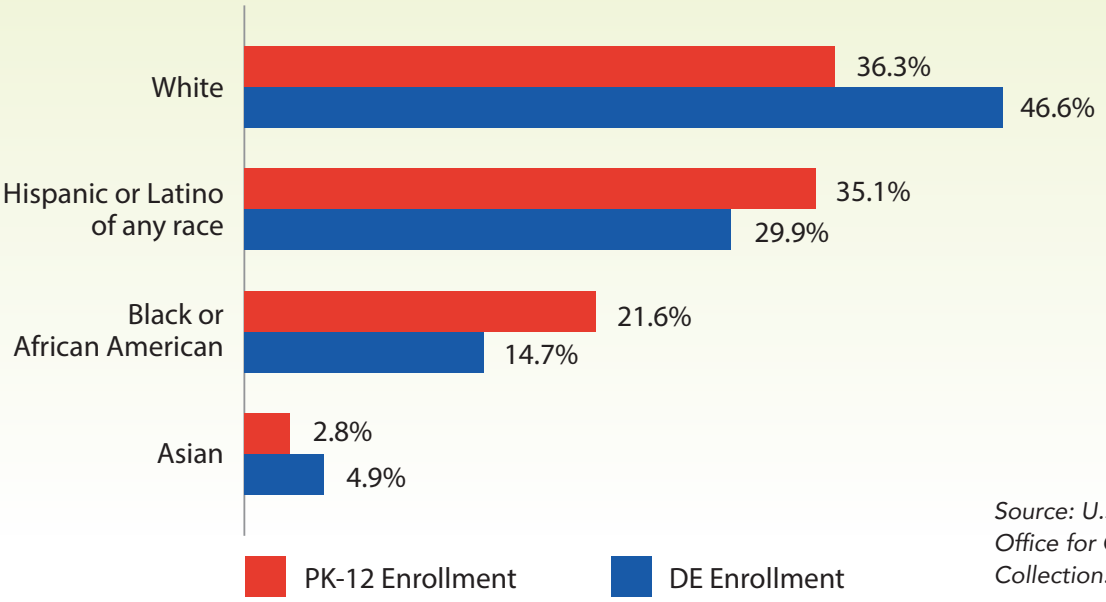
Florida PK-12 Enrollment and DE Enrollment



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection. 2020-2021 School Year

in terms of dual enrollment reflective of the overall PK-12 enrollment, these gaps can and should be narrowed. Students facing barriers to traditional college access can gain exposure to college courses and credits while still in high school.

Early college access can level the playing field and improve the chances of pursuing higher education after high school graduation. By increasing educational attainment, dual enrollment contributes to the overall well-being of communities. It can attract businesses, improve property values, and create a more vibrant and educated citizenry, which is beneficial for local economies and public resources, aligning with a broader goal of fostering a civically engaged and economically self-sufficient society.

Financial Benefits Of Dual Enrollment

Number of Credits	Cost per Credit Hour	Tuition Cost Savings	Textbook Savings*
6	$71.98	$431.88	$100
12	$71.98	$863.76	$200
60	$71.98	$4,318.80	$1,000

**Estimates are based on $50 per 3-credit course, a generalized amount in consideration of retail and rental prices and options for open educational resources.*

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

Dual enrollment empowers middle and high school students for future success by providing a head start in their academic and career journeys while reducing financial barriers, enhancing readiness for college, and offering a glimpse into the college experience. Dual enrollment grants students the invaluable opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school. Doing so, alleviates the financial burden associated with higher education and expedites degree completion. This early start in college-level coursework equips students with valuable skills, knowledge, and confidence as they embark on their paths to higher education and careers.

The financial benefits of dual enrollment for students in Florida are significant. Table 1 provides a snapshot of the financial benefits that students participating in dual enrollment receive due to a hefty state investment.

With the growing number of early college students earning associate degrees concurrent with high school graduation, the $5,300 plus savings can be significant.

Students who complete dual enrollment also receive academic benefits. Dual enrollment challenges students academically, exposing them to more rigorous and advanced material. This enhances their college readiness and cultivates critical thinking skills, effective study habits, and a boost in self-confidence. It helps them become better prepared for the intellectual demands of higher education and beyond.

BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS, DISTRICTS, AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Dual enrollment programs offer several advantages to school districts. Dual enrollment, including career dual enrollment, can boost student engagement by demonstrating the real-world relevance of coursework, leading to improved attendance and a more positive learning atmosphere. School districts can expand their course offerings without additional teachers or instructional resources, giving students access to a broader array of courses, including advanced subjects. As a result, student achievement may increase, which can enhance the school district's overall academic reputation and appeal to prospective students and their families. Districts collaborating with local colleges and universities in these programs strengthen community ties, foster engagement, and may even result in cost savings for the district.

Postsecondary institutions also benefit significantly from dual enrollment programs. These initiatives can drive increased college enrollment as more middle and high school students take college-level courses, aiding institutions in meeting enrollment targets and maintaining in-demand program offerings. Furthermore, they can bring a diverse student body to campuses, contributing to a more inclusive and enriched learning environment for all students. Participating in dual enrollment fosters community outreach, building stronger connections between higher education institutions, local communities, and high schools. It can align college coursework with regional workforce needs, ensuring relevance to local industries and supporting economic development. Additionally, dual enrollment smooths the transition to college for students, reducing the need for investments in developmental coursework and improving overall student outcomes. These programs can also establish long-term enrollment pipelines, as some students continue their education at the same institution after high school, benefiting both the students and the postsecondary institution.

Participating in dual enrollment fosters community outreach, building stronger connections between higher education institutions, local communities, and high schools.

Current Designs and Incentive Models for Dual Enrollment

CURRENT DESIGN

Over the years, policy changes have been made, including the establishment of early college programs in s. 1007.273, F.S., but core policies have remained. Secondary students who meet eligibility criteria have access to tuition-free college-level courses that satisfy high school graduation and postsecondary credential requirements. The general design of Florida's dual enrollment program includes several components, including:

1. **Course Offerings:** Dual enrollment programs in Florida allow eligible middle and high school students to enroll in college-level courses offered by Florida's public higher education institutions in the Florida College System and State University System, and nonpublic postsecondary institutions. The course offerings vary locally and typically include general education, career and technical education, and advanced curricular sequenced courses, such as calculus and physics.

2. **Credit Transfer:** Students who successfully complete dual enrollment courses earn both high school and college credit. Students may transfer credits to other institutions within the Florida College System and State University System or sometimes to private and out-of-state institutions, although there is no guarantee.

3. **Eligibility:** Eligibility criteria are specified in section 1007.271, Florida Statutes, and include factors such as minimum GPA, standardized test scores or alternative placement methods, and grade level. The intent is to establish a level playing field for secondary students to have access to college-level courses.



4. **Location:** Dual enrollment courses can be taken on college/university campuses, at the middle or high school, or through online platforms, thus offering flexibility to students based on their preferences and availability.

School districts and postsecondary institutions specify dual enrollment and early college implementation details in local articulation agreements and early college contracts (ss. 1007.271 and 1007.273 (2), F.S.).

Florida policymakers have further supported dual enrollment by establishing a financial policy infrastructure. Collaborating school districts and public postsecondary institutions receive a base enrollment allocation for dual enrollment participation through the General Appropriations Act. Incentive funds are also available to school districts for dual enrollment students who meet performance criteria. Tuition and textbook costs are further offset through multiple state-level funding streams. While dual enrollment courses are offered at no cost to the student, to support the postsecondary investment for dual enrollment instruction, school districts are required to reimburse colleges for dual enrollment taught by college faculty. The reimbursement amount varies based on the instruction location, which is less when instruction is conducted at the school site. There is no reimbursement for dual enrollment classes taught by school district teachers who have the credentials to teach postsecondary coursework and are processed by the postsecondary institution to serve as adjuncts.

INCENTIVE MODELS

Florida has implemented several incentives to prompt dual enrollment participation by encouraging school district and postsecondary institution collaboration through financial support. The following list summarizes dual enrollment categories and key laws:

1. **Tuition:** exempts dual enrollment students from the payment of tuition and fees, including laboratory fees (ss. 1009.22 (3)(c), 1011.62 (1)(i)(1), F.S.); Establishing funding mechanisms

for districts and postsecondary institutions to support dual enrollment instruction (s. 1011.80 (10), F.S.).

2. **Additional Full-Time Equivalent for Early College General Education Core:** adds weighted FTE in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) for students earning an A grade in specified dual enrollment coursework (s. 1011.62 (1)(i)(2), F.S.).

3. **Summer Dual Enrollment:** Subject to appropriations, a public postsecondary institution shall receive an amount of funding equivalent to the standard tuition rate per credit hour for each dual enrollment course taken by a student during the summer term (ss. 1007.271 (21)(n)(3), 1009.30 (3)(b), F.S.).

4. **Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program:** Subject to appropriations, provides dual enrollment funding for private school students, home education program secondary students, and personalized education program secondary students (s. 1009.30 (3)(a), F.S.).

5. **Instructional Materials Funded:** Institutions are reimbursed for dual enrollment instructional materials costs (s. 1009.30 (6)(d), F.S.).

6. **Dual Enrollment Educator Scholarship Program:** assists public school teachers of grades 9-12 in obtaining the graduate degree and credentials necessary to provide dual enrollment coursework directly to students on campus (s. 1009.31, F.S.).



Florida has introduced various initiatives and funding categories to promote dual enrollment, aiming to facilitate collaboration between school districts and postsecondary institutions. While these efforts have undeniably addressed certain financial challenges for students, critically assessing their long-term impact and effectiveness is essential. Continued evaluation and adjustments are necessary to ensure that these programs genuinely provide equitable opportunities and meaningful educational experiences for all students involved.

Barriers to Dual Enrollment Expansion

FINANCIAL

Florida's dual enrollment infrastructure is conducive to dual enrollment participation as evidenced by enrollment trends. According to the Florida Department of Education's Long Range Program Plan, "[m]ore than 81,000 students were dual enrolled in one or more Florida College System courses in 2021-22." The Florida Department of Education's Know Your Data Advanced Reports Portal reports nearly 160,000 dual enrollment course enrollments in 2022-2023, an increase of

roughly 4.5% from the prior academic year. As shown in Appendix A, of the nearly 158,000 course enrollments in the academic year 2022-2023 for which minority and non-minority dual enrollment data is disclosed, more than 53% are attributed to non-White or Hispanic students. However, dual enrollment growth has slowed due to flaws in its incentive model. By requiring school districts to reimburse colleges for dual enrollment participation based on a formula that varies by who and where dual enrollment is taught, unhealthy competition has emerged between districts and postsecondary institutions.

POLICY VERSUS PRACTICE

Regardless of the policy and fiscal incentives and constraints imposed at the state level, local implementation is an overlooked key to the success of the dual enrollment program. The statutorily directed collaboration among school districts and postsecondary partners results in inconsistent implementation that can result in the unintended consequence of inequitable access. High school teachers who use the recent addition of the Dual Enrollment Educator Scholarship Program to obtain dual enrollment teaching credentials serve as an example of when a district would not reimburse a college due to the instructional model, which can present a potential rift between districts and colleges and hence lead to more teachers having access to the scholarship in one district than another.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Dual enrollment requires students to be proactive in seeking the opportunity to participate, which means students need to know about those opportunities. S. 1007.271 (21)(b), F.S. specifies that the dual enrollment articulation agreement includes a "description of the process by which students and their families are informed about opportunities for student participation in the dual enrollment program." However, given the financial barriers explained earlier, local communications have the ability and incentive to promote other acceleration options instead of – or ahead of – dual enrollment, thereby limiting the exposure needed for dual enrollment expansion.

Best Practices

The following Florida College System institutions are working closely with their district counterparts to provide high-quality dual enrollment opportunities by implementing strategies like assigned advisors, business partnerships, automated processes, and virtual information sessions.

Florida SouthWestern State College: According to Florida SouthWestern State College's (FSW's) website, "[o]ver 3,200 students in the five counties (Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee) have accessed FSW Accelerated Pathway courses with a 93% success rate (C or higher) in their coursework, have earned over 48,000 credits last year, and saved over $7 million in college tuition and textbooks costs." FSW offers three Academic Pathway programs, including Dual Enrollment (part-time), Early Admissions (full-time), and Collegiate/Early College (Clewiston and MooreHaven High Schools). All Accelerated Pathway students are assigned an FSW Academic Advisor whose name and contact information can be found in the FSW Portal.

Lake-Sumter State College: Lake-Sumter State College (LSSC) offers Early College Academies,

which are "structured dual enrollment programs that provide students an opportunity to acquire their associate's degree through a cohort class model. Students join the program with a group of students and take a predetermined sequence of courses that will eventually lead to an associate's degree. LSSC's current Early College Academies include the Health Sciences Collegiate Academy in Lake County and The Villages Early College Academy at The Villages High School…The Health Sciences Collegiate Academy (HSCA) is an accelerated academic program offering Lake County students the opportunity to explore careers in STEM and health sciences through hands-on activities and early exposure to college courses. HSCA is a unique partnership among Lake-Sumter State College, South Lake Hospital, Lake County Schools, Pinecrest Lakes Academy Middle High, and the University of Central Florida."

Miami Dade College: Miami Dade College (MDC) has automated much of the dual enrollment process, including developing a student portal in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, allowing dual enrollment students to self-register for MDC courses. The portal includes a step for secondary school counselors to approve the dual enrollment student's course selection. MDC dual enrollment students may also order textbooks online.

Valencia College: Valencia College (VC) offers many options for prospective students to learn more about dual enrollment, including virtual dual enrollment information sessions. The VC Dual Enrollment Student Guide provides an overview of the dual enrollment program, academic guidance, and campus resources. VC also has four dual enrollment coordinators whose contact information and school assignments are included on the website, as well as a way to schedule an appointment.

Policy Recommendations

Buoyed by an already robust dual enrollment policy landscape, dual enrollment expansion in Florida could be sparked by several policy adjustments and enhancements.

1. **Fiscal:** Dual enrollment finance is complicated, and recent policy changes have amplified those complications. Untangling the fiscal policies and streamlining the funding mechanisms would reduce the nuanced interpretation of financial winners and losers that constrain district and postsecondary receptivity to expansion. One way to reduce inconsistencies across districts and postsecondary institutions is to fund dual enrollment delivery at full cost in a single legislative appropriation to postsecondary institutions rather than multiple funding mechanisms that require district and postsecondary personnel, systems, and financial resources to implement.



2. **Student Eligibility:** The recent policy change to allow districts and postsecondary institutions to determine student eligibility for dual enrollment based on alternative placement methods, such as performance in high school courses, presents the potential for some students to have access to dual enrollment while others with similar academic performance will not depending on where the student is enrolled. Rather than making alternate placement methods permissive, requiring districts and postsecondary institutions to incorporate alternate placement methods with specificity in dual enrollment articulation agreements could promote greater access to dual enrollment.



3. **Public Information:** Student and family access to information about dual enrollment opportunities is critical to expanding access. Districts, schools, and postsecondary institutions use various methods and messages to reach students and their families. As with the Florida Department of Education's Get There Florida campaign for career and technical education, a similar statewide marketing effort could widen the reach of existing communication methods.

4. **Local Commitment to Partnership**: A commitment to partnership between districts, schools, and postsecondary institutions is critical to successful dual enrollment programs. Collaboration is a distinctive intent of most dual enrollment policies, but the nature of the collaboration is left to the local leaders – superintendents and presidents – to shape. By clarifying expectations and sharpening policies, policymakers would reduce the reliance on ad hoc relationships and interpretations.

Student and family access to information about dual enrollment opportunities is critical to expanding access.

5. **Dual Enrollment Delivery Models:** The policy structure for dual enrollment is multifaceted, but there are aspects of the dual enrollment program that are reliant on the agreements and contracts between districts and postsecondary institutions. More statewide guidance and sharing of best practices would likely lead to more consistent policy implementation and increased student access. Course-taking patterns suggest that many dual enrollment students select courses without careful advising about how courses lead to credentials of value. Better advising mechanisms that specify how courses relate to programs and credential-earning potential could result in more students earning postsecondary credentials in tandem with high school graduation.

Florida is a national leader in dual enrollment policy, but now is the time to evaluate those policies to reaffirm the state's commitment to

postsecondary education and its comprehensive articulation infrastructure built to ensure seamless student success, including seamless pipeline transitions, transfer, and postsecondary credential completion. If we fail to address the growing

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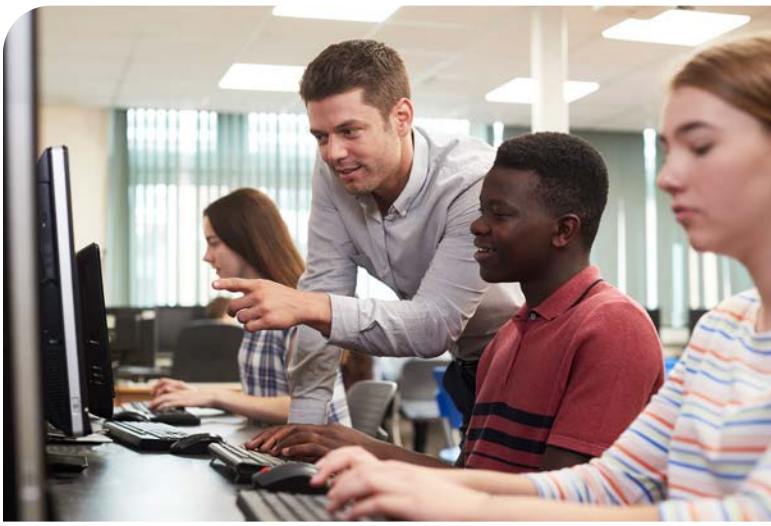
FCAN is committed to continue working towards dual enrollment expansion. In partnership with the state, school districts, postsecondary institutions, and the community, we can continue the state's momentum toward the 2030 goal of 60% postsecondary attainment.



Additional Dual Enrollment Resources

Estimating Trends in Access to Dual Enrollment Using IPEDS and CCRC Data

High School Dual Enrollment in Florida: Effects of College Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity and Course Modality

Leading and Partnering for Excellence and Equity in Dual Enrollment

Scaling Dual Enrollment Equity Pathways to College and Career Success

The Dual Enrollment Playbook

About Florida College Access Network

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida's collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and a rewarding career. We envision a Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all.

FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies, and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida. For more information, visit **www.floridacollegeaccess.org.**

FCAN is a statewide independent organization hosted by the University of South Florida (USF). The statements and positions presented are those of FCAN and are not made on behalf of the USF Board of Trustees or intended in any way to be representative of USF.

Online version of this report includes hyperlinked resources.

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