



Sharing the Cost

Insights From States Funding Dual Enrollment to Expand Access

Executive Summary

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APRIL 2025

Executive Summary

In 2023, 2.5 million students — 16% of public high school students nationwide — participated in dual enrollment programs, which offer high school students the opportunity to engage in college-level coursework. Research demonstrates that participation in dual enrollment contributes to improved student outcomes, including increased high school graduation rates, college enrollment, credit accumulation, and postsecondary attainment. However, dual enrollment participation is inequitable, with white and high-income students participating at much higher rates than Black, Latino, Indigenous, economically disadvantaged, and other historically marginalized student groups.

State policymakers can use fiscal policies to improve access to dual enrollment, especially for underrepresented student groups. However, dual enrollment funding policies and approaches vary significantly among states and programs, complicating efforts to identify which approaches are most promising. **To help address this challenge, this report uses a case study approach to investigate how different state policy and funding mechanisms might contribute to improved dual enrollment participation and attainment for underrepresented student groups.** The analysis also seeks to build a more comprehensive understanding of how dual enrollment-related costs are divided among states, school districts, community colleges, and students.

Lessons From California, Idaho, Minnesota, and Texas

This report examines six dual enrollment programs across four states — **California, Idaho, Minnesota, and Texas** — each with distinct policy and funding approaches (Executive Summary Table). In selecting these states, this report drew from the literature base and expert interviews, applying four key criteria:

1. The state has invested in dual enrollment.
2. The state has prioritized dual enrollment participation.
3. Students are not responsible for tuition.
4. Students are not responsible for nontuition costs.

Employing desk research, expert interviews, and national data sources, this report analyzes each program's funding structures, including how costs are shared across states, community colleges, K-12 districts, and students, as well as student participation and attainment outcomes. The report then uses the dual enrollment equity framework presented in *Unlocking Potential*, College in High School Alliance's State Policy Roadmap, to conduct a thematic analysis of funding and non-funding policies shared across two or more case study states.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TABLE: ALIGNMENT OF CASE STUDY PROGRAMS WITH SELECTION CRITERIA IN CALIFORNIA, IDAHO, MINNESOTA, AND TEXAS

Key: Program Selection Criteria

- 1. The state has invested in dual enrollment.
- 2. The state has prioritized dual enrollment participation.
- 3. Students are not responsible for tuition.
- 4. Students are not responsible for nontuition costs.

State	Dual Enrollment Program	Program Selection Criteria			
		1	2	3	4
California	College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) Allows high school students to take college courses and earn both high school and college credits simultaneously at the high school at no cost.	X	X	X	X
Idaho	Advanced Opportunities Provides \$4,625 to public school students in Grades 7-12 to accelerate their education and earn college credits, including through dual enrollment programs.	X	X	X	
Minnesota	Concurrent Enrollment Offered at the high school and taught by qualified high school teachers or college faculty at no cost to students.	X	X	X	X
	Traditional Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) Offered at institutions of higher education (IHEs), including community colleges, and taught by college faculty. The tuition is covered through a statutory formula.		X	X	X
	PSEO by Contract Offered at IHEs, including community colleges, and taught by college faculty. The tuition is covered through individual memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between the IHE and the school district.		X	X	X
Texas	Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) Allows public IHEs, including community colleges, to offer dual credit courses to educationally disadvantaged high school students at no cost.	X	X	X	X

Funding Policies That Support Access and Participation

Beyond the four criteria used to identify the states, this report identifies three themes across dual enrollment funding policies as promising practices for other states to consider in supporting increased student access and participation.

THEME 1

The state allows school districts to receive full per-pupil state allocations for dual enrollment students. This policy ensures that school districts are not financially disadvantaged when students take dual enrollment courses. In **California**, K-12 districts receive full per-pupil funding for all high school students who attend school at least 240 minutes (four hours) a day. Similarly, **Idaho** and **Texas** provide full per-pupil funding to K-12 districts for all students, regardless of dual enrollment participation. **Minnesota** also follows this model, allowing K-12 districts to receive their full per-pupil state allocation when offering dual enrollment through the Concurrent Enrollment model or the PSEO by Contract program.

THEME 2

The state includes dual enrollment students in the community college full-time equivalent (FTE) calculation for state allocations. This policy ensures that community colleges are adequately funded for all of the students they serve. **California** accomplishes this by counting dual enrollment students as “special admit” FTEs under the community college funding formula’s base allocation. In **Idaho**, dual enrollment students count toward an IHE’s FTE count in the same way as all other students. **Texas**, which has an outcomes-based funding formula, provides state funding for dual enrollment students who complete at least 15 credit hours of dual enrollment coursework.

THEME 3

The state (partially) reimburses community colleges for tuition costs. This policy allows states to keep costs low for students while also supporting the instructional costs borne by community colleges. **Idaho** reimburses community colleges for tuition for all dual enrollment students at a flat rate of \$75 per credit hour, while **Texas** reimburses community colleges for tuition for FAST-eligible students at a flat rate of \$57 per credit hour. In **Minnesota’s** Traditional PSEO model, the state reimburses IHEs for tuition for dual enrollment students at a flat rate of \$241 per credit hour, funded by a significant reduction in state allocations to the K-12 district partner.

Policies Beyond Funding That Support Access and Participation

State dual enrollment policy spans many areas beyond funding. This report identifies four themes across dual enrollment policies beyond funding as promising practices for other states to consider in supporting increased student access and participation.

THEME 4

The state sets goals specific to dual enrollment. This policy integrates the state's dual enrollment efforts with other attainment initiatives, establishes program performance expectations, and guides data collection efforts to support access. For example, **California's** strategic plan for community colleges sets a specific target of 12 college credits for each high school graduate, building dual enrollment into the state's attainment goal. **Idaho's** State Board of Education works with the state's public IHEs to annually set and publicly track dual enrollment participation goals by student subgroup. In **Texas**, the state legislature codified statewide dual enrollment goals that support equitable access by emphasizing proactive, comprehensive outreach and advising for underserved student populations.

THEME 5

The state requires school districts and community colleges to report dual enrollment program data to the state. This policy allows state leaders to identify areas of programmatic strength and opportunities for growth. In **California**, colleges are legislatively required to submit annual reports to the governor on demographics, unduplicated counts, FTEs, and course information for students participating in CCAP dual enrollment. Similarly, in **Idaho**, schools are required to collect and report information on Advanced Opportunities participation and outcomes to the state legislature. For its Concurrent Enrollment program, **Minnesota** requires its Office of Higher Education and Department of Education (MDE) to work together to collect disaggregated data and conduct yearly evaluations; for its Traditional PSEO program the state requires MDE to use the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System to track student enrollment and participation. **Texas** school districts are required to report all college credit hours earned by students who pass dual enrollment courses to the Texas Education Agency.

THEME 6

The state requires school district and community college partners to establish formal agreements. This policy ensures that both partners serving dual enrollment students understand their responsibilities and obligations from the outset. In **California**, CCAP legislation includes clear, minimum criteria for MOUs, including the specification of data-sharing agreements, college course offerings, instructional logistics, and data-reporting responsibilities. In **Minnesota's** Concurrent Enrollment and PSEO by Contract models, a formally established K-12 and IHE partnership is required to set up cost-sharing. Similarly, **Texas** rules require any dual credit partnership to establish an MOU that specifies student eligibility, funding responsibilities, and eligible courses, among other things.

THEME 7

The state requires coursework to be aligned with a credential of value or workforce needs. This policy increases the value of dual enrollment programs by increasing the likelihood that credits earned in high school will apply to students' postgraduation endeavors. **California** state law requires CCAP partnerships to consult with local workforce investment boards and align career and technical education dual enrollment courses with regional and statewide labor markets. In the new **Texas** community college funding formula, incentive funding provided to institutions for dual enrollment course completion is contingent on the hours being coherent and aligned with the requirements of either an academic program or a workforce program leading to a credential.

Policy Recommendations

This report identifies four key recommendations for state policymakers, advocates, education leaders, and other stakeholders seeking to increase access to and participation in dual enrollment in states:

- **Ensure sustainable state funding** by directing state funds to cover student tuition and nontuition costs, especially for student subgroups that are underrepresented in dual enrollment, and by establishing reasonable guardrails when investing in program growth.
- **Support district and IHE participation** by creating funding structures that fairly support the engagement of both district and IHE partners and by establishing statewide MOU requirements for dual enrollment partnerships.
- **Support student participation** by investing in growing the instructor workforce to meet program demand, identifying options for students to cover nontuition costs, and establishing effective and accessible advising systems.
- **Monitor impact and inform continuous improvement** by requiring K-12 districts and IHEs to track and report data disaggregated by student subgroup and by connecting data across K-12 and postsecondary systems while addressing privacy concerns.

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About Bellwether

Bellwether is a national nonprofit that exists to transform education to ensure systemically marginalized young people achieve outcomes that lead to fulfilling lives and flourishing communities. Founded in 2010, we work hand in hand with education leaders and organizations to accelerate their impact, inform and influence policy and program design, and share what we learn along the way. For more, visit bellwether.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the many experts who gave their time and shared their knowledge with us to inform our work, including individuals from the College in High School Alliance, the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, the Student Success Through Applied Research Lab at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Zinth Consulting, and the many experts in California, Idaho, Minnesota, and Texas. Thank you also to the Gates Foundation for its financial support of this project.

We would also like to thank our Bellwether colleagues Mark Baxter, Nick Lee, and Jennifer O’Neal Schiess for their input and Dwan Dube for her support. Thank you to Amy Ribock, Kate Neifeld, Andy Jacob, Zoe Cuddy, Julie Nguyen, Mandy Berman, and Amber Walker for shepherding and disseminating this work, and to Super Copy Editors.

The contributions of these individuals and entities significantly enhanced our work; however, any errors in fact or analysis remain the responsibility of the authors.



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