

Dual Credit

Landscape

Participation in dual credit coursework is positively correlated with the likelihood of students to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education or training.¹ Dual credit has been identified as a leading strategy for reaching more equitable postsecondary outcomes across student demographic populations. The vast majority—88 percent of the over 80,000 students in the class of 2017—took at least one dual credit course during their high school career.² While the offering of at least one type of dual credit program is nearly ubiquitous across the state, there remain deep inequities in access to and participation in each type of dual credit. In the 2020-21 academic year, the range of participation in any dual credit coursework ranged from 43 percent to nearly 78 percent for different racial groups. This equates to an equity gap score of 1.8, indicating that the group with the highest proportion is almost twice as likely to enroll in a dual credit course than the group with the lowest proportion.³

Some **key barriers** have been identified:

- **Access:** Districts lack sufficient capacity to provide equitable access to dual credit courses and to advise students and families about dual credit options. This leads to students and families, particularly from low- and middle-income BIPOC backgrounds, not having sufficient access to information, resources, and support to understand and pursue dual credit opportunities.
- **Costs:** Costs, including those associated with getting college credits, exam fees, and other costs like textbooks and transportation, remain a burden for the most marginalized students across all dual credit programs. While some students may have some costs covered, most have to fund on their own.
- **Credit transferability:** The earning and use of credits from dual credit courses is inequitable, both by student demographic and by dual credit program type.

A Senate bill this session is proposing to address the costs for all students across the state for the College in the High School dual credit program by covering these costs for institutions. Bills in the House also propose to subsidize the costs for eligible students across many dual credit programs, including College in the High School and Running Start.

Case Studies

While costs—a significant barrier to students—are being pursued at the state level, there are innovative approaches in the dual credit space being implemented by some school districts that could help address existing barriers. Now is a prime opportunity for the state to understand these equity-focused, student-centered models that could lead to strategic alignment between K-12 districts and institutions of higher education. Such approaches pave the way to address not only cost but also access and transition from one system to the next.

Yelm Community Schools

Yelm community schools has partnered with South Puget Sound Community College to offer an Associates of Art – Direct Transfer Agreement (AA-DTA) degree, making it possible for all incoming high school freshmen to earn both their high school diploma and the AA-DTA degree at their high school campus in four years. The program began with approximately 60 students in 2021-22, with an additional 60 students this academic year.

Key aspects of the program are partnership development, focus on equitable student access, and cost benefits for all students, with additional grants for students-in-need and student and family engagement. Yelm found that College in the High School courses are especially beneficial to students for whom transportation costs to and from the closest community college (located 20 miles away) could be a significant barrier. Additionally, the cost of the AA-DTA degree to the student at the high school was [67% lower](#) than that of an AA degree at a Washington community college after high school. To ensure wide reach and access to information, Yelm School District conducted multiple info sessions with families and [middle schoolers](#). The Yelm district continues to engage with students to identify supports they need to be successful, and to keep innovating to accomplish just that.

Yakima School District

Yakima School District has recently started an [asynchronous dual credit pilot program](#) with Arizona State University (ASU). The goal is to provide high school students with an associate degree in addition to their high school diploma within four years. Yakima is piloting this program in two high schools with a total of approximately 75 students.

High school teachers shepherd students through the course by facilitating discussions and answering questions, while students complete coursework and assignments online. Currently this program has no cost to students, as Yakima is being supported by ASU and grants from philanthropic organizations. Costs will be incurred by the district next year, and they are looking for options to continue to subsidize students. An analysis of access to dual credit courses by a high school in Yakima found that many students would like to accrue college credits while continuing to stay on campus for high school activities and assemblies. This led to the creation of this program this fall.

¹ [Increasing Equitable Access, Participation, and Success for Students in Dual Credit Legislative Report from the Dual Credit Task Force, December 2022](#)

² [ERDC Update on Dual Credit Programs Report, September 2022](#)

³ [WSAC Report Equity Can't Wait - Examining Racial Disparities in K-12 Education in Washington State, October 2022](#)