



# COURSE ACCESS & AVAILABILITY

*States ensure that students are able to access college in high school courses, regardless of geography, with pathways that maximize opportunities for students to earn multiple credits, and facilitate students exploring academic and career areas of interest while ensuring that those courses count toward high school graduation requirements.*

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This is one of six components that states need to be mindful of to build policy for college in high school programs like dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and early college high school that includes equity and quality as a priority. To learn more, see the full report *Unlocking Potential: A State Policy Roadmap for Equity & Quality in College in High School Programs*.



**WHY THIS MATTERS** | *Ensuring equitable access includes making sure courses are available to students and that artificial barriers aren't in place. In designing college in high school programs, states should also recognize that there are multiple pathways into postsecondary education and the workforce.*



## Making Courses Accessible to All Students

Students with the potential to succeed in college courses should be able to access these programs regardless of where they live, the high school they are enrolled in, their ability to pay, or unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles. Students from underserved and underrepresented backgrounds, in particular, have the most to gain from thoughtfully designed college in high school programs.<sup>1</sup> However, they also have the biggest barriers to overcome, including barriers related to accessing the courses—both geographically and in terms of the eligibility requirements present in many states.<sup>2</sup> State policies targeted at ensuring college and high school opportunities are available to all students are essential for closing equity gaps and increasing access for underrepresented groups.



## Making Courses Accessible to All Students

### FOUNDATIONAL POLICY

#### ► Notify Students & Parents

The state requires high schools to notify students and families of college in high school opportunities in which they are eligible to participate, ideally beginning in middle school.

*Example — Colorado requires that each district, board of cooperative services, and charter schools annually notifies all students and parents of concurrent enrollment opportunities for qualified students in postsecondary courses, including academic courses and career and technical education courses.*

### ADVANCED POLICY

#### ► Provide Transportation Supports

The state requires that transportation supports be provided to students that need them to access courses.

#### ► Include Multiple Providers

The state's policy framework for college in high school program is inclusive of multiple providers—including public and private two year and four-year institutions of higher education, as well as both open and selective institutions—and delivery methods in order to address geographic barriers across urban and rural schools.

### EXCEPTIONAL POLICY

#### ► Require Program Availability

The state requires all high schools and eligible public postsecondary institutions to provide college in high school opportunities.

*Example — Virginia requires its local school boards to develop agreements with the local community colleges to offer college in high school opportunities, and all public institutions of higher education in the state must commit to offer college in high school opportunities for high school students.<sup>3</sup>*



## Student Eligibility

In addition to funding barriers, a state's determination for student eligibility for college in high school programs can indirectly undermine efforts to get more high school students, particularly from underserved populations and middle-to-lower achieving students, on a pathway towards postsecondary education. According to a recent report by the Education Commission of the States (ECS), "by and large, state-set eligibility requirements limit dual enrollment access to only the most academically advanced students, who are likely to pursue college after high school regardless."<sup>4</sup> If structured thoughtfully, statewide student eligibility policies can help ensure equitable treatment in college program access, including across high school and traditional-aged college students.



## Student Eligibility

### FOUNDATIONAL POLICY

#### ► Align Eligibility Criteria

The state ensures that eligibility criteria and course placement for high school students are not higher than the requirements for college students matriculating into credit bearing courses or programs. The state ensures that this eligibility criteria is easily accessible and easy to understand for students, families, teachers, and school administrators.

### ADVANCED POLICY

#### ► Provide Early Interventions

The state encourages and allows college in high school programs to identify students on the cusp of college readiness early, and provides those students with early interventions such as placement test preparation, transitional courses, developmental education, or co-requisite support to bring those students up to the state's college readiness requirements.

*Example — Minnesota policy allows institutions to leverage Postsecondary Enrollment Opportunities (PSEO) funding for developmental coursework if they enroll students full time into an early/middle college that provides a well-defined pathway to a degree or credential. Early/Middle colleges must be approved by the state and are required to offer students personalized student supports.<sup>5</sup>*

### EXCEPTIONAL POLICY

#### ► Offer Whole-School Models

The state includes a role in its system of college in high school programs for whole-school models that work with traditionally underrepresented students in higher education to improve their college readiness and then take college classes, such as early college high schools.

*Example — Texas has supported the growth of early college high schools in the state, which now number approximately 150 statewide. The schools provide high school students, particularly those who are at risk or underrepresented in higher education, the opportunity to earn up to 60 hours of college credit tuition-free with personalized supports, including academic and social support.<sup>6</sup>*

#### ► Use Multiple Measures of Entry

The state uses multiple measures for dual enrollment eligibility other than age, grade level, or a single standardized assessment, to potentially include projects, portfolios, and performance assessments.

*Example — The Ohio Innovative Programs for College Credit Plus provides a waiver (related to students needing to demonstrate meeting the eligibility criteria for taking college courses) for dual enrollment programs that offer programming that is unique and focused on students of color, first-generation families, low-income students.<sup>7</sup>*



## Pathways to Areas of Student Interest

College in high school opportunities should be available across academic and career and technical pathways so they meet the varying needs and interests of today's diverse student population. Students interested in career and technical fields can benefit from college in high school opportunities that lead towards in-demand pathways. State-wide policies and incentives can help direct more districts to broaden their college in high school offerings to align more broadly with multiple postsecondary pathways and industry demands.



## Pathways to Areas of Student Interest

### FOUNDATIONAL POLICY

#### ▶ Eliminate Credit Caps

The state does not cap the number of credits students may earn (per semester, per year, or during a student's high school career).

*Example — Colorado's Senate Bill 176 (not yet enacted) is intended to require districts to offer concurrent enrollment courses and would not allow schools to limit the number of courses students could take.<sup>8</sup> In Illinois, S.B. 2527 allows students to take an unlimited number of dual enrollment/dual credit courses and earn high school college credit.<sup>9</sup>*

#### ▶ Offer Broad Range of Courses

The state requires a broad range of general education and career/technical courses be offered as part of college in high school programs.

*Example — Kentucky's Dual Enrollment Credit Policy requires participating postsecondary institutions to collaborate with schools and districts to provide at least three CTE courses in a regionally appropriate career pathway.<sup>10</sup>*

### ADVANCED POLICY

#### ▶ Maximize Student Choice

The state enacts enabling policies that incentivize high schools to develop college in high school programs that allow students to pursue multiple courses with access to multiple postsecondary pathways, including pathways towards an associate degree, in-demand certificate or credential, and/or a credit transfer pathway towards a four-year university.

#### ▶ Include CTE Opportunities



The state ensures that high school career and technical education programs include opportunities for students to earn postsecondary CTE credits through collaboration with college in high school programs.

*Example — In Maine, "dual enrollment career and technical education program" means a learning pathway for a specific CTE programs that provides students in grades 11–12 with the opportunity to take postsecondary education courses and earn credits toward a high school diploma and an associate's degree.<sup>11</sup>*

### EXCEPTIONAL POLICY

#### ▶ Build into Other Workforce Development Programs



The state creates linkages between dual enrollment programs and work-based learning and apprenticeship programs that lead towards in-demand postsecondary credential pathways.

*Example — Colorado has recently launched CareerWise Colorado, a statewide youth apprenticeship system that combines high school classes, college classes, and on-the-job training over a three-year period. By the time they complete the paid program, students can earn a high school diploma, a year of college credit, and an industry credential.<sup>12</sup>*





## Graduation/Diploma Requirements

States should implement policies that provide students and families with assurances that participation in a college in high school program will count towards a student's high school graduation and diploma requirements. Such policies 1) promote greater transparency, 2) incentivize participation in college in high school programs, 3) and also ensure students across the state are receiving the same treatment and opportunities for participating in college in high school programs.



## Graduation/Diploma Requirements

### FOUNDATIONAL POLICY

#### ► Notify Students & Parents

The state requires programs to notify students and parents about whether completion of college in high school courses will count toward meeting high school graduation requirements prior to their enrollment.

### ADVANCED POLICY

#### ► Require Dual Crediting

The state requires that students who complete courses in a college in high school program receive credit toward high school graduation.

*Example — Florida students in grades 6–12 are afforded the opportunity to dual enroll in postsecondary coursework that may count toward both graduation from high school and earning postsecondary credit. Each high school is required to advise each student of courses through which a high school student can earn college credit, including AP, IB, AICE, dual enrollment, early admission, and courses that lead to industry certification, as well as the availability of course offerings through virtual instruction.<sup>13</sup>*

### EXCEPTIONAL POLICY

#### ► Provide Flexible Graduation Options

The state provides flexibility to students to fulfill high school graduation requirements through both time-based and competency-based options, including college in high school programs.

*Example — Georgia's Alternative Graduation Plan provides high school students with an alternate pathway to high school graduation if they have completed certain required high school courses and specific college credential programs.<sup>14</sup>*



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# REFERENCES

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