

Now's the Time:

April 2018

Early College and Dual-Enrollment Programs in the Higher Education Act



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Acknowledgments

*This report was prepared by the **Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy** (the Institute) for the Alliance for Excellent Education (All4Ed). Cover photo by **Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency** for **American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action**.*

*Support for this report was provided in part by **The James Irvine Foundation**. Opinions expressed are those of All4Ed and the Institute and do not necessarily represent the views of The James Irvine Foundation.*

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Background

Students who experience rigorous course work in their secondary schools demonstrate readiness for college-level work and complete postsecondary credentials at substantially higher rates than their peers experiencing less-rigorous preparatory course work.¹ White students and those from higher-income families, however, tend to have greater access to rigorous courses than students from lower-income backgrounds and students of color.²

Two efforts, early college high schools (ECHSs) and dual-enrollment programs, address this pressing equity concern by offering students the opportunity to pursue college-level credit-bearing course work while still in high school. Generally, ECHSs provide college credit-bearing course work in small enrollment settings intended to boost the level of preparation for historically underserved populations including students from low-income families and students of color. ECHSs concurrently enroll students in partner colleges and universities and stress college-going cultures.

Dual-enrollment courses may be offered in a variety of settings, including at traditional comprehensive high schools or on college campuses. Like ECHSs, dual-enrollment courses require high school-college partnerships to ensure credits earned by high school students apply toward postsecondary credentials. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), students enrolled in ECHSs must earn at least twelve college credit hours at no cost to them. ESSA does not establish a minimum credit requirement for students enrolled in dual-enrollment courses which, unlike ECHSs, may charge tuition and fees to students.

ESSA defines dual- or concurrent-enrollment programs as those

... offered by a partnership between at least one institution of higher education and at least one local educational agency through which a secondary school student who has not graduated from high school with a regular high school diploma is able to enroll in one or more postsecondary courses and earn postsecondary credit that—

(A) is transferable to the institutions of higher education in the partnership; and

(B) applies toward completion of a degree or recognized educational credential as described in the Higher Education Act of 1965.³

ECHSs and dual-enrollment programs can help students from all backgrounds develop a fuller sense of college-level expectations and how they differ from those of their high schools.⁴ Although some dual-enrollment programs set academic benchmarks students must meet to pursue college-level course work, ECHSs generally seek to serve students who do not fit traditional profiles of high academic performance.⁵

Opportunities for high school students to enroll in college courses are broadly available, but costs associated with those courses may lead to under enrollment among students from low- and middle-income families. According to U.S. Department of Education (ED) data, 53 percent of postsecondary institutions enrolled high school students in credit-bearing courses in School Year (SY) 2010–11, and more than 1.2 million students pursued college credits through dual-enrollment programs that year.⁶ Still, less than 10 percent of high school students take advantage of programs that offer college-credit courses.⁷



Photo by Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

This under enrollment comes at a time of concern for postsecondary enrollment especially for students from low-income families. National data shows that 69 percent of spring 2015 high school graduates enrolled in college the following fall.⁸ But according to an analysis of U.S. Census data by the American Council on Education, the proportion of students from low-income families who went directly to college declined from 55.9 percent to 45.5 percent between 2008 and 2013.⁹ Many students who stand to gain the most from credentials that open better-paying, sustainable career paths are not pursuing the preparation they need beyond a high school diploma.

Governmental and private actors have attempted to catalyze postsecondary education attainment, particularly among historically underrepresented students. For example, in 2002 the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation¹⁰ announced the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI), which supports development of more than 280 ECHSs across thirty-one states and the District of Columbia.¹¹ Much of the available research on ECHSs examines the design and student outcomes of ECHSI schools. This report synthesizes findings from this research base and other sources.

In addition, this report examines information on the ongoing Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment. Under this initiative, ED granted forty-four institutions nationwide—most of them community colleges—waivers to allow high-need high school students to access Federal Pell Grants to take dual-enrollment and early college courses at these institutions. Typically, Federal Pell Grants are awarded only to undergraduate students with a demonstrated financial need. Student postsecondary outcomes from both the ECHSI and Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment should inform potential legislative language in the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). The final section of this report includes guidance on dual-enrollment programs for the next iteration of HEA.

To provide a research-based perspective on dual-enrollment programs and ECHSs, this report addresses four key questions:

1. What does research currently say about the impact of ECHSs and dual-enrollment programs?
2. What does research show about student outcomes for African American and Latino students, students from low-income families, and rural students who participate in these programs?

3. What does research show about who is teaching ECHS and dual-enrollment courses?
4. Is there available research on allowing students to use Federal Pell Grants to participate in ECHS or dual-enrollment programs?

Key findings from this review include the following:

- Students who earn college credits in high school tend to have higher college grade point averages, persistence rates, and degree attainment compared to peers who do not. Results generally are positive for students who historically under enroll or do not persist to postsecondary program completion.
- Students from all backgrounds who attend an ECHS demonstrate positive outcomes for postsecondary enrollment and credential completion, but students of color, students from low-income families, and first-generation college students receive the strongest benefits. Results generally do not differ based on gender.
- Two- and four-year postsecondary institutions that offer dual-enrollment courses on high school campuses use college and high school instructors to teach these courses. Twenty-one percent of these courses are taught by college instructors only, 34 percent are taught by high school instructors only, and 45 percent are taught by a combination of high school and college instructors. The minimum qualifications for high school instructors who teach dual-enrollment courses are the same as those for faculty at the postsecondary partner institution in 87 percent of cases. However, ECHS teachers are nearly twice as likely to be in their first three years in the profession compared to teachers at traditional comprehensive high schools.
- ED's Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment offers an opportunity for school districts and postsecondary institutions to test innovative approaches to supporting students' success. However, it is unclear how ED will evaluate the experiment's effectiveness or identify measures used as benchmarks for success. Lessons learned and promising practices identified at experimental sites should inform legislative language in the next version of HEA.

Impact of Dual-Enrollment Programs and ECHSs

Approximately 15 percent of all community college students nationally are high schoolers enrolled through dual-enrollment programs; however, dual-enrollment participation rates vary widely across states. In states like Kentucky, New Hampshire, and North Dakota, 30 percent or more of community college students also are enrolled in high school. Meanwhile, in Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, and South Dakota, 5 percent or less of community college students are dual-enrollment students. Dual-enrollment students are more likely women (58 percent) than men (42 percent) and come from a variety of economic backgrounds. According to the Community College Research Center (CCRC), 37 percent of dually enrolled students come from low-income backgrounds, compared to 24 percent from middle-income backgrounds and 38 percent from upper-income backgrounds.¹²

Researchers generally find positive outcomes associated with students' participation in dual-enrollment programs. Based on enrollment data reviewed by CCRC researchers, "The vast majority of dual-enrollment students enrolled in college after high school. Among college-goers, more than half first attended a community college, although this varied by state."¹³ Among

students in a national sample who completed some dual-enrollment course work, 47 percent enrolled in community colleges and 41 percent enrolled at four-year institutions in the fall of 2015 after graduating from high school.¹⁴ This overall college enrollment rate of 88 percent exceeded the national average for immediate college enrollment by 19 percentage points.¹⁵ Dual-enrollment programs present one promising pathway by which many students complete college credits while in high school and then proceed to the postsecondary institution of their choice. Once they enroll in postsecondary education full time, former dual-enrollment students demonstrate higher college grade point averages, persistence rates, and degree attainment.¹⁶

Many ECHS models fuse secondary and postsecondary programs of study and focus particularly on historically underrepresented students—students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and students without a close family member who completed college. Early models such as the Middle College High School—founded in 1974 at New York City's LaGuardia Community College—stress a sense of belonging for students identified as potential high school dropouts to deepen their commitment to academics and present a vision for improved futures through education. Students concurrently enroll in high school and the community college, and enrollment is capped for Middle College High School at 500 students to

TABLE 1: ECHS Student Demographics from Selected Research Studies

	Edmunds et al. (2012)	Berger et al. (2014)	Edmunds et al. (2017)
Percentage of First-Generation College Students	41.0%	30.7%	40.8%
Percentage of Students from Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Groups	41.0%	52.4%	39.9%
Percentage of Students from Low-Income Families	51.3%	46.5%	51.3%

Sources: A. Berger et al., *Early College, Continued Success: Early College High School Initiative Impact Study* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2014); J. A. Edmunds et al., "Expanding the Start of the College Pipeline: Ninth-Grade Findings from an Experimental Study of the Impact of the Early College High School Model," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 5, no. 2 (2012): 136–159; J. A. Edmunds et al., "Smoothing the Transition to Post-Secondary Education: The Impact of the Early College Model," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 10, no. 2 (2017): 297–325.

Note: Edmunds et al. (2012) and Edmunds et al. (2017) include African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students in the category "underrepresented racial/ethnic groups." Berger et al. (2014) includes these student populations as well as Asian American/Pacific Islander, multi-racial students, and students from other racial/ethnic backgrounds who did not identify as white.

promote a close-knit community among students, faculty, and staff.¹⁷ Many of today's ECHSs reflect these key elements, and researchers consistently note the importance of strong community support structures within ECHSs as key elements of their culture.¹⁸

As table 1 on the previous page indicates, students participating in research-site ECHSs often come from low-income and racial/ethnic populations historically underrepresented in higher education. Approximately 30–40 percent of students in the research studies represent the first generation of their families to pursue college.

ECHSs profoundly can affect graduates' attainment of college credits prior to enrolling full time at postsecondary institutions and propel them toward attaining postsecondary degrees and certifications. However, high school graduation rates for students from ECHSs do not differ significantly from their comparison group peers.¹⁹ In their national ECHSI evaluation, researchers from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) find a statistically significant difference of 5 percentage points favoring an ECHS model, but results elsewhere show comparably mild effects.²⁰

A separate analysis conducted by researchers on ECHSs in North Carolina shows positive results that could be tied to the finding that early college students had 1.3 fewer days absent and were suspended at half the rate compared to their control group peers in traditional zoned high schools.²¹ Findings from North Carolina are particularly instructive since by 2010 more than sixty ECHSs operated statewide—the highest concentration of early colleges of any state.²² The most important effects of these models appear in the level of preparedness ECHS students attain while enrolled and in their likelihood of completing a postsecondary credential.

AIR researchers find early college students are significantly more likely to enroll at a postsecondary institution within three years of high school graduation than their comparison group peers. This differential is most profound in the first year out of high school, with nearly 62 percent of ECHSI graduates enrolling in college compared to 23.6 percent of traditional high school graduates of similar backgrounds. This gap narrows over subsequent years, but ECHSI graduates still enroll in postsecondary education at statistically significant higher rates by the third year after high school (78.6 percent for ECHSI graduates versus 71 percent for traditional high school graduates).²³

Results from North Carolina show large positive effects for ECHS students. There, by twelfth grade, ECHS students earned an average of 21.6 college credits—the equivalent of seven college courses—by the time they finished high school. Their comparison group peers, in contrast, earned an average of 2.8 credits—less than one full college course. Researchers there observed that ECHSs can be particularly important in opening college credit-bearing course work opportunities for students in rural communities.²⁴

Yet simply earning early credits and enrolling in college does not represent an ultimate successful outcome; the real goal is for students to complete a postsecondary degree. The following section examines postsecondary outcomes across student groups.

Outcomes for Historically Underserved Students

Positive effects on postsecondary credential completion accrue broadly to students completing ECHS programs of study, but effects are most profound for students from historically underserved populations. In AIR's evaluation of the ECHSI, "Among minority students, Early College students were nearly 10 times more likely to obtain a college degree than comparison students (29.4 percent vs. 3.0 percent). Among white students, Early College students were approximately 4 times more likely to obtain a college degree than comparison students (25.8 percent vs. 6.5 percent)."²⁵ Although researchers do not find that students from these populations are significantly more likely to graduate from high school than their peers in traditional comprehensive high schools, their higher chances of earning postsecondary credentials are striking.

Program effects can be especially profound for students from low-income backgrounds as well. According to AIR researchers, "low-income Early College students were approximately 8.5 times more likely than low-income comparison students to obtain a college degree (22.1 percent vs. 2.6 percent). In contrast, higher-income Early College students were approximately 4 times more likely to obtain a degree than higher-income comparison students (27.6 percent vs. 7.2 percent)."²⁶ Among ECHS students in North Carolina, "all subgroups showed positive impacts on college credit attainment, post-secondary enrollment, and post-secondary credential attainment."²⁷

TABLE 2: Percentage of Graduates Completing Postsecondary Credentials Within Four Years of High School Graduation from Selected Research Studies

	Berger et al. (2014)	Edmunds et al. (2017)
Percentage of ECHS Graduates	24.9%	30.1%
Percentage of Traditional High School Graduates	4.7%	4.2%

Sources: A. Berger et al., *Early College, Continued Success: Early College High School Initiative Impact Study* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2014); J. A. Edmunds et al., "Smoothing the Transition to Post-Secondary Education: The Impact of the Early College Model," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 10, no. 2 (2017): 297–325.

As noted in table 2 above, research to date shows that graduates of ECHSs are more likely to complete postsecondary credentials than their comparison group peers. In the AIR study, for example, nearly 25 percent of ECHS graduates completed a postsecondary credential compared to less than 5 percent of the comparison group.²⁸ Meanwhile, 30 percent of ECHS graduates in North Carolina completed a postsecondary credential, compared to 4 percent of graduates from traditional high schools.²⁹

Broadly, evidence demonstrates that participation in dual-enrollment programs likewise benefits students once they reach postsecondary education and expedites the time students need to attain a postsecondary credential. Nationally, "the 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2009 was 59 percent. That is, 59 percent had completed a bachelor's degree by 2015 at the same institution where they started in 2009," according to ED.³⁰ By comparison, dual-enrollment students who first enroll at a four-year institution after high school earn bachelor's degrees at a higher rate (60 percent) in just five years.³¹

Postsecondary credential completion rates varied widely by state and income background among more than 210,000 students nationally who participated in dual-enrollment programs while in high school in fall 2010. According to CCRC researchers, "Five years after high school, average rates of completion of any college credential ranged between 28 and 64 percent by state" for sampled students. Students from higher-income families completed postsecondary credentials at substantially higher rates in Florida, Illinois, Kansas, New York,

Ohio, and Tennessee. In Iowa, Minnesota, and Missouri, peers from higher- and lower-income families completed credentials at similar rates. However, completion rates for students from low-income families far exceeded those of their peers from higher-income families in Nebraska and North Dakota.³²

Although findings from CCRC's national analysis note important outcome disparities tied to income, researchers did not disaggregate findings by race or geographic distinctions such as rural versus urban Census tracts. Further work is needed to identify effects for student subpopulations beyond income-level distinctions.

Who Teaches ECHS and Dual-Enrollment Courses?

Among two- and four-year postsecondary institutions offering dual-enrollment courses on high school campuses, 21 percent of courses were taught by college instructors only, 34 percent by high school instructors only, and 45 percent by a combination of high school and college instructors in SY 2010–11, the most recent year for which data is available. Meanwhile, 87 percent of partner postsecondary institutions report that the high school educators who teach their dual-enrollment courses on high school campuses meet the minimum qualifications the institutions set for faculty to teach the same courses on their own campuses.

By contrast, just 5 percent of postsecondary partner institutions set different qualifications for dual-enrollment high school instructors compared to those required for their own faculty.

Qualifications vary or are not set by policy in remaining instances.³³ This data, although from seven years ago, provides a baseline understanding of qualifications generally set for high school instructors of dual-enrollment courses. The data does not, however, show potential effects on student outcomes of varying qualification standards.

Researchers in North Carolina found similar teacher turnover rates when comparing ECHSs and traditional comprehensive high schools; however, teachers in their first three years in the profession are far more likely to serve at ECHSs than traditional schools. At the traditional high schools sampled, 17.2 percent of teachers were in these early career years, compared to 30.2 percent of teachers at ECHSs.³⁴

Based on a review of available research, characteristics of and qualifications and professional development requirements for dual-enrollment and ECHS instructors remain underexamined. One review finds that Tennessee “require[s] early college programs to encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods and provide a flexible, customized program of instruction.” Meanwhile, postsecondary institutions and high schools partnering to establish an early college in North Carolina must detail in their state application the qualifications for teachers in their school. In Texas, ECHS instructors must be employed by partner postsecondary institutions or have comparable credentials. These instructors are supervised and evaluated by the standards of their home postsecondary institutions. Similarly, Indiana requires that institutions granting college credit set standards for course instructors.³⁵ Little, if any, identified empirical work tracks the potential effects on student outcomes of such credential requirements or state guidance.

Consistent, broad collection of data on teachers' institutional affiliations, years of experience, disciplinary fields, and other relevant characteristics would provide additional insight about people who teach ECHS students and how their backgrounds may contribute to student outcomes. More research is needed in this area to deepen the understanding of the landscape of dual-enrollment and ECHS teachers and identify implications for policy and practice improvements.

Federal Pell Grant Funding for Dual-Enrollment and ECHS Students

Historically, Federal Pell Grants have supported only students from low-income families during their undergraduate years and in some postbaccalaureate programs to promote affordability of postsecondary education.³⁶ The amount of Federal Pell Grant funds individual students receive varies based on several factors, including each student's specific financial need, but a student may not receive more than \$6,095 per academic year (the maximum Federal Pell Grant for the 2018–19 award year). Additionally, eligible students may not receive Federal Pell Grant funding for more than twelve semesters (six years).³⁷

In May 2016, however, ED designated forty-four postsecondary institutions as experimental sites granting them the ability to allow high school students to access Federal Pell Grants to participate in dual-enrollment courses.³⁸ ED established this national Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment to “test the effectiveness of statutory and regulatory flexibility for post-secondary institutions that participate in the Federal student aid programs.” Approximately 80 percent of the institutions in the experiment are community colleges. Eight locations feature early college models. According to ED, “Selected experimental sites are required to ensure Pell-eligible students are not responsible for any charges for postsecondary coursework [sic] after applying Pell Grants, public and institutional aid, and other sources of funding.”³⁹

This experiment set aside approximately \$20 million in available funding for high school students pursuing dual-enrollment course work. These funds were intended to supplement but not replace institutional, district, and other sources of available financial aid to eliminate enrollment costs for students and families. ED estimated 10,000 students would have the opportunity to access Federal Pell Grant funding through the experiment. According to national data, in SY 2010–11, 43 percent of schools and districts with academically focused dual-enrollment offerings reported they paid for some or all participating students' tuitions, 33 percent paid some or all of students' fees only, and 44 percent paid some or all book costs. Schools and districts reported similar levels of support for students in technical/vocational courses.⁴⁰

Profiles of Three Dual Enrollment Pell Experimental Sites

Experimental sites are located across the country in a variety of settings, including two- and four-year postsecondary institutions and early colleges. These sites are launching new dual-enrollment opportunities, expanding existing programs, or reducing dual-enrollment course work costs for students and families. Examples of these programs include the following:

Guilford Technical Community College (Jamestown, North Carolina)

Since SY 2016–17, Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) has partnered with sixteen high schools in its service area to serve approximately 100 students. Through the partnership, high school students can enroll in a college-transfer pathway that allows them to continue their education career beyond high school to obtain an associate's or bachelor's degree or a career and technical education to begin a certification or diploma program in a technical field or career area. The program has an individualized counseling model where students work with both a GTCC professional counselor and their high school counselor to ensure their success. To increase preparation for success in postsecondary education, an early alert system notifies the project director of any student who misses classes or does not maintain a 2.0 grade point average in the college course work. Additionally, the program director meets with each student and a parent prior to enrollment in the program to discuss the transferability of the courses the student will take. GTCC has articulation agreements with the university system to guarantee transferability of the classes dually enrolled students take as part of the college-transfer pathway.

Leeward Community College (Oahu, Hawaii)

In partnership with the Hawaii State Department of Education and three public schools (James Campbell High School, Walanae High School, and Waipahu High School), Leeward Community College established the “Early College” partnership. This program serves 500 students and plans to add an additional thirty students per year from the partnering high schools. With the expansion of the Early College partnership, students can choose and pursue formal programs of study and then access courses relevant to those degree programs.

SUNY Rockland Community College (Suffern, New York)

In partnership with the North Rockland and East Ramapo school districts, SUNY (State University of New York) Rockland Community College will expand its existing dual-enrollment program to provide opportunities for approximately 200 students per year who are academically prepared for but otherwise unable to afford dual-enrollment courses. Students can earn up to thirty-four college credits in various programs, including those in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and healthcare fields.

See the appendix on page 10 for a list of all forty-four institutions participating in the Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment. Full program descriptions are available at <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-expanding-college-access-through-dual-enrollment-pell-experiment>.

Although the Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment offers school districts and postsecondary institutions the opportunity to test innovative approaches to support students' success,⁴¹ ED has not announced detailed plans for evaluating the experiment's effectiveness or measures it will use as benchmarks for success.⁴²

A review of brief program descriptions linked to the award notification announcement also does not include details of research or evaluation planned for experimental sites. Lessons learned and promising practices identified at experimental sites should inform legislative language in the next version of HEA

that could open opportunities for more students to pursue dual-enrollment and ECHS programs as pathways to accelerate their journeys to complete postsecondary credentials.

Early College Models Participating in ED's Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment

- Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, New York)
- Gateway Community College (New Haven, Connecticut)
- Leeward Community College (Oahu, Hawaii)
- Naugatuck Valley Community College (Waterbury, Connecticut)
- Norwalk Community College (Norwalk, Connecticut)
- Quinebaug Valley Community College (Danielson, Connecticut)
- Ranger College (Ranger, Texas)
- Three Rivers Community College (Norwich, Connecticut)

Federal Policy Considerations

By 2020, two-thirds of jobs will require education and training beyond high school.⁴³ Yet despite increases in high school graduation rates, nearly one-third of first- and second-year students at four-year institutions and more than 40 percent of first-time students at two-year institutions report requiring remedial course work upon enrollment.⁴⁴ Students of color, first-generation college students, and students from low-income families tend to require remediation at higher rates than comparison student groups.⁴⁵

Moreover, while evidence shows that participation in dual-enrollment and ECHS programs can help students enroll in and complete postsecondary education, under enrollment in these programs remains an issue. Consequently, as debate on the reauthorization of HEA continues, policymakers should consider including a pilot program based on ED's Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment. Like the Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment, the pilot program would require participating Title IV-eligible

postsecondary institutions to partner with one or more local education agencies or public secondary schools to allow high school students to access Federal Pell Grants to participate in dual-enrollment courses. Specifically, the pilot program could include the following principles:

Student-Level Protections⁴⁶

- **Tuition coverage:** Participating postsecondary institutions would ensure that after all Federal Pell Grants; state, local, and institutional aid; or other resources have been applied to students' charges, students and their families are not responsible for any remaining institutional charges resulting from enrollment in the dual-enrollment pilot program. Under this model, individual students could use Federal Pell Grant funds to cover costs for courses, capped at the maximum annual amount of a Federal Pell Grant for a postsecondary student, currently \$6,095 for the 2018–19 award year. Students who do not exhaust their maximum grants could apply remaining funds, at no cost to districts or states, toward tuition and fees of any college credit-bearing courses they elect to pursue in the summer.
- **Postsecondary education credit:** Offer participating students the opportunity to earn the equivalent of at least twelve postsecondary education credit hours. This aligns with the definition of ECHS in ESSA, which requires a participating student to earn not fewer than twelve postsecondary education credit hours.
- **Support services:** Offer participating students support services, such as academic tutoring, guidance counseling, assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), high school-to-college transition support, and other similar services designed to increase preparation for, and success in, dual-enrollment programs.
- **Remaining Pell eligibility:** Students' participation in the pilot program would not count toward the twelve-semester limit for receiving Federal Pell Grants.

Postsecondary Institution Eligibility

- **Enrollment and completion:** Require postsecondary institutions to enroll dual-enrollment students as regular students and enroll them only in courses that apply toward completion of a postsecondary degree. Course work may, but is not required to, apply toward a high school diploma.

- **Research and evaluation:** Require postsecondary institutions receiving Federal Pell Grant funds to collect data on postsecondary credential completion rates of students who benefit from Federal Pell Grants to cover costs associated with dual-enrollment programs. Postsecondary institutions would disaggregate four- and six-year completion rate data to show outcomes for historically underserved populations, including those from economically disadvantaged households⁴⁷ (e.g., students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch in high school), students of color (without using “super-subgroup” classifications), English learners in high school, and other priority equity populations identified by states.
- **Accreditation:** Make eligibility to cover course costs with Federal Pell Grant funds contingent upon dual-enrollment programs’ accreditation by the relevant postsecondary accrediting authority and the state’s higher education licensing body and/or the National Alliance on Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships or a comparable national accrediting/certifying agency.⁴⁸
- **Supplement, not supplant:** Require postsecondary institutions to verify that Federal Pell Grants made available to participating students supplement, not supplant, state, local, and institutional sources of funding for the dual-enrollment program.
- **Participation of incarcerated juveniles, homeless students, and students in foster care:** Prioritize applications from postsecondary institutions that communicate participation eligibility to otherwise eligible incarcerated juveniles, homeless students, and students in foster care and that support these student populations to participate in the pilot program.

State Prioritization

- **Articulation agreements:** Prioritize applications from postsecondary institutions in states with strong articulation agreements across public institutions—including applied technology centers, community colleges, and four-year institutions—to ensure that students can apply college credits they earn in high school toward postsecondary degree completion and/or transfer. North Carolina’s Career & College Promise college-transfer pathway presents one promising model.⁴⁹ Priority also could be given to applicants from states that demonstrate a commitment to working with

private institutions to broaden the applicability of dual-enrollment credits for students who pursue their degrees through independent colleges and universities.

- **Workforce development:** Prioritize applications from postsecondary institutions in states and/or postsecondary systems that focus on expanding dual-enrollment programs tied to regional workforce development needs. States could demonstrate this commitment through existing or planned efforts to strengthen partnerships between local workforce development boards or economic development agencies, school districts, postsecondary institutions, and community stakeholders.

If policymakers include a Dual Enrollment Pell Grant pilot program in the next reauthorization of HEA, and that pilot program shows promising results, broader changes to the Federal Pell Grant program could be considered in the future. These broader changes could include a “pay-for-success” model for dual-enrollment students⁵⁰ or excusing dual-enrollment students from the current twelve-semester cap that applies to all Federal Pell Grant recipients. Nonetheless, guiding principles for a pilot program as outlined above would foreground equity considerations, stress the importance of student outcomes and program quality, and provide accountability mechanisms and guidance for states, districts, and postsecondary systems.

Conclusion

Dual-enrollment and ECHS programs show promise as ways to prepare more students for success in postsecondary education. Opportunities for students to earn college credits while enrolled in high school can alter academic trajectories in a significant and positive direction, particularly for students from historically underserved backgrounds. These efforts need continued attention from federal policymakers to improve access and affordability to open more pathways toward degree and credential attainment and expand opportunities for students to receive the education necessary for economic and personal success.

Appendix

Institutions Participating in Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment

Adams State University (Alamosa, Colorado)	Naugatuck Valley Community College (Waterbury, Connecticut)
Asnuntuck Community College (Enfield, Connecticut)	Niagara County Community College (Sanborn, New York)
Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, New York)	North Country Community College (Saranac Lake, New York)
Benedict College (Columbia, South Carolina)	Northeast State Community College (Blountville, Tennessee)
Bristol Community College (Fall River, Massachusetts)	Northeastern Technical College (Cheraw, South Carolina)
Carl Sandburg College (Galesburg, Illinois)	Norwalk Community College (Norwalk, Connecticut)
Cayuga Community College (Auburn, New York)	Owensboro Community and Technical College (Owensboro, Kentucky)
Central Virginia Community College (Lynchburg, Virginia)	Quinebaug Valley Community College (Danielson, Connecticut)
College of Southern Maryland (La Plata, Maryland)	Ranger College (Ranger, Texas)
Community College of Beaver County (Monaca, Pennsylvania)	Ranken Technical College (St. Louis, Missouri)
Cowley County Community College (Arkansas City, Kansas)	Southern New Hampshire University (Manchester, New Hampshire)
Gateway Community College (New Haven, Connecticut)	Southwest Tennessee Community College (Memphis, Tennessee)
George C. Wallace Community College (Hanceville, Alabama)	Southwestern Illinois College (Belleville, Illinois)
Germanna Community College (Fredericksburg, Virginia)	Sullivan County Community College (Loch Sheldrake, New York)
Glenville State College (Glenville, West Virginia)	SUNY Adirondack (Queensbury, New York)
Guilford Technical Community College (Jamestown, North Carolina)	SUNY Rockland Community College (Suffern, New York)
Hagerstown Community College (Hagerstown, Maryland)	Three Rivers Community College (Norwich, Connecticut)
Holyoke Community College (Holyoke, Massachusetts)	University of Arkansas Community College (Hope, Arkansas)
Illinois Central College (East Peoria, Illinois)	University of Nevada (Reno, Nevada)
Jackson State University (Jackson, Mississippi)	Urban College of Boston (Boston, Massachusetts)
Leeward Community College (Oahu, Hawaii)	William R. Moore College of Technology (Memphis, Tennessee)
Louisiana State University (Eunice, Louisiana)	
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (Perkinstown, Mississippi)	

Abstracts of experimental projects are available for download at

<https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-expanding-college-access-through-dual-enrollment-pell-experiment>.

Endnotes

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³⁶ Current language in HEA stipulates that to qualify for a Federal Pell Grant a student must "... be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a degree, certificate, or other program ... leading to a recognized educational credential at an institution of higher education that is an eligible institution ... **and not be enrolled in an elementary or secondary school**" [emphasis added].

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⁴⁶ Except for the "remaining Pell eligibility" protection, these student-level protections align with those included in ED's Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment.

⁴⁷ Federal Pell Grant funds target students from middle- and lower-income backgrounds, but eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch during the

high school years could serve as a proxy for students living in poverty to track their postsecondary outcomes.

⁴⁸ For example, Minnesota requires districts that receive funds to cover dual-enrollment programs to meet this requirement and represents a strong state model. J. Zinth, *State Approaches to Funding Dual Enrollment* (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 2015), <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/18/92/11892.pdf>.

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⁵⁰ A "pay-for-success" model was included in S. 840 and H.R. 4435, the Go to High School, Go to College Act of 2017.



Photo by Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

