

Dual Enrollment Programs

BENEFITS



Dual enrollment programs, such as dual credit, concurrent enrollment, and early college high school provide significant benefits to students, colleges, employers, and society.

National research studies^{1,2} have consistently shown that these programs improve rates of college enrollment and degree completion, completing high school, and college credit accumulation. These proven programs are important mechanisms for talent development and meeting workforce needs through strategic partnerships and alignment between education and the workforce, and by providing more efficient transitions for students between sectors, saving them time and money as they earn degrees and industry credentials.

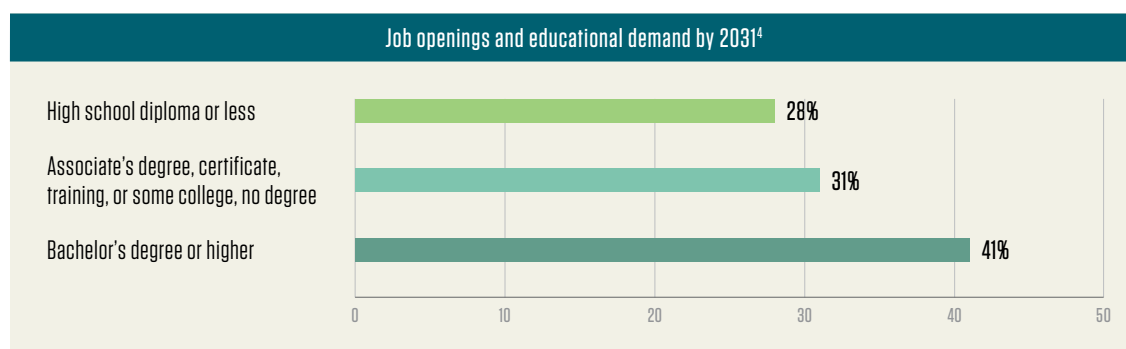
WHAT ARE DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS?

Dual enrollment programs — which are referred to by many terms in states across the country — promote partnerships between school districts and institutions of higher education that provide high school students with intentionally designed, rigorous, and authentic postsecondary experiences leading to officially transcribed and transferable college credit towards a recognized postsecondary degree or credential. See the graphic below for how these programs are distinct from credit by exam programs such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB).

	Dual Enrollment Programs	AP/IB
Authentic college courses offered through a direct partnership between a school district and college in which high school students will always receive transcribed postsecondary credits if they pass the class	✓	✗
Can be taught at high schools or on college campuses	✓	✗
Variety of coursework aligned to postsecondary programs at all levels, including employer-vetted CTE programs at technical and community colleges	✓	✗
Academic support for students	✓	✓
Wraparound supports for students, such as access to college campus resources (e.g., library) and tailored advising	✓	✗
Credit granted by paying for and passing an end-of-course exam	✗	✓

WHY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOULD TAKE COLLEGE COURSES

Over half of students from the lowest income brackets who start college leave without completing any postsecondary degree or credential within 8 years of high school graduation.³ This has a direct impact on their ability to obtain and maintain employment in high-demand and high-wage jobs. As an example, data from the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce shows that over 70% of job openings will require at least some postsecondary education or training by 2031 (see graphic below).⁴ Students who complete a postsecondary degree or credential are more likely to secure employment and to set themselves up for long-term economic success.



The college and career landscape has changed dramatically over the past several decades, making it imperative for schools and colleges to work together more closely to promote effective transitions for students between education and the workforce. Dual enrollment programs, particularly through CTE programs, help students to acclimate to college-level teaching and real-world expectations in a supported environment. These programs give students college skills, confidence, and an understanding of how to be a college student that makes it much more likely they will attend a good-fit college or university, thrive there, and complete a postsecondary degree or credential. This stands in stark contrast to the traditional school to college pipeline, which leaves far too many students ill-prepared for success in college.

THE BENEFITS OF DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS

There are widespread benefits of dual enrollment programs for all stakeholders. Benefits to the workforce, states, students, high schools, and colleges are as follows:

The Workforce

- Dual enrollment programs allow many students to earn a degree or credential by the time they finish high school, ready to enter the workforce. For example, the statewide College Credit Plus (CCP) program in Ohio provides students the opportunity to take dual enrollment courses at their high school, online, or at a college campus. In the 2020–21 academic year, over 76,000 CCP students participated in the program and earned over 650,000 credit hours. From the program's inception in 2015 to the end of academic year 2020–21, **almost 8,000 associate degrees and certificates were awarded to CCP students while in high school.**⁵

By-the-Numbers⁵

76,000+
Students participated in the Ohio College Credit Plus (CCP) program in 2020–21

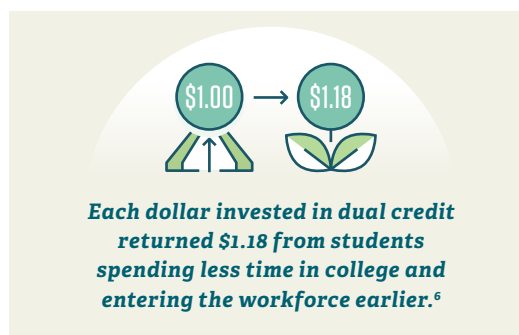
650,000+
Credit hours earned by Ohio CCP students in the program in 2020–21

~8,000
Associate degrees and certificates awarded to Ohio CCP students 2015–21

- Growing a skilled workforce with credentials and training to expand the jobs of the future ensures growing prosperity for employers as well as the country overall.
- The modern economy requires a trained workforce equipped with postsecondary degrees and credentials. Dual enrollment programs put students on a pathway towards securing industry-valued degrees and credentials that open the door to wealth-generating careers.

States

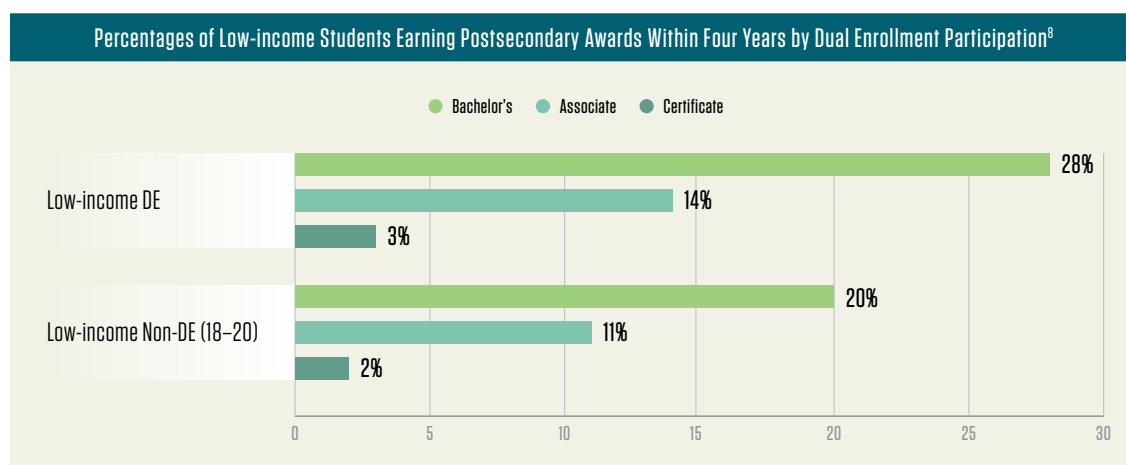
- Studies show that dual enrollment programs provide a high return on investment, providing significant social and fiscal benefits to states through savings and increased tax revenue. For example, a study⁶ conducted by American Institutes for Research (AIR) on the dual credit program in Texas found that “each dollar invested in dual credit returned \$1.18 from students spending less time in college and entering the workforce earlier.”



- State-level support for dual enrollment is steadily growing, which allows states to tailor dual enrollment programs to local, regional, and state contexts and labor market needs. In 2024, legislatures in 39 states introduced a collective total of 243 bills related to dual enrollment, and 39 new laws were created in 21 states.⁷
- Growing a skilled workforce through dual enrollment programs expands the tax base to support important public investments.
- Dual enrollment programs foster communication and collaboration between K–12 and higher education, creating more efficient transitions for students between the two education systems.
- With strong results, dual enrollment programs help states meet their postsecondary attainment goals and meet workforce demand and changing needs over time.

Students

Students who participate in dual enrollment programs are more likely to graduate high school, enroll in college, persist in college, and complete a college degree or credential.⁸



- Evidence indicates that all students, no matter their background or income level, can benefit from participating in dual enrollment programs. For example, a Community College Research Center (CCRC) study found that low-income students who began participating in dual enrollment in fall 2015 were more likely to earn a degree or credential within 4 years of high school graduation compared to their low-income peers who did not participate in dual enrollment (see graphic on previous page).⁹
- Dual enrollment programs may also allow students to complete degrees or credentials at lower costs than the traditional high school and college model as many programs are provided at low or no cost to students. As an example, Kentucky offers the dual credit scholarship to cover up to 12 hours of college credit for juniors and seniors.
- Dual enrollment programs offer a bridge between K–12 and higher education that gives students a strong head start to earning a postsecondary degree or credential and an opportunity to explore career options while still in a familiar environment.

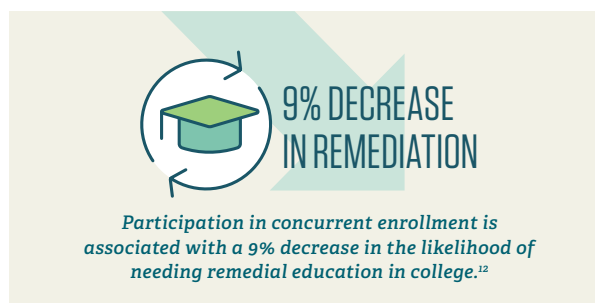
High Schools

- Dual enrollment programs allow high schools to offer a range of engaging advanced coursework opportunities to students to support them on their pathway towards a career. Many dual enrollment courses can be embedded in industry-vetted CTE programs of study. For example, Tennessee high schools embed dual enrollment courses offered through partnerships with technical, community, or 4-year colleges in CTE programs of study. See the example to the right¹⁰ for how Tennessee high schools maximize CTE course options for students through dual enrollment coursework.
- Data also indicates that dual enrollment programs improve high school graduation rates, an important metric in school accountability systems.¹¹

Industrial Maintenance Technology Program of Study in Tennessee ¹⁰	
Year 1 ▼	
	<i>Principles of Manufacturing</i>
Year 2 ▼	
	<i>Introduction to Industrial Maintenance</i>
Year 3 ▼	
	OPTIONS – <input type="radio"/> <i>Advanced Industrial Maintenance</i> <input type="radio"/> <i>Dual Enrollment: Industrial Maintenance Technology I</i> <input type="radio"/> <i>Dual Enrollment: Industrial Maintenance Technology II</i>
Year 4 ▼	
	OPTIONS – <input type="radio"/> <i>Manufacturing Practicum</i> <input type="radio"/> <i>Dual Enrollment: Industrial Maintenance Technology III</i> <input type="radio"/> <i>Dual Enrollment: Industrial Maintenance Technology IV</i> <input type="radio"/> <i>Dual Enrollment: Industrial Maintenance Technology V</i> <input type="radio"/> <i>Dual Enrollment: Industrial Maintenance Technology VI</i>

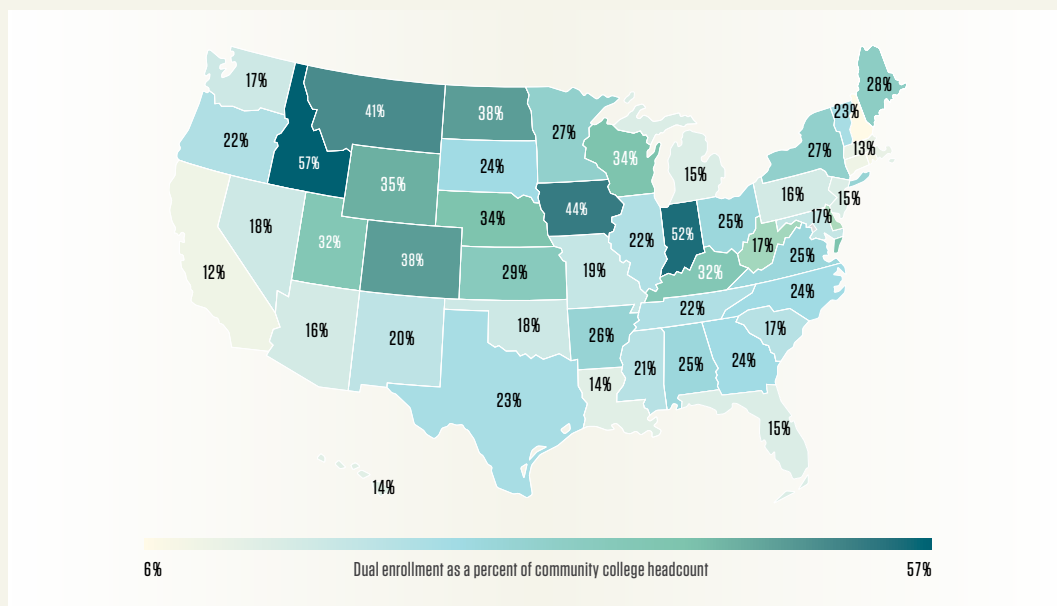
Colleges

- Students are more prepared to succeed in college and more likely to graduate on time or early, and less likely to require remediation. As an example, a Colorado Department of Higher Education study¹² found that “participation in concurrent enrollment is associated with a 9% decrease in the likelihood of needing remedial education in college.”



- Dual enrollment students make up a significant percentage of college enrollments. In some states, high school students account for over 50% of community college enrollment (see the map below).¹³
- Recruiting high school students through dual enrollment coursework not only helps improve college access and completion but also improves the college's enrollment numbers. CCRC's study on students who began taking dual enrollment coursework in fall 2015 found that 38% of community college dual enrollees and 31% of four-year-institution dual enrollees reenrolled for at least one term at the same institution within the first year after high school.¹⁴

Percentage of Community College Students in High School in 2022–23¹⁴



Source: Community College Research Center, 2024

ENDNOTES

- 1 Institute of Education Sciences. *WWC Intervention Report: Dual Enrollment* (February 28, 2017), https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_dual_enrollment_022817.pdf.
- 2 Community College Research Center. *Postsecondary Outcomes for Dual Enrollment Students: National and State Data* (2021), <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/postsecondary-outcomes-dual-enrollment-national-state.html>.
- 3 National Center for Education Statistics. *Dual Enrollment: Participation and Outcomes* (2024), <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2024/2024022.pdf>.
- 4 Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce. *Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2031* (2024), <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections2031-National-Report.pdf>.
- 5 Ohio Auditor of State. *College Credit Plus Performance Audit Summary* (2022), https://ohioauditor.gov/performance/CCP_2022/CCP_summary.pdf.
- 6 American Institutes for Research. *Dual Credit Education Programs in Texas: Phase II* (July 2018), <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Dual-Credit-Education-Programs-in-Texas-Phase-II-July-2018.pdf>.
- 7 College in High School Alliance, *2024 Year in Review* (2024), <https://collegeinhighschool.org/resources/2024-year-in-review/>.
- 8 Institute of Education Sciences, *WWC Intervention Report: Dual Enrollment*.
- 9 Community College Research Center, *Postsecondary Outcomes for Dual Enrollment Students*.
- 10 Tennessee Department of Education. *Course and Program of Study Guide: TISA 2024-25 School Year* (July 2024), https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/cte/Course_and_Program_of_Study_Guide_TISA_2024-25_School_Year_July_2024.pdf.
- 11 Institute of Education Sciences, *WWC Intervention Report: Dual Enrollment*.
- 12 Colorado Department of Higher Education. *The Effects of Concurrent Enrollment on Postsecondary Outcomes* (March 27, 2014), https://higher.ed.colorado.gov/sites/highered/files/2020-03/concurrentenrollmenteffectsanalysis_2014.pdf.
- 13 Community College Research Center. *How Many Students Are Taking Dual Enrollment Courses in High School?* (2024), <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/how-many-students-are-taking-dual-enrollment-courses-in-high-school-new-national-state-and-college-level-data.html>.
- 14 Community College Research Center, *Postsecondary Outcomes for Dual Enrollment Students*.