



ISSUE BRIEF: Texas Dual Credit Landscape

Introduction

Dual credit coursework provides an opportunity for high school students to earn college credits while simultaneously completing a high school diploma. Nationwide and in the state of Texas, dual credit is a growing educational model that increases access to and facilitates completion of postsecondary education. According to one study, students who have the opportunity to earn college credits while in high school are nearly twice as likely to complete a college degree within six years of graduation than students with similar backgrounds who did not take college courses in high school.¹⁰

The purpose of this paper is to address current questions arising among state agencies and policymakers regarding Texas dual credit. Within this paper is an overview of the dual credit landscape in Texas - characterized by an overview of student outcomes, nationally and in Texas, and related state policies. A review of student eligibility requirements, dual credit teacher credentials and dual credit environments is given as a comprehensive background on dual credit in the state of Texas.

Overview of Dual Credit

Nationwide

During the 2010-2011 school year, 82 percent of high schools across the nation had dual credit students and 46 percent of all two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions had high school students enrolled in a dual credit program.¹³ Nearly three quarters of high schools with dual credit programs had students taking academic dual credit courses and nearly half had students enrolled in career and technical dual credit courses.¹³

Among colleges and universities with dual credit students, 83 percent of the dual credit courses were taught on the higher education institution's campus, 64 percent were taught at a partnering high school, and 48 percent of courses were taught through distance education.¹⁰ Among the institutions that had at least some dual credit courses taught on high school campuses, 45 percent of the courses were taught by both high school and college instructors, 34 percent were taught by high school instructors only, and 21 percent were taught by college instructors only.¹⁰

According to results from national studies, dual credit programs are successful in increasing high school completion, enrollment into higher education and completion of postsecondary degrees.^{10,13} Texas dual credit programs and outcomes reflect similar results to the national overview.

Texas

Dual credit enrollment in Texas schools continues to rise.⁶ In Fall 2015, more than 133,000 students were enrolled in dual credit classes, an increase from 17,784 in its inception in 2000 and 90,364 a decade later in 2010.^{4,6}



Importantly, dual credit is the only entry point to postsecondary that is proportional to the actual population in Texas. Students enrolled in dual credit in fall 2015 were 44 percent Hispanic, 38 percent White, 7.1 percent Black, and compared to the state population, which is 38 percent Hispanic, 43 percent White, and 12 percent Black.^{13,14}

According to outcomes from the 2010 dual credit cohort, dual credit students who enroll at public 4-year universities complete at higher rates when compared to statewide figures.⁵ Additionally, students who take 12 to 30 dual credit hours complete at higher rates than students taking below 11 dual credit hours.⁵

The merits of Texas dual credit opportunities are highlighted in a Jobs For the Future (JFF) analysis conducted on Texas high school graduates of the class of 2004.¹⁰ Dual credit students, regardless of demographics, are 2.21 times more likely to enroll in postsecondary education than non-dual credit participants in this study.¹⁰ Further, dual credit students are 1.66 times more likely to complete a credential in six years or less than their non-dual credit counterparts.¹⁰ More specifically, 54 percent of dual credit students obtained a postsecondary credential within six years compared to 37 percent of non-dual credit students.¹⁰

Similar results about dual credit's influence on enrollment and persistence are displayed in Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) data. Of the 2010 total high school graduates, 17 percent had attempted dual credit courses prior to enrollment in a Texas higher education institution.^{5,8} Eighty-five percent of the 2010 high school graduates who completed dual credit coursework in high school persisted one year into higher education.⁵ According to THECB data released in March 2016, nearly 40 percent of the 2010 dual credit cohort completed a bachelor's degree in four years, compared to the statewide cohort at a 31 percent completion rate.⁵ Similarly, 60 percent of the 2010 dual credit cohort completed a bachelor's degree in five years, compared to 52 percent statewide.⁶

Consistent with national trends, Texas dual credit participants benefit from increased likelihood of completing higher education.

State Dual Credit Policies

State legislation passed in 2006 required school districts to provide students with opportunities to earn the equivalent of at least 12 semester credit hours of college credit while in high school – amended in 2007 to stipulate how those courses could be offered, with dual credit being among those options.¹ Most recently, House Bill 505 of the 84th Texas Legislature resulted in an expansion of dual credit participation by allowing freshmen and sophomores access to dual credit programs that were once only accessible to juniors and seniors.¹¹ House Bill 505 and House Bill 18 prohibited any limitations on the number of dual credit courses or semester credit hours a public high school student could enroll in.¹¹ House Bill 505 also removed language that would prevent students from being limited in taking dual credit courses outside the student's high school service area.¹¹ House Bill 18 requires a dual credit course to be taught by a qualified instructor.¹¹ These qualifications are explained in more detail below in the section entitled Dual Credit Teacher Credentials. House Bill 2812 removed the restriction for a high school student to enroll in an excess of three dual credit courses at a junior college, whether or not the student's high school district was in the junior college's service area.¹¹



Student Eligibility Requirements

Texas students in academic dual credit courses (as opposed to career and technical (CTE) workforce education dual credit courses) are required to have shown college-ready capabilities prior to enrolling in dual credit courses.¹² In general, college-readiness is defined as, "...the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed, without remediation, in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program."² Texas high school students may demonstrate college readiness by achieving the minimum passing standards under the provisions of the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) on relevant section(s) of an assessment tool approved by the THECB, or if the student is exempt under the provisions of the TSI (Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter D, Rule 4.85, 2015).¹² The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness End of Course (STAAR EOC) exams, the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), and the American College Testing (ACT) Plan accompanied by scores on the ACT-Aspire are the three assessment methods listed as acceptable to proving college-readiness, thus preparation for academic dual credit coursework.¹²

Eligibility requirements for enrollment into CTE dual credit courses are equivalent to the college readiness requirements for academic dual credit courses.¹² However, students do not need to achieve certain minimum standards for enrollment into dual credit courses for Level 1 certificates or programs leading to a credential of less than a Level 1 certificate, at public community colleges or public technical institutes.¹²

Dual Credit Teacher Credentials

According to the Texas Administrative Code, dual credit course instructors, whether regularly employed by the college or employed by the high school where a student is enrolled, must meet the standards and approval procedures used by the college for teaching the course.¹² Additionally, the college must supervise and evaluate instructors of dual credit courses using the same or comparable procedures used for faculty at the main campus of the college.¹²

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission and Colleges (SACSCOC), the Texas region's higher education accrediting body, compiled a faculty credentials guideline.⁷ According to this guideline, university faculty teaching undergraduate level courses or associate degree courses designed for transfer to a baccalaureate degree – the categories of dual credit courses – should have a doctorate or master's degree in the teaching discipline or a master's degree with a concentration (a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours) in the teaching discipline.⁷ Faculty teaching associate degree courses not designed for transfer to a baccalaureate degree should hold a bachelor's degree in the teaching discipline, or associate's degree and demonstrated competencies in the teaching discipline.⁷

Therefore, dual credit courses are taught by instructors with the credentials necessary to teach college courses, whether a higher education institution or a high school is the regular employer of the instructor.

Dual Credit Environment

The location of dual credit courses and the composition of classes are the characteristics used to define dual credit environment. Dual credit courses may be offered electronically.¹² Additionally, early college high schools⁺ are a

⁺ Early college high schools (ECHS) offer high school students an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or at least 60 hours towards a baccalaureate degree.



unique mode of dual credit course offering. The composition of a dual credit class may be exclusively dual credit students or dual and college credit students.¹² A class may be high school credit-only students if: (1) the course is required for completion by the State Board of Education High School Program and the high school is unable to offer such a course, (2) the high school credit-only students are College Board Advanced Placement students, or (3) the course is a CTE workforce education course and the high school credit-only students are earning articulated college credit.¹²

During the 2015-2016 academic year, the majority of Texas dual credit students, nearly 94 percent, completed dual credit coursework through public community colleges.⁴ During the 2009-2010 academic year, 88 percent of dual credit students enrolled in dual credit courses at a community college, while 77 percent enrolled in dual credit courses at the student's high school.¹ Other locations where dual credit courses could be taken were via distance learning, at another high school, or at a four-year college or university.¹ Most distance learning courses were reported as asynchronous, meaning students received instruction on their own schedule and used e-mail or discussion boards as a substitute for traditional classroom participation.¹ There is very limited research available regarding the optimal location or delivery mechanism (online or in-person) for dual credit courses with respect to student outcomes.

Current Questions About Texas Dual Credit

There are questions among policymakers and other stakeholders about the progress, growth, and outcomes regarding dual credit. For example, dual credit has been a recurring issue in interim hearings leading up to the 85th Texas Legislative Session. Responses to the following list of questions could aid education stakeholders and policymakers in understanding and facilitating the continuing growth of dual credit.

- Under what conditions is dual credit most effective?
- What makes dual credit an effective postsecondary readiness, access, and attainment strategy?
- What do we mean by dual credit?
- Is all dual credit the same?
- Which students are accessing dual credit?

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the dual credit landscape in Texas and related state policies. A review of student eligibility requirements, dual credit teacher credentials and dual credit environments is given as a comprehensive background on dual credit in the state of Texas. Results from dual credit studies show that dual credit is effective both nationally and in Texas as a means to increase access to higher education. The questions presented in this report represent the additional research that should be done to maintain and improve the Texas dual credit system.



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