

Are Dual Credit Enrollment Programs Serving Underrepresented Students as Intended?

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Dual Credit Enrollment (DCE) and concurrent enrollment programs consist of a partnership between a high school and a post-secondary institution (PSI) whereby high school students earn college credit through a variety of means. These programs have been in existence for decades, however, the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) contained a directive, and funding, to increase post-secondary education access—particularly through dual and concurrent enrollment programs ("ESSA," 2015)—which has generated rapid DCE growth. Many extol the advantages of DCE as a “well-established practice to prepare students for college that is supported by research and stakeholders in education” (Grubb, Scott, & Good, 2017, p. 17); however, other scholars question if underrepresented high school students are getting the same opportunities to excel through use of DCE (Kremer, 2020). Because of this rapid growth, consistency in implementation, oversight, and assessment varies a great deal among States, districts and schools. In this research, I will use two channels to gain information, a student survey to a cross section of Kansas High School students will provide information from the student perspective, including their awareness and participation levels with dual credit programs, reasons for taking dual credit, and what resources they are utilizing, which will be graphed with their demographic data: grade, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch, and first generation status. Additionally, through a detailed review of offerings from the largest local community college provider of dual credit instruction, I will be able to report on the availability of dual credit courses in our local area, in comparison to each schools demographic populations. These two channels of information will allow me to review if the intended goals of dual credit programs are in alignment with practice, highlight areas of weakness or inconsistency, determine if goals are being met locally, and offer concepts for further discussion.