



Expand Access to Dual Credit

Equitable access to dual-credit programs will help close opportunity gaps

2017-19 Strategic Action Plan Recommendation

Increase equity in access to dual-credit programs

Strategies to increase access to dual-credit programs (and total 2018-19 anticipated costs):

- Give districts funding to cover exam fees for 25,000 free and reduced price lunch (FRPL)-eligible students in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International Programs (\$6.5 million).
- Subsidize transportation and book costs for 8,600 FRPL-eligible students enrolled in Running Start (\$26.6 million).
- Fully implement the current College in the High School policy to serve all eligible students enrolled in small schools, those distant from a college with a Running Start program, and FRPL-eligible students (\$4.3 million).

The Imperative

Students do not have equitable access to dual-credit opportunities

Problems with access to dual credit programs still exist, despite 2015 legislation to address inequities. Although 97 percent of high school districts offer dual credit, and 47 percent of all public high school students enroll in at least one dual-credit course, the costs of these programs present a barrier to enrollment for low-income students. Running Start, Advanced Placement, and College in the High School program data show participation gaps among students eligible for free and reduced priced lunch. In addition, costs may contribute to disproportionate enrollment by race or ethnicity. For example, Hispanic students make up 19 percent of the high school population, yet are represented at rates of 12 percent in Advanced Placement and Running Start programs, and 13 percent in College in the High School programs.

Context

Dual-credit costs can be prohibitive for students

Dual-credit programs are either college-level courses that also meet high school requirements, or rigorous high school courses coupled with standardized exams or articulation agreements. In all cases students can earn both high school and college credit. Participation in dual-credit programs increases high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion. Despite these advantages, students in dual-credit programs face costs that may discourage or prevent participation. For example, costs for exam-based programs range from \$91 for Advanced Placement test fees to \$168 for registration plus \$116 per test for International Baccalaureate. Running Start students may receive a waiver for tuition; however, they face all the other costs of a typical college student, including student fees, books and transportation, and other education-related expenses. The College in the High School program limits funding to cover only one to two classes per year; yet even with that limitation, funding is short of what is needed to meet all the needs identified by school districts.

Outcomes and Measures

Increased high school completion and postsecondary enrollment

Students enrolled in dual-credit programs are more likely to complete high school and continue on to postsecondary education. For the five-year period from 2010-11 through 2014-15, student enrollments in nearly every dual-credit program increased. Enhanced funding would lead to increased overall participation in dual-credit programs and greater participation among low-income and underrepresented students.

Quick Facts:

Seattle's Rainier Beach High School has improved graduation rates by 25 points—to 79 percent—since implementing its International Baccalaureate program in 2013.

37 percent of Washington high school graduates in the class of 2015 took at least one Advanced Placement exam. AP exam scores also rose, with 22.6 percent of exam-takers scoring a 3 or higher in 2015.

In 2015, 2,083 high school students in Washington graduated with both a high school diploma and an associate degree.