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Dual Enrollment for Accelerated English Language Development

A Case Study of the ALL Curriculum and Intersegmental Partnership

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Abstract/Introduction

Mountain Empire High School replaced its prior English language development courses with Cuyamaca College’s Accelerated Language Learning (ALL) curriculum and course sequence, allowing students to earn both high school and college credit simultaneously. Instruction is delivered by high school teachers who are qualified as adjunct college faculty and collaborate with Cuyamaca’s English as a Second Language team. This dual enrollment partnership has provided accelerated student pathways, academically engaging instruction, and aligned postsecondary transitions. This report describes the program in detail and includes appendices with all curricular materials and the College and Career Access Pathways partnership agreement between Cuyamaca College and Mountain Empire Unified School District.

Context

English Learners in California

In recent years, California’s English learner (EL) student population has made up roughly 20% of the state’s total K-12 enrollment, with over one million ELs in the 2023-24 school year.¹ Upon a student’s first enrollment in school, families must complete a Home Language Survey to determine if the student should be assessed for English language proficiency. If a language other than English is spoken at home, students are administered the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) to determine if they are classified as an English Learner and at what level.



The majority of students classified as ELs in California can functionally speak and read in English but need additional support in developing advanced academic language skills. A foundational study by the University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute found that “even in two California districts that are considered the most successful in teaching English ... to limited English proficient students, oral proficiency takes 3 to 5 years to develop, and academic English proficiency can take 4 to 7 years.”²

1 California Department of Education, Data Reporting Office. (2024). 2023-24 enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status (ELAS) and grade, State Report (DataQuest). Retrieved June 6, 2024.

2 Hakuta, K., Butler, Y., Witt, D. (2001). *How Long Does It Take English Learners to Attain Proficiency?* University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute. [https://web.stanford.edu/~hakuta/Publications/\(2000\)%20-%20HOW%20LONG%20DOES%20IT%20TAKE%20ENGLISH%20LEARNERS%20TO%20ATTAIN%20PR.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/~hakuta/Publications/(2000)%20-%20HOW%20LONG%20DOES%20IT%20TAKE%20ENGLISH%20LEARNERS%20TO%20ATTAIN%20PR.pdf).

Not all English learners advance as quickly as the research suggests is possible. In 2023-24, there were 122,437 “Long Term English Learners” in California high schools who had received support services for six or more years but had not yet reclassified as proficient in academic English.³

Many traditional educational settings treat advanced academic English proficiency as a prerequisite for academically challenging content and, with limited exposure to college preparatory content, English learners often fall through the gap between the state’s disconnected high school and college systems. The vast majority of English learners do not meet the California Department of Education’s definition of college and career readiness upon high school graduation, and fewer than half enroll in college in the following year.⁴

Some of this may be due to challenges with finding high-quality curriculum for English learner teachers and students. The Council of the Great City Schools, a national research and advocacy coalition comprising 78 urban school districts, stated in a 2017 paper that many K-12 school districts “report significant difficulty finding high-quality, academically challenging, grade-level instructional materials that are written for ELs at varying levels of English proficiency.”⁵ In a 2024 national survey conducted by RAND, less than one-third of teachers serving ELs described their curriculum materials as adequate for helping ELs master state academic standards for language development and academic content.

There is little alignment in California between “English Language Development” (ELD) classes that K-12 schools provide for EL students and the “English as a Second Language” (ESL) course sequences that community colleges provide to multilingual adults. Though ostensibly working towards the same goals with students of similar proficiency levels, the two systems of English language development have different professional communities, administer different standardized assessments, and almost always utilize different curricula. Furthering the difference, K-12 ELD is a mandated support embedded in the school day and state accountability system, while college ESL is an optional curricular pathway.

Dual Enrollment and Its Benefits

The term “dual enrollment” refers to high school students taking college courses for transcribed college credit. In some cases, these courses simultaneously confer credits that meet high school graduation requirements, commonly referred to as “dual credit.”

3 California Department of Education, Data Reporting Office. (2024). 2023–24 “At-Risk” and Long-Term English Learners (LTEL) by Grade, Statewide Report (DataQuest). Retrieved June 6, 2024.

4 Buenrostro, M. (2024). *The State of English Learners in California Public Schools*. Californians Together. <https://californianstogether.org/state-of-english-learners/>.

5 Uro, G., Lai, D., Corcoran, A. (2017). *Re-envisioning English Language Arts and English Language Development for English Language Learners*. Council of the Great City Schools. <https://www.cgcs.org/fs/resource-manager/view/bd065ce8-8715-406c-af0c-c079ec71d8ee>.

National research has demonstrated that dual enrollment improves student success in high school and college, including higher rates of high school graduation and college enrollment and completion.⁶ These positive effects are understood to be driven by the headstart in accumulating college credits, the experience with academically challenging curriculum, and the building of a strong college-going identity. The benefits extend to low-income students, students of color, and students with lower GPAs.⁷

The Wheelhouse Center found that while dual enrollment participation has grown for ELs in recent years, it started at a lower point and increased at a slower rate compared to other underserved student populations. From 2015 to 2019, the EL participation rate in dual enrollment rose from 7% to 10% of all high school ELs, while the overall student participation rate increased from 11% to 18% over the same period.⁸ Other studied subgroups – Foster Youth, Homeless Youth, and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students – participated in dual enrollment at higher rates than ELs, and their participation rates grew faster.

However, promising strategies for increasing EL participation in dual enrollment have also surfaced. The JFF report, *Designing Dual Enrollment to Reach English Learners*, found several exceptional programs and schools serving high proportions of ELs in dual enrollment. These programs tended to share several characteristics, including:⁹

- A focus on acceleration rather than remediation.
- A combination of high-level course access with structured supports.
- Making participation in dual enrollment a default expectation for all students.

Assembly Bill 705 and ESL Acceleration

California Assembly Bill 705 (AB 705), which took effect in 2018, required community colleges to maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete transfer-level classes in English and math within a one-year timeframe (“transfer-level classes” are accepted for credit by four-year, baccalaureate degree-granting institutions). At the core of AB 705’s mandate, changes in placement rules shifted many students from remedial and lower-level coursework into more rigorous, transfer-level classes. In the years since AB 705’s passage, system-wide acceleration efforts have been successful in increasing the number and percentage of students completing math and English milestones for transfer and a college degree.¹⁰

6 What Works Clearinghouse. (2017). *Intervention Report: Dual Enrollment Programs*. Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_dual_enrollment_022817.pdf.

7 Karp, M. (2007). *The Postsecondary Achievement of Participants in Dual Enrollment: An Analysis of Student Outcomes in Two States*. National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, University of Minnesota. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED498661.pdf>.

8 Reed, S., Kurlaender, M., & Li, A., (2020). *A Rising Tide: Dual Enrollment is Growing Among California High School Students*. Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research. https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/ig_wheelhousedec2020.pdf.

9 Hooker, S., Finn, S., Niño, D. (2020). *Designing Dual Enrollment to Reach English Learners*. JFF. https://www.jff.org/EL_Dual_Enrollment_Brief-FINAL_01052021.

10 *Equitable Placement, Support, and Completion*. California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/equitable-placement>.

AB 705 mandates acceleration for ESL students,¹¹ requiring community colleges to:

- Maximize the probability that students who enroll in credit ESL courses complete transfer-level English within three years.
- Place students in courses using a combination of high school records and student self-placement rather than proficiency examination.
- Give U.S. high school graduates direct access to transfer-level English or a transfer-level English ESL equivalent course.

AB 705 also recognizes ESL students as foreign-language learners seeking proficiency in an additional language, allowing for the development of transfer-level ESL courses for general education credit, including ESL equivalents for composition.

Research has found these requirements have made a substantial difference on campus. Since AB 705 went into effect, a study by PPIC reported that colleges have shortened their ESL sequences and are more likely to include an ESL version of a transfer-level English course.¹² The RP Group found that colleges that streamlined ESL sequences and provided transfer-level ESL courses have higher academic pathway completion rates than other colleges.¹³ With the increased postsecondary focus on accelerated credit accumulation and transfer-level ESL coursework, dual enrollment offers a compelling opportunity for high school English learner students to build their college transcript and identity early.

The Dual Enrollment Partnership

Mountain Empire Unified School District (MEUSD) serves several rural communities in the easternmost San Diego County area, including Guatay, Potrero, Descanso, Pine Valley, Campo, Boulevard, Jacumba, and various areas within the Kumeyaay Nation. The school district has four elementary schools, one junior high, and one high school, Mountain Empire High School. Depending on the year, Mountain Empire High School serves between 400 and 500 students, many of whom are classified as ELs. Between 2020 and 2024, the percentage of ELs at the school ranged from 17 to 25%.



11 While “English learner” is the official term in K-12 systems, English as a Second Language (ESL) is the term used in postsecondary to describe classes and students focused on developing English language proficiency.

12 Rodriguez, O., Hill, L., and Payares-Montoya, D. (2022). *English as a Second Language at California’s Community Colleges: An Early Examination of AB 705 Reforms*. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/english-as-a-second-language-at-californias-community-colleges/>.

13 Hayward, C. (2020). *Maximizing English Language Learners’ Completion of Transferable English Composition in Community College*. The RP Group. https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/MultipleMeasures/AB705_Workshops/Maximizing-English-Language-Learners-Completion_September2020.pdf.

Cuyamaca College is about a 37-mile drive from the high school and serves the eastern part of San Diego County. The college serves close to 9,000 students. Within this rural community, the drive into “town” (a.k.a. San Diego city areas) from these schools ranges from 30 to 90 minutes. As of 2025, there were approximately 400 students in the ESL program with about 200 of those students being degree-seeking.¹⁴

In 2018-19, MEUSD and Cuyamaca College began a dual enrollment partnership focused on EL students. Through this partnership, all students taking ESL classes at Mountain Empire High School are automatically enrolled and earn credit at both the high school and Cuyamaca College. Together, the high school and college partners provide students with learning supports, accelerated pathways, academically challenging instruction, and aligned postsecondary transitions.

Formation

The dual enrollment partnership for English Learners traces its roots to direct outreach by Cuyamaca College faculty to MEUSD staff in the 2017-18 academic year. Cuyamaca faculty members, Manuel Mancillas Gomez and Guillermo Colls, excited about their students’ success with their internally developed ESL curriculum, got in touch with then Mountain Empire High School Principal Patrick Keeley.

At the time, Keeley and MEUSD did not feel their EL program was working well and were excited to hear the Cuyamaca faculty describe their use of authentic high-level texts and academically challenging, student-centered work. Seeing the potential, Keeley worked with his school’s EL department to tailor the collegiate academic program for the high school setting.

In the end, MEUSD replaced their previous ELD course sequence with a higher quality, accelerated pathway that provides course credit in both high school and college – the Cuyamaca College Accelerated Language Learning (ALL) ESL Program.

Implementation Model

This intersegmental collaboration is made possible through embedded supports for students, from the enrollment process to the scheduling of courses. This scaffolding eases the administrative burdens of the dual enrollment experience for students and provides authentic college preparatory training.

All students designated as English learners at Mountain Empire High School are asked to submit a one-time paper permission slip upon enrollment, providing parental consent and the recommendation of the principal to participate in college courses. These permissions are required to participate in a College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) dual enrollment program in California.¹⁵

All students in ELD classes at Mountain Empire High School are enrolled and earn credit at both Mountain Empire High School and Cuyamaca College. Students register online for their Cuyamaca College course from their high school ELD classroom, receiving support from instructors as needed.

14 Personal email from Dean and Department Chair of the College

15 In California, College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) agreements, authorized by Assembly Bill 288 (2015), allow high schools and community colleges to partner in offering dual enrollment courses that expand access to college-level instruction and support students’ preparation for postsecondary education and careers.

Instruction for dual enrollment students is delivered at Mountain Empire High School by high school ELD teachers who meet the minimum qualifications for ESL faculty set by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. These Mountain Empire instructors receive training directly from Cuyamaca ESL faculty, which, along with the use of the same instructional materials, is designed to ensure a consistent level of rigor in the classroom. MEUSD continues to pay standard salary and benefits to their dual enrollment instructors. Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District (GCCCCD) then reimburses MEUSD the cost of the salary and mandated benefits for the course up to the average amount a GCCCCD instructor would be paid for the same course. This model represents one of several payment structures utilized across the state.

Course Pathway and Sequence

The following chart provides an overview of the Cuyamaca College ELD sequence at Mountain Empire High School. While Cuyamaca College occasionally offers companion support courses tied to certain levels on the college campus, this material is incorporated into the core sequence by default for dual enrollment classes.

Course Title	ESL 45	ESL 50	ESL 1 A ESL 1 B	ESL 2	ESL 122
English Level	Novice ELPAC 1	Basic ELPAC 1	Intermediate ELPAC 2	Advanced ELPAC 3	Advanced ELPAC 3 or 4
Course Description	Foundations of oral and written language for immigrant students new to English, with a focus on “survival English” and high frequency words.	Simple oral language and comprehension of basic passages. Writing paragraphs with scaffolded support and attention to grammar.	Increased complexity of oral language with vocabulary development. Grammatically complex readings and development of writing conventions.	Advanced oral language, and structural analysis of literary and academic texts. Advanced essays with arguments, research, and citations.	Advanced dialogue, presentations, and close reading. Expository, analytical, and argumentative writing drawing from multiple sources.
A-G Course	Not A-G	A-G course	A-G course	A-G course	A-G course
College Credits	6 college units, not transferable	6 college units, not transferable	6 college units, transferable as elective	6 college units, transferable as English	6 college units, transferable as English, counts as college composition

Students enter the course sequence at different levels depending on their English proficiency. Levels range from “newcomer,” for students new to the English language, to “advanced collegiate,” which is equivalent in rigor and credit to a college freshman composition class. Course placement is based primarily on a student’s ELPAC score but takes into account teacher observations of student familiarity and comfort with the English language.

Across California, it is typical for students to spend multiple semesters at the same level, as English learners regularly take up to seven years to reclassify as fluent in academic English. Accounting for this possibility, each level of the sequence has multiple novels and accompanying texts to rotate content for learners. It is common for students at the pivotal intermediate stage of ESL 1 to take the “A” class one semester and the “B” class the next, taking additional time to master the intermediate standards with new literature and oral activities.

Each course in the sequence grants six units of credit at Cuyamaca College. The intermediate course (ESL 1) is accepted as elective credit for transfer by the CSU/UC systems, while the two advanced courses (ESL 2 and ESL 122) are accepted as English course credit by the CSU/UC systems. The ESL 122 course satisfies the college freshman English composition requirement.

All but the first course in the sequence meet CSU/UC A-G transcript requirements for high school coursework, allowing them to serve double duty as both “college preparatory courses” and actual college courses for credit.



Ongoing Collaboration and Practice

New and updated curriculum documents are shared electronically by Cuyamaca faculty with Mountain Empire instructors before the start of each semester. Regular email communication facilitates discussion on questions of curriculum implementation in the high school context.

The three teachers who serve as qualified dual enrollment instructors for ELD/ESL classes also teach English as a core subject at Mountain Empire High School. Sharing the same students across years and courses allows instructors to collaborate in continuously tailoring their approaches, critical for classes with students at different levels of English proficiency and of different ages.

Each spring, Mountain Empire ALL dual enrollment students visit Cuyamaca College to tour the campus and participate in class with their adult peers and Cuyamaca faculty. The day serves to acclimate students to the college, build their identity and confidence as college students, and celebrate their accelerated learning. The Mountain Empire community considers this one of the high points of the year.

The Accelerated Language Learning (ALL) Curriculum

Development

Initial development of the ALL curriculum for the college was begun by Cuyamaca College Professor Guillermo Colls while on sabbatical, seeking to create materials that could better challenge and support students in attaining advanced proficiency in writing. In subsequent years, Cuyamaca ESL faculty collaborated to build out more rigorous instructional materials for their entire ESL course sequence to accelerate student progress and better drive engagement.

Faculty development work was initially enabled by grants to support innovative curriculum and instruction. After the passage of AB 705, which encouraged the elimination of remedial courses and a focus on transfer-level achievement, faculty used additional grant funding to compress and accelerate the ESL course sequence. Faculty describe their professional learning at California Acceleration Project (CAP) conferences as critical to their ability to both develop new curriculum and compress their course sequence.



Core Principles

The ALL curriculum is undergirded by principles from CAP. This faculty-led network supports California’s 116 community colleges to produce better and more equitable English and math outcomes. CAP offers five core elements to accelerate curricula and pedagogy:¹⁶

- Backward design from college-level courses.
- Relevant, thinking-oriented curriculum.
- Just-in-time remediation.
- Low-stakes, collaborative practice.
- Intentional support for students’ affective needs.

Incorporating these principles, the ALL curriculum challenges students intentionally as capable language learners with rich background knowledge and life experiences. It centers on engaging high-quality authentic texts and “adds the English” for student access and learning. Engagement and intellectual stimulation provided by advanced texts are seen by faculty to drive increased student learning outcomes.

Low-stakes collaborative practice is provided consistently, with a student-centered emphasis on participation, ownership, and production of both written and oral language. A class is considered successful when students speak more than the teacher.

For instructors, adaptability and flexibility are key to the learning experience. One faculty member describes the curriculum like a broad recipe; an outline of suggestions in which ingredients are adapted based on what you have and what you want to create. Each teacher tailors lessons and content to their students, incorporating more conversation activities at the newcomer level, rigorous grammar and socio-emotional learning at the beginning level, or preparing students for college at the merging level through more essay preparation and editing drafts, similar to the high school structure. Teachers frequently base explicit grammatical instruction on the questions and challenges that authentically arise as students grapple with texts, in addition to teaching students technological literacy.

Components and Structure

Instructional Materials

Each class has a set of instructional materials provided to the high school teachers by email from the community college ESL department. These instructional materials contain different oral and written activities tied to texts, including individual work, pair work, and group work. Teachers often adapt individual materials to fit their students’ levels, as students’ ages range from 14 to 18. The structure of the activities can be used with any text or book.

16 Hern, K. and Snell, M. (2013). *Toward a Vision of Accelerated Curriculum & Pedagogy: High Challenge, High Support Classrooms for Underprepared Students*. LearningWorks, California Acceleration Project, <https://accelerationproject.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/accelerating-curriculum.pdf>.

The faculty's goal is to have four sets of instructional materials for each level of language provided in the program. There are currently twenty sets of instructional materials in total, all of which can be accessed in Appendix B.

Texts

Each set of instructional materials is paired with an English text. In this dual enrollment partnership, Mountain Empire High School buys the textbooks.¹⁷ Texts range from novels like Fahrenheit 451 to contemporary behavioral psychology. Because the school site reuses the texts, students annotate with sticky notes or in notebooks.

Essays

Essay prompts are provided in the instructional materials by the college ESL department. Teachers at the high school crosswalk the grading rubrics of the essays with high school English standards. Essays are often revised many times by students before a final version is submitted.

Supplementary Materials

Teachers at the high school incorporate technology resources, food-based activities, cultural context, and school-specific culture into the courses to make them well-rounded and meet the students' needs.

Benefits for Students

As is often the case for English learners and dual enrollment students, outcomes data could not be easily compared across years for participants in the Mountain Empire-Cuyamaca partnership due to changing state assessments (CELDT to ELPAC), pandemic interruptions (two years of distance learning and a halted state accountability system), and disconnected K-12 and postsecondary systems (a lack of standardized tracking of outcomes from high school to college). However, while it cannot be attributed directly to program implementation, it is worth noting that ELs at Mountain Empire High School scored between two to eight percentage points above the state average on the California School Dashboard's English Learner Progress Indicator from 2022 to 2024.

Unavailable data aside, faculty and teachers report that implementing the accelerated dual enrollment ESL program has had a number of benefits.

Improved Language Learning

Mountain Empire teachers described the previous ELD course sequence and curriculum as unchallenging and slow; they now see students rising to the increased rigor of the ALL curriculum with engagement and success. Teachers observe that students are progressing more quickly, using more complex language, and engaging in more academic ways of thinking.

Student success with such advanced materials surprised even their teachers. As one said, "My students didn't know it was impossible, so they just did it! And they did it well beyond even my expectations."

17 The partnership offers CCAP dual enrollment. In this type of dual enrollment, state law specifies that students do not pay for their own supplies including text books.

The experience of high-quality language learning is also seen as a gateway into the broader school community, especially for students newer to the U.S. Improving English communication skills helps students build stronger relationships with both monolingual peers and teachers in the school.

College-Going Identity

At Cuyamaca College, faculty report that EL students with experience in dual enrollment arrive as “standouts and stars” in their freshman year, comfortable in their college-going identity and possessing strong academic foundations.

Mountain Empire teachers note that the combination of direct course experience and annual campus visits are immensely helpful to students who may not have felt comfortable applying to college previously. One teacher stated, “This familiarity has a huge benefit for the kids, they’re confident and understand. They’ve visited. They feel some belonging.”



Conclusion

The dual enrollment partnership between Mountain Empire High School and Cuyamaca College demonstrates what becomes possible when two educational systems stop operating in parallel and start working together. By replacing a slow, undemanding ELD sequence with the rigorous ALL curriculum and embedding college credit into the high school experience, the partnership has accelerated language development, built college-going identity, and created a smoother transition into postsecondary education for students who have historically been among the least likely to make that journey. As far as we are aware, this is the first EL dual enrollment program of its kind, making it an innovative model worth close attention.

The fundamental insight animating this work is straightforward: Intellectual rigor drives learning. When students are given authentic, challenging material and treated as capable scholars, they rise to meet the challenge. The ALL curriculum’s grounding in high-quality texts, low-stakes collaborative practice, and acceleration toward transfer-level work reflects a philosophy that EL students are not deficient learners who need slow remediation; they are learners who deserve to be challenged and supported at the same time. The passage of AB 705 has formalized this logic at the college level and this dual enrollment partnership extends it to high school, potentially sending students to college already having completed transfer-level English.

To incubate promising programs like this one, California needs better infrastructure. The absence of robust, longitudinal data systems that track students across the K-12 and postsecondary divide makes it difficult to measure long-term outcomes and build the evidence base that would accelerate adoption elsewhere. The field would also benefit from access to materials and data from successful dual enrollment partnerships. In the meantime, the ALL curriculum and the dual enrollment partnership agreement between Cuyamaca and Mountain Empire are available in the appendices as a practical starting point for school districts and colleges interested in undertaking a similar approach for their local context.

Appendix A: Dual Enrollment Partnership Agreement

[College and Career Access Pathways \(CCAP\) Partnership Agreement Between Grossmont-Cuyamaca College District and Mountain Empire Unified School District, 2024-2026](#)¹⁸

Appendix B: ALL Curriculum

This [Google Drive contains materials for the ALL curriculum](#),¹⁹ created by the faculty of Cuyamaca College. Each folder contains a syllabus and a set of curricular materials for a course level, adapted from the standard Cuyamaca College materials for the high school context.

The curriculum is built for further adaptation and customization. Teachers can copy and paste instructional materials into their own documents, coloring them and adding more media such as visual aids, videos, music, and color coding. Lessons and materials may be additionally scaffolded for students with special needs.

If you would like to access additional materials or discuss the curriculum further, please contact Cuyamaca College ESL Chair Laurie Woods at Laurie.Woods@gcccd.edu.

18 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Jv7iGovjjQqXbRrnLJwMneB31ngm_w0K/view

19 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16CS0ypK9RkC0v5W8JaLaifTSOx9U5Jg_





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