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Sharing the Cost: Insights from States Funding Dual Enrollment to Expand Access

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Presented to Midwestern Higher Education Compact

October 21, 2025

About Bellwether



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Bellwether envisions a future where *all* young people have access to an **equitable** and **excellent** education, and live lives filled with **opportunity**.

Bellwether is a **national nonprofit** that works 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.

About Our State Education Finance Initiative

Education finance **sets the foundation** for what is possible in every K-12 school and postsecondary institution in the country. Education finance equity is essential to leveling the playing field for students in under-resourced schools, colleges and communities.

Bellwether's work in state education finance aims to change the status quo, state by state, through:

- **Analyses and explainers** that shape the public conversation on education finance and help advocates and policymakers understand and improve finance policies in their states.
- **Trainings** that equip state advocates and other partners with policy knowledge and data skills to unlock the potential for policy reforms.
- **Policy advising and technical assistance** for state advocacy groups, public agencies, and other partners in states on the precipice of enacting change.

Scan the QR code to access the publication

You can also use this link:

bellwether.org/publications/sharing-the-cost/



Poll Question:

What are the top 1-2 barriers to equitable dual enrollment access and participation in your state?

- A. Information** - Students don't know about dual enrollment opportunities
- B. Cost** - It is too expensive for students to take dual enrollment courses
- C. Instructors** - Districts struggle with finding enough qualified dual enrollment instructors
- D. Geography** - Postsecondary institutions are too far away from high schools for partnerships
- E. Other** - Briefly describe
- F. Not sure**

Please put your answers in the chat!

A close-up, monochromatic photograph of a hand holding a pen, poised to write on a spiral-bound notebook. The notebook has a grid pattern. The text 'Goals and Research Questions' is overlaid in white serif font. The pen is a dark, sleek design with 'FABER-CASTELL' visible on its side. The background is a textured surface, possibly a desk or table.

Goals and Research Questions

Why focus on dual enrollment funding?

Sharing the Cost defines dual enrollment as programs that offer high school students the opportunity to engage in college-level coursework.

- **Dual enrollment is early college access.** State funding can increase access.
- **In 2022-23, 2.5 million students participated in dual enrollment**, representing:
 - 16% of all public high school students nationwide
 - an increase of over 2 million students since 2015.
- **Dual enrollment participation improves student outcomes**, including:
 - increased high school graduation rates
 - increased college enrollment and credit accumulation
 - increased postsecondary attainment
- **However, dual enrollment participation has historically been inequitable**, with white and high-income students participating at much higher rates than Black, Latino, Indigenous, and economically disadvantaged students.
- **Dual enrollment funding policies and approaches vary significantly** among states and programs, complicating efforts to identify the most promising approaches.

Goals and Research Questions

Sharing the Cost uses a case study approach to investigate how different state policies and funding mechanisms might contribute to improved dual enrollment participation and attainment for underrepresented student groups.

Goals:

- Help state leaders, policymakers, and advocates better understand **how states use funding models to increase dual enrollment equity**.
- Provide state leaders, policymakers, and advocates with **clear, actionable policy design options and considerations** that help them evaluate their current approaches to dual enrollment funding, prioritize equity, and determine policy changes.

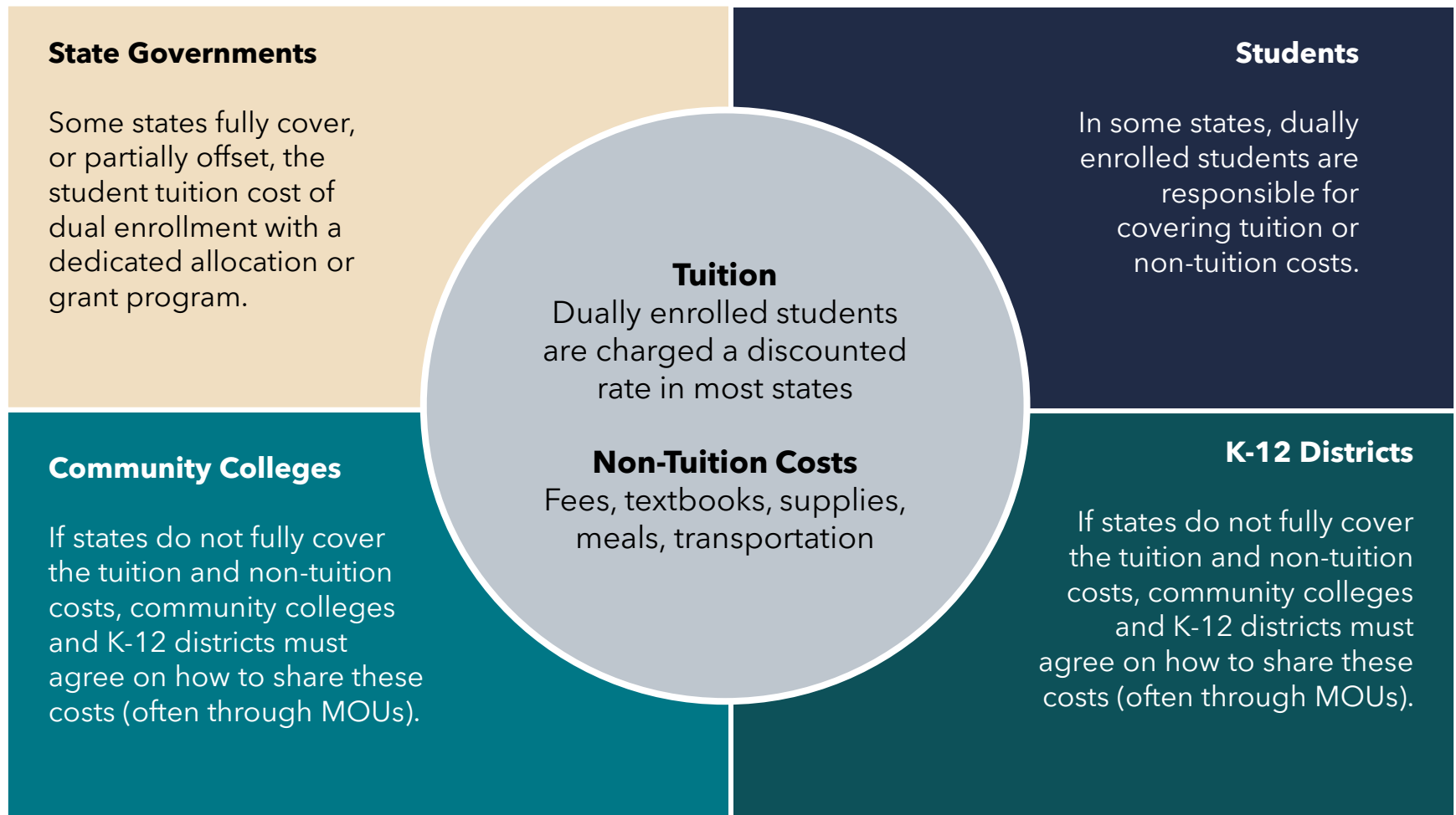
Research Questions

- **What are the characteristics of dual enrollment funding models** that aim to support more equitable dual enrollment program participation and student outcomes?
- **How do these models share dual enrollment tuition and non-tuition costs** across the state, community colleges, K-12 districts, the state, and students?
- **What are the program growth and attainment outcomes** in state programs that have employed these models of dual enrollment funding?

A hand holding a pen over a notebook with mathematical formulas. The notebook is open, showing a page with a grid pattern. The hand is holding a pen and is positioned over the page. The background is a textured surface.

Dual Enrollment Cost Sharing

There are four main players that (can) cover dual enrollment tuition and non-tuition costs



States must consider how K-12 and community college funding systems will work together to cover DE expenses

K-12 Districts

- Every state has its own K-12 funding formula that allocates funding to districts **based on either enrollment or attendance (ADM/ADA)**.
- States generally allocate some or all of the K-12 general education per-pupil allocation for dual enrollment students to districts.

Community Colleges

- States generally allocate some or most community college formula funding **based on the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of enrolled students**.
- Many states have incorporated dual enrollment students into community college FTE counts.

Some states allocate supplemental dual enrollment funding outside the state's K-12 and community college funding formulas.

State cost-sharing structures for DE impact student, district, and community college participation

Entity	State allocations to cover costs for ...	Lack of such state allocations ...
Students	... encourages DE participation, particularly for underrepresented student groups.	... serves as a financial deterrent to engaging in DE, exacerbating existing gaps in student access.
K-12 Districts	... eases the district costs of offering DE, increasing the likelihood that all districts will be able to offer programs.	... places a financial burden on districts offering DE, exacerbating existing gaps in student access.
Community Colleges	... provides a financial incentive for the community college to offer DE, increasing student access to programs.	... requires community colleges to subsidize DE costs, leading them to limit DE offerings or prioritize partnerships with districts that can pay.

A close-up, monochromatic photograph of a hand holding a pen over an open spiral notebook. The notebook has a grid pattern on the left page and a blank page on the right. The text 'State Case Studies' is overlaid in the center. The pen is a dark color with a silver clip and tip. The background is a textured surface, possibly a desk or table.

State Case Studies

We selected case study states using four key criteria identified from the literature base and expert interviews

Criteria	Description
1. The state has invested in DE	The state provides additional funding to help districts and community colleges cover dual enrollment expenses
2. The state has prioritized DE participation	The state has committed to expanding dual enrollment , particularly for systemically marginalized student groups, through legislation, regulations, or strategic initiatives.
3. Students are not responsible for tuition costs	The state requires tuition-free dual enrollment for all or certain student groups.
4. Students are not responsible for nontuition costs	The state requires that all or certain student groups are not responsible for other costs associated with dual enrollment, such as textbooks, fees, or course materials.

We analyzed six dual enrollment programs across four states – California, Idaho, Minnesota, and Texas

State	Dual Enrollment Program
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.
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.
Minnesota	Concurrent Enrollment is offered at the high school and taught by qualified high school teachers or college faculty at no cost to students.
	Traditional Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) is offered at institutions of higher education (IHEs), including community colleges, and taught by college faculty. The tuition is covered through a statutory formula.
	PSEO by Contract is offered at IHEs, including community colleges, and is taught by college faculty. The tuition is covered through individual memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between the IHE and the school district
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.

Every DE program we chose met at least 3 of the program criteria

1. The state has invested in dual enrollment

3. Students are not responsible for tuition

2. The state has prioritized dual enrollment participation

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)	X	X	X	X
Idaho	Advanced Opportunities	X	X	X	
Minnesota	Concurrent Enrollment	X	X	X	X
	Traditional Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO)		X	X	X
	PSEO by Contract		X	X	X
Texas	Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST)	X	X	X	X

Each case study examined four key areas

1. The entity responsible – the state, K-12 district, community college, and/or student – for covering dual enrollment **tuition and non-tuition costs**.
2. How the state includes dually enrolled students in their **community college and K-12 funding formulas**.
3. Whether the state provides **additional state dual enrollment funding**, and if so, how it is distributed.
4. Whether the state has seen increased dual enrollment **participation and attainment**, particularly for systemically marginalized student groups.

All four states have experienced significant growth in dual enrollment participation, but for different reasons

- **California's CCAP legislation allowed high schools to offer community college courses in the high school that were not open to the public,** which led to large and equitable representational growth in dual enrollment participation.
- **Idaho's Advanced Opportunities program consolidated multiple early college initiatives into a single, student-directed fund,** which spurred massive growth in dual enrollment participation across student groups but did not close equity gaps.
- **Minnesota legislation allowing high schools and colleges to directly contract with each other to offer dual enrollment** led to establishment and growth of the Concurrent Enrollment and PSEO by Contract programs, allowing massive growth in program participation across student groups but retaining some equity gaps.
- **Texas' FAST program made dual enrollment free for economically disadvantaged students,** which more than doubled the participation of eligible students in one year, accounting for targeted participation growth and more equitable access.

A close-up, monochromatic photograph of a hand holding a pen, poised to write on a spiral-bound notebook. The notebook has a grid pattern. The text 'Minnesota Highlight' is overlaid in a white serif font. The background is a textured surface, possibly a desk.

Minnesota Highlight

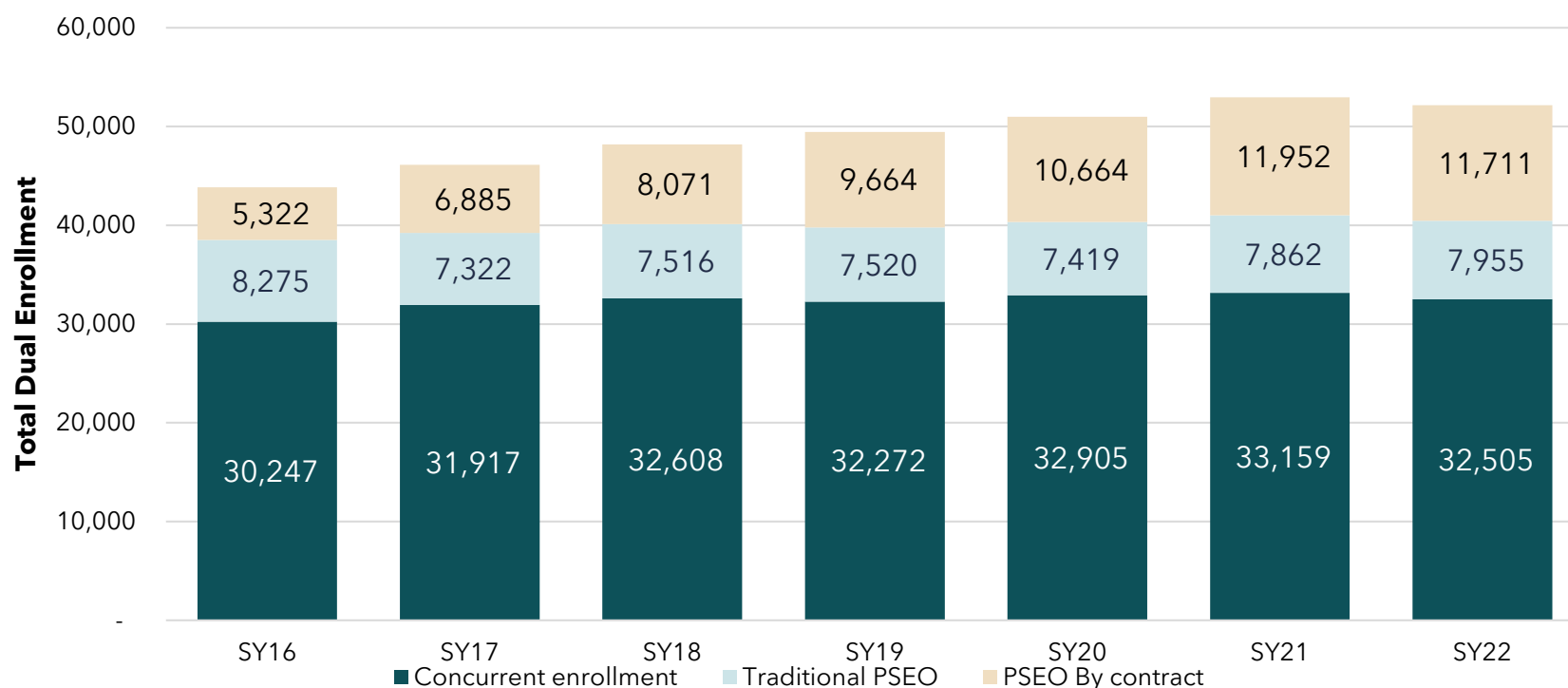
Each dual enrollment program has a distinct funding model that provides different incentives for student, district, and community college participation.

Dual Enrollment Program	Program Selection Criteria			
	The State Has Invested in Dual Enrollment	The State Has Prioritized Dual Enrollment Participation	Students Are Not Responsible for Tuition	Students Are Not Responsible for Non-Tuition Costs
Concurrent enrollment	The state provides an additional \$4M annual allocation.	Minnesota was selected to participate in a CHSA initiative where they will work on expanding dual enrollment access and setting a statewide vision to eliminate gaps in access and participation.	The state mandates that students do not pay tuition.	The state mandates that students do not pay for textbooks or supplies.
Traditional PSEO	The state has not provided an additional allocation for PSEO.			
PSEO by contract				

From SY16 to SY22, participation across MN dual enrollment programs grew by 19%, nearly 9,000 students

The bulk of the dual enrollment growth came from PSEO by contract programming, with concurrent enrollment also experiencing an increase in enrollment. Traditional PSEO saw a slight decline in student participation.

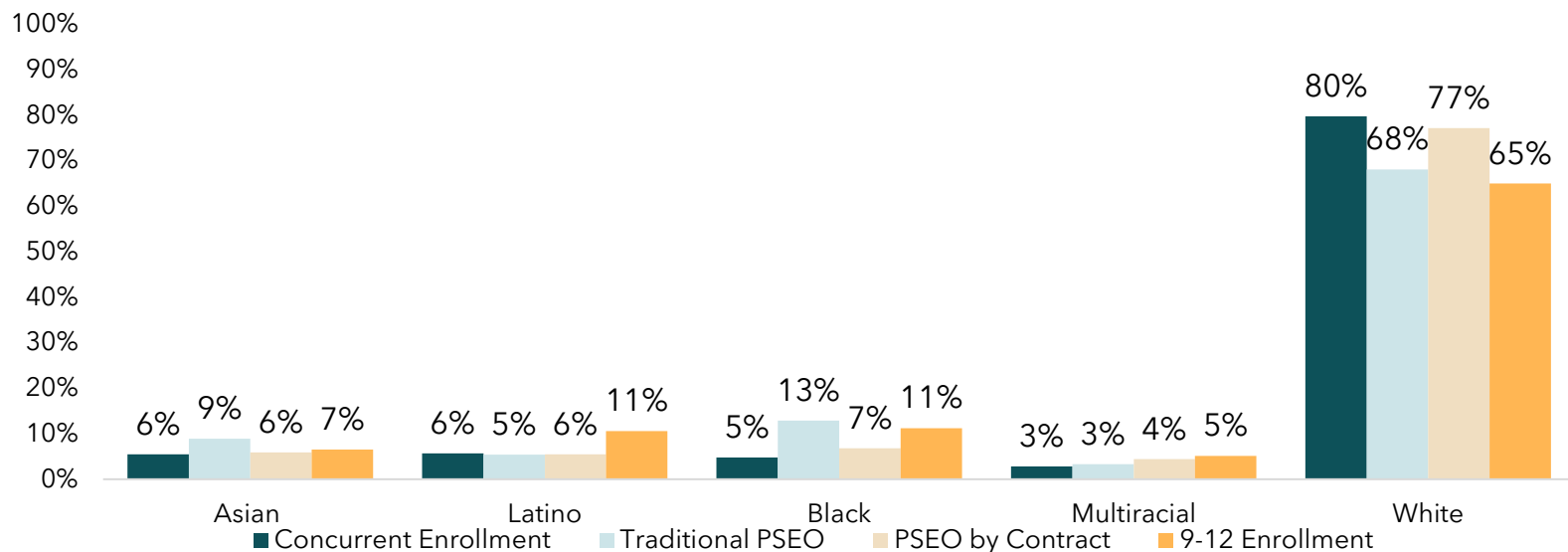
Minnesota Share of Dual Enrollment by Program, SY16 to SY22



Since SY15-16, enrollment in all three dual enrollment programs has increased across all racial subgroups

Although dual enrollment participation among students of color in Minnesota has increased, the growth has not been sufficient to achieve proportional representation across all racial groups

Share of Dual Enrollment and 9-12 Enrollment by Program and Race/Ethnicity, SY22



Research also suggest that dual enrollment programming supports postsecondary outcomes

- **A recent study of Minnesota's class of 2015 found that:**
 - Dual enrollment students were more likely to earn a postsecondary degree or certificate compared to their non-dual enrollment peers (55% versus 50%).
 - The research also highlighted that economically disadvantaged students and students of color who participated in dual enrollment had higher completion rates for bachelor's, associate's, or certificate programs than those who did not.
 - Additionally, dual enrollment participants were more likely to continue in postsecondary education for at least four years.
- **Other research on specific dual enrollment program outcomes is largely qualitative and ad hoc.**
 - A 2021 study of administrators across seven rural and urban Minnesota districts found that they viewed concurrent enrollment as a valuable opportunity for students to experience college-level coursework, preparing them for postsecondary success after high school.
 - Minnesota State University, Mankato, reported that its concurrent enrollment alumni indicated that, after taking the courses, they "feel more confident in their ability to be successful in postsecondary coursework when they enroll as full-time students."

A hand holding a pen over a spiral notebook with faint mathematical formulas. The image is a monochromatic, teal-toned photograph. A hand is visible, holding a pen over an open spiral-bound notebook. The notebook's pages are filled with faint, handwritten mathematical formulas, including $3x^2 + 2x - 1$ and $2x^2 + 3x - 1$. The overall image has a soft, artistic feel with a teal color overlay.

Case Study Themes and Recommendations

Poll question:

Does your state provide full per-pupil allocations to K-12 districts (ADA/ADM) and community colleges (FTE) for dual enrollment students?

- A. **Both** - Yes, both K-12 and CCs receive their full per-pupil state allocations for DE students
- B. **K-12 only** - Yes to K-12, but not to CCs
- C. **CC only** - Yes to CCs, but not to K-12
- D. **Neither** - No, neither K12 nor CCs receive their full per-pupil state allocations for DE students
- E. **I'm not sure**

Please put your answers in the chat!

Part 1: Supportive Funding Policies

STUDENTS PAY NO TUITION: State Selection Criteria

The state requires that dual enrollment is tuition-free for all or certain **student groups**.

STATE ALLOCATIONS TO K-12 DISTRICTS:

The state allows **school districts** to receive full per-pupil state allocations for DE students.

- **California** - DE students who attend high school 240 min/day
- **Idaho** - All DE students
- **Minnesota** - DE students in Concurrent Enrollment & PSEO by Contract
- **Texas** - All DE students

STATE ALLOCATIONS TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

The state includes DE students in the **community college** full-time equivalent (FTE) calculation for state allocations.

- **California** - DE students count as "special admit" FTEs
- **Idaho** - DE students count in the same way as all other students
- **Texas** - DE students count if complete 15 credit hours

STATE REIMBURSEMENT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TUITION:

The state (partially) reimburses community colleges for DE **tuition costs**.

- **Idaho** - All DE students, at a flat rate of \$75/credit hour
- **Minnesota** - Traditional PSEO DE students, at a flat rate of \$241/credit hour
 - Funded by a significant reduction in state allocations to the K-12 district partner
- **Texas** - FAST-eligible DE students, at a flat rate of \$57/credit hour

Part 2: Supportive Policies Beyond Funding

STATE GOALS:

The state **sets goals specific to dual enrollment.**

- **California** - Included in state strategic plan for community colleges
- **Idaho** - Set by State Board of Education in collaboration with state's public IHEs
- **Texas** - Codified by state legislature

DATA REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

The state requires school districts and community colleges to **report dual enrollment program data to the state.**

- **California CCAP** - community colleges submit annual reports to the governor
- **Idaho AO** - school districts submit annual reports to the state legislature
- **Minnesota CE, PSEO by Contract** - DOE collects data and conducts yearly evaluations
- **Minnesota PSEO** - DOE tracks student enrollment and participation
- **Texas** - school districts report all college credits earned by high school students to DOE

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS:

The state requires school district and community college partners to **establish formal agreements.**

- **California CCAP** - program legislation includes clear, minimum criteria for MOUs
- **Minnesota CE, PSEO by Contract** - require formal K-12/IHE partnership for cost-sharing
- **Texas** - state rules require any dual credit partnership to establish an MOU

ALIGNED COURSEWORK:

The state requires **coursework to be aligned with a credential of value or workforce needs.**

- **California** - CTE DE courses must be aligned with regional and statewide labor markets
- **Texas** - incentive funding for DE course completion is contingent on program alignment with credential

Part 3: Challenges to Increasing Access



CHALLENGE 1: State data reporting requirements are limited.

All four states require data reporting but also face data limitations. These include the lack of linked data between K-12 and postsecondary systems, uneven reporting requirements across programs, limited data disaggregation, and limited public data access.



CHALLENGE 2: States allow colleges to impose additional eligibility criteria.

All four states allow community colleges to impose additional eligibility criteria (courses, GPAs, test scores) beyond the state's minimum DE eligibility requirements. Additional criteria can exclude students who could otherwise succeed in dual credit courses.



CHALLENGE 3: High school dual enrollment instructor capacity is limited.

All four case study states have encountered challenges in finding enough high school teachers who meet the IHE minimum qualifications to teach the state's dual enrollment courses. This tends to be particularly problematic in rural areas.



CHALLENGE 4: Students lack college advising.

All four states identified challenges with providing appropriate advising/navigational support to students. ASCA recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250-to-1; national average is a ratio of 385-to-1; all four case study states had higher ratios.

Policy Recommendations

- **Support student participation**

- Use state funds to cover student tuition and nontuition costs
- Invest in growing the instructor workforce to meet program demand
- Establish effective and accessible advising systems

- **Support district and IHE participation**

- Create funding structures that fairly support both district and IHE partners
- Establish statewide MOU requirements for dual enrollment partnerships

- **Ensure sustainable state funding**

- Direct state funds toward student tuition and nontuition costs, especially for underrepresented student subgroups
- Establish reasonable guardrails when investing in program growth

- **Monitor impact and inform continuous improvement**

- Require K-12 districts and IHEs to track and report disaggregated data
- Connect data across K-12 and HE systems while addressing privacy concerns

Before we start the Q&A, please respond to one of the following prompts:

1. Based on what you've learned today, what is **one specific action or commitment** you will make to support equitable dual enrollment funding and access in your state?
2. What is **one question you still have** about dual enrollment cost-sharing, or one challenge you foresee in implementing these strategies in your context?

Please put your answers in the chat!

Q&A:
Dual Enrollment
Funding and Access

Thank You



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A close-up, monochromatic photograph of a hand holding a pen, poised to write on a spiral-bound notebook. The notebook has a grid pattern. The text 'Thank You!' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font. The pen is a dark color with a silver clip and tip. The background is a textured surface, possibly a desk or table.

Thank You!