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Framework:

Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion

By Career Ladders Project

CLP

Career Ladders Project

Acknowledgment

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Introduction

“At Compton College, about a third of our students are high school students taking college classes. Dual enrollment is an essential strategy for students to earn college credits while still in high school, positioning them to achieve college success. Through guided pathways, students explore academic and career options, choose a program of study, and develop a plan based on their program maps.... For many of our students, dual enrollment is the first connection with our college, leading them directly into a pathway to success.”

Dr. Keith Curry, President and CEO, Compton College

“Dual enrollment holds the potential to disrupt generational poverty. It can advance upward social mobility for first-generation, low-income, and often Black and brown communities.”

Dr. Angélica Garcia, Superintendent/President, Santa Rosa Junior College (formerly President of Berkeley City College)

Dual enrollment allows a student to enroll in both high school and college at the same time, serving as an acceleration strategy for college completion. When implemented with the intention to serve as an equity lever, dual enrollment has been shown to be particularly effective for students from historically underserved groups including first-generation students, male students of color, and low-income students. Equity-focused dual enrollment recognizes the capacity and builds upon the assets of students and their families to share the responsibility for student success between educational institutions, families, and community partners. When high-quality dual enrollment is integrated with other college success and completion efforts such as guided pathways, it can further accelerate students in reaching their goals.

The guided pathways approach to community college redesign aims to center the students and clarify college and support pathways to and through college. Guided pathways includes a set of evidence-based community college reforms such as shortening or removing developmental English and math, requiring students to complete an educational plan with a counselor or advisor, and others. In many colleges, guided pathways includes a focus on how students first engage with the college—how they encounter the “front door.” For an increasing number of students, that front door is dual enrollment.

Equitable dual enrollment for completion combined with guided pathways redesign promises to amplify and extend the impact of both approaches. To accelerate this work in California, the Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion (DE4EC) initiative, co-funded by College Futures Foundation and the Gates Foundation, brought together researchers, advocates, intermediaries, technical assistance providers and capacity builders, system offices, and networks across California with a common focus on implementing and scaling dual enrollment as a strategy to increase equitable postsecondary completion.

CLP was funded by College Futures Foundation and the Gates Foundation to lead a community of practice of 10 college partnership sites and coordinate with other allied organizations working to advance the goals of DE4EC. CLP has supported the community of practice for four years, and this effort is ongoing. The Stuart Foundation and Tipping Point Community also served as co-funders of the community of practice for a time.

The community of practice has played a pivotal role in this effort. It generated proof points to inform the work of policymakers. It developed promising practices in design and implementation to build capacity in the field. And the college and high school practitioners in the community of practice emerged as champions for equitable dual enrollment. (See the Appendix for more about DE4EC).

The approaches used by DE4EC community of practice partners drew on several tools and frameworks including the [Dual Enrollment Playbook](#)¹ and the [Dual Enrollment Equity Pathways \(DEEP\)](#)² project. The work of the sites provided insight into the implementation of dual enrollment for equity and completion, particularly on increasing student completion, connecting to guided pathways redesign efforts, and navigating the California guided pathways and dual enrollment implementation context. These perspectives are reflected in this framework, representing the collective work and aspirations of the DE4EC sites.

DE4EC Community of Practice Sites

The 10 sites in the DE4EC community of practice include the following community colleges and multiple high school partners: Berkeley City College, Compton College, Contra Costa College, Cuyamaca College, East Los Angeles College, Fresno City College, Gavilan College, Hartnell College, Madera Community College, and Skyline College. The sites were chosen based on criteria that included supportive leadership, a demonstrated commitment to equity, and guided pathways implementation at the college. They represent a mix of rural and urban communities, serve different regions in California, and vary in size as well as in numbers of dual enrollment students served. Sites share certain enabling conditions that make dual enrollment for equitable completion possible. One of these key conditions is a partnership among high schools, community colleges and community organizations that share a commitment to addressing the structural constraints inherent in their systems and organizations.

Each site started with a different level of capacity and at a different stage of dual enrollment program implementation, but all of them focused on expanding high-quality dual enrollment to students of color and low-income students in their service areas. The sites also joined the DE4EC community of practice at different times.

The community of practice met 64 times between December 2020 and May 2024. The collective learnings from the 10 sites informed development of this framework, and earlier versions were vetted by the community of practice members and college leadership.

1 Mehl, G., Wyner, J., Barnett, E., Fink, J., & Jenkins, D. *The Dual Enrollment Playbook: A Guide to Equitable Acceleration for Students*, The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/dual-enrollment-playbook-equitable-acceleration.pdf>.

2 Community College Research Center. (2024, March 21). *Introducing DEEP: A Research-Based Framework for Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment*. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/introducing-deep-research-based-framework.html?format=amp>

The framework centers three overlapping and complementary design principles: **Equity, Community, and Success**. All three principles are foundational to high-quality dual enrollment for completion. While Equity and Success share many commonalities with other frameworks, the principle of Community offers insight into the potential of dual enrollment to disrupt intergenerational poverty and historic patterns of marginalization experienced by communities of color. The principle of Community represents a call for high schools and colleges to partner with families and communities—including community-based organizations, employers, community leaders, and civic organizations—to support dual enrollment. A community approach to dual enrollment will widen the network of student support and potentially open the door to greater educational attainment and economic mobility for students and their families. When communities are partners in this effort, dual enrollment becomes an important racial justice and anti-poverty strategy.

Dual Enrollment: A Primer for College Success

Multiple studies have shown that students who participate in high-quality dual enrollment³ programs during high school are more likely to graduate high school, enter college, and persist in college to completion.⁴ When dual enrollment is designed for quality and equity, students who are most underrepresented in postsecondary degree attainment—young men of color, students from low-income families, and students who are the first in their families to attend college—often benefit the most. Evidence also suggests that students who start with lower GPAs experience similar gains.⁵ Dual enrollment provides an introduction to postsecondary education for first-generation college students and their families. It offers a low- or no-cost way to earn college credit⁶ and can help students obtain degrees faster. And it can serve as an even more powerful equity strategy if it intentionally prioritizes underserved students and is integrated with a college completion agenda such as guided pathways, a whole-college redesign approach that provides a framework for achieving timely student completion and reducing equity gaps by redesigning the college experience from the student’s perspective.

3 Dual enrollment refers to the students’ enrollment status - being enrolled in both high school and college at the same time. It can take place on a college campus, on a high school campus, online, in a structured program such as an early or middle college, a College and Career Access Pathway (CCAP) or non-CCAP MOU or as an individual experience.

4 What Works Clearinghouse (2017). *Dual Enrollment Programs*. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/EvidenceSnapshot/671>

5 An, B. P. (2013). The impact of dual enrollment on college degree attainment: Do low-SES students benefit? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 35(1), 57-75; An, B. P., & Taylor, J. L. (2015). Are dual enrollment students college ready? Evidence from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education. *Education policy analysis archives*, 23(58), n58.; Cowan, J., & Goldhaber, D. (2013). How Much of a “Running Start” Do Dual Enrollment Programs Provide Students? Working Paper 92. National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER); Henneberger, A.K., Witzgen, H., & Preston, A. (2020). A longitudinal study examining dual enrollment as a strategy for easing the transition to college and career for emerging adults. *Emerging Adulthood*; Karp, M. J. M. (2007). Learning about the role of college student through dual enrollment participation; Lee, H. B., & Villarreal, M. U. (2021). Should Students Falling behind in School Take Dual Enrollment Courses? Policy Brief. Texas Education Research Center.; Rodríguez, O., Hughes, K. L., & Belfield, C. (2012). Bridging College and Careers: Using Dual Enrollment to Enhance Career and Technical Education Pathways. An NCPR Working Paper. National Center for Postsecondary Research.; Speroni, C. (2011). Determinants of Students’ Success: The Role of Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Programs. An NCPR Working Paper. National Center for Postsecondary Research.; Struhl, B., & Vargas, J. (2012). Taking College Courses in High School: A Strategy Guide for College Readiness--The College Outcomes of Dual Enrollment in Texas. *Jobs for the Future*.

6 In California, most dual enrollment is offered free of charge. By law, students participating in structured College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) dual enrollment programs do so for free; they are not charged for college fees, tuition or materials.



The potential for dual enrollment as an equity lever can be seen in research in California. [Wheelhouse](#) looked at dual enrollment across the state.⁷ They found that over 18% of the 2018-19 cohort of high school graduates had taken a community college course during high school. And while participation gaps remain for Black, Latine and socioeconomically disadvantaged students, these gaps are shrinking in dual enrollment programs that are structured and composed of mostly high school students. In these types of “high school-only”⁸ programs, Latine students now constitute the largest group. In a Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) report, researchers reviewed data for students in the graduating classes of 2015-16 through 2020 and found that a particular type of high school-only dual enrollment, College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP), was associated with narrower equity gaps in participation compared with other types of dual enrollment. Latine students were overrepresented, Asian students were proportionately represented, and Black students remained underrepresented.⁹

Notably, outcomes for CCAP students are also promising. In the same study, PPIC found that 82% of CCAP students continued into postsecondary education right after high school, compared to 80% who took other types of dual enrollment and 66% of their non-dual enrollment peers. CCAP students also completed transfer-level math and English in their first year at higher rates than students in other types of dual enrollment and students who did not participate in dual enrollment at all.

7 Kurlaender, M., Reed, S., Grosz, M., Mathias, J., & Hughes, K. (2021). A Foot in the Door: Growth in Participation and Equity in Dual Enrollment in California. UC Davis Wheelhouse. https://education.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/wheelhouse_research_brief_vol_6_no_7_final.pdf

8 “High school-only” describes types of dual enrollment where the courses are composed of all, or nearly all, high school students. These could be an early or middle college high school or dual enrollment that is governed by an agreement such as College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP), in which the course may enroll only high school students at the high school campus.

9 Rodriguez, O., Payares-Montoya, D., Ugo, I., and N. Gao. (2023). Improving College Access and Success through Dual Enrollment. Public Policy Institute of California.

Guided Pathways: Scaffolded and Supported Pathways to Completion

Guided pathways is the umbrella term for a set of evidence-based reforms for colleges that center and streamline the student experience. The problem of low college completion, as well as the promising approach of guided pathways, was outlined in the book [Redesigning America's Community Colleges](#). Authors Thomas Bailey, Shanna Smith Jaggars, and Davis Jenkins of the Community College Research Center at Columbia University's Teachers College characterized the “cafeteria-style” college as offering too many choices in an unorganized way that ultimately impedes student completion. In contrast, guided pathways proposes to simplify students’ decision making by grouping related academic programs into meta majors and then providing clear and structured program maps to guide students from a meta major to a major with career and transfer options. In a well-designed guided pathways structure, students are supported along their pathway to participate in work-based learning opportunities, explore careers, and complete. Due to the structure and support, students can move more efficiently toward certificates, degrees and careers.

The guided pathways framework is organized into four pillars: clarify the path, enter the path, stay on the path, and ensure learning. Guided pathways colleges monitor a student’s progress along their pathway using momentum points, such as completion of college-level English and math in the first year and progress through their program of study.

With a focus on the student journey, dual enrollment can be seen as an extension of guided pathways into high school all the way to the ninth grade. Dual enrollment is an opportunity to provide thoughtful onboarding into college. Through intentional recruitment and support, college and high school partnerships can provide a scaffolded transition into college for students from communities furthest from opportunity and with historically lower college-going rates, including low-income, first-generation, Black, Latine and Indigenous communities.

Note to Practitioners: Dual enrollment reform work is iterative. The DE4EC sites have all experienced that process, and the evolving work and approaches they’ve shared have shaped this framework, which seeks to support college and high school partners engaged in similar efforts. Unfortunately, that real-world work doesn’t separate into tidy buckets. Practitioners will find that the distinctions between the key components and design principles are somewhat artificial. They overlap and are mutually reinforcing. This reflects the messy work of imagining and implementing robust, equitable dual enrollment to successfully reach and support underserved students on their educational journeys.

The DE4EC Framework

This framework is intended to support college and high school partners in designing and implementing dual enrollment for equitable completion within the larger success and completion reforms of guided pathways. It lays out a conceptual approach that emerged from the collective learnings and aspirations of the ten sites in the DE4EC community of practice, including both college and high school partners. As such, college and high school practitioners should consider it a framework to be adapted to meet their local context, rather than a turnkey model to be strictly replicated. It also offers examples of effective practice and guiding questions for practitioners.

The DE4EC framework is organized around seven key components and the design principles of Equity, Community, and Success. The key components are:

- Create a Shared Vision
- Design for Success
- Remove Barriers
- Demystify College Knowledge
- Tailor Supports
- Foster Belonging
- Be Responsive and Reflective

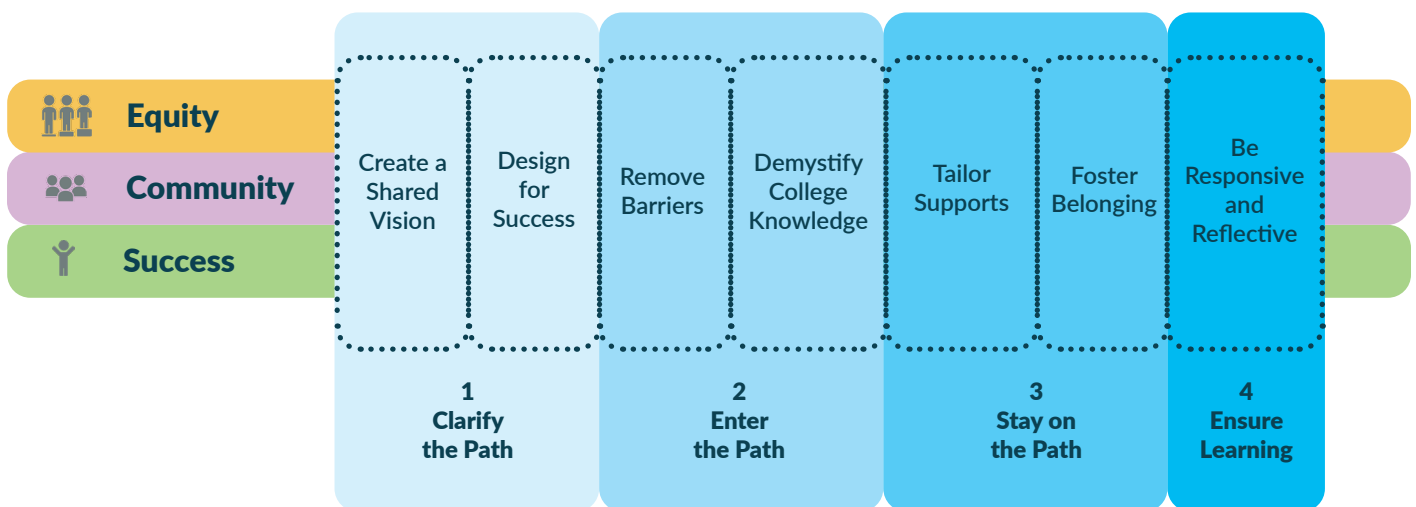
The guided pathways approach is centered on the student journey, and this is echoed in the key components of the framework. The design principles and key components of the DE4EC framework are intended for an intersegmental partnership. The foundation of effective dual enrollment is the partnership between the high school and community college. The partners work together to create a seamless experience for students by streamlining the intersection of the two complex systems.



The diagram below shows how the key components of the DE4EC framework map onto the four guided pathways pillars:

1. Clarify the path – The work colleges do before the student arrives to design course sequences and supports for clear navigation by students
2. Enter the path – How students are onboarded into the college and their program and guided to explore
3. Stay on the path – The support services to help students be successful and the ways that students access those services
4. Ensure learning – Teaching and learning in the classroom that leads to success and completion

Crosswalk with Guided Pathways Pillars



1 Create a Shared Vision and Design for Success

Guided Pathways Pillar: Clarify the Path

Students from groups that are underrepresented in postsecondary education—especially Black, Latine, Indigenous, first-generation, and low-income students—should be prioritized and supported in dual enrollment. Creating a shared vision and designing dual enrollment pathways for serving underrepresented students can close opportunity gaps in college access and success.

When there is equity, access to and success in dual enrollment is not predictable by race, gender, income status or other characteristics. At the heart of the concept of equity is the idea that people have different needs that arise from intersecting identities or differing circumstances, particularly historical and contemporary exclusion and racism, lack of resources, and more.

When dual enrollment is designed with students at the center of all parts of the experience, including applying to the college, participating in courses, and succeeding in courses, it supports high school students learning both course content and how to be a college student. Student-centered design offers structured and intentional transition for first-time college students that accelerates high school graduation and college degree completion. Supports should be embedded in the student experience; these include student supports such as tutoring, counseling, college planning, financing and FAFSA completion, and coordination of communication between the student's high school and the college. Dual enrollment should be part of high school and college success and completion efforts, embedded in institutional priorities documented in college educational and strategic plans, and in K-12 Local Control and Accountability Plans and district budgets. Dual enrollment should be integrated with other reform efforts at the high school and college; examples include guided pathways, developmental education reform, and high-quality pathway programs such as Linked Learning. The ultimate success indicator is when students earn certificates and degrees that lead to fulfilling careers with family-sustaining wages.



Create a Shared Vision



Equity. A shared vision that centers equity and sets goals for access and success of underserved populations will solidify the partners' commitment and collective responsibility for student success. All dual enrollment partners—the high school, college, and community organizations—should share this vision.



Community. When rooted in community educational aspirations, a shared vision provides an asset-based lens for the partnership. Partners could include families, parent groups, cultural organizations, nonprofit organizations, civic leaders, and employers.



Success. When the college, high school, and community partners create a common vision, all partners share collective responsibility for the success of students. A vision should include a commitment to monitoring and improving success measures, including completion and momentum points.

Design for Success



Equity. Intentional design applies to all aspects of dual enrollment—from deciding which schools and students a partnership begins with, to the supports and courses that are offered. Partnerships may concentrate their initial efforts on schools that are least resourced or that have large numbers of underserved students. Dual enrollment should be designed in a pathway¹⁰ that clearly lays out how to reach educational and career goals. Guided

¹⁰ A pathway is a sequence of courses with embedded supports that enable students to advance over time to higher levels of education and to better careers usually in a particular sector.

exploration can help students discover a purpose, ignite excitement, and begin narrowing in on a career goal. Designing for equity requires enabling students to choose and advance along pathways leading to high-demand, high-value careers while disrupting historic patterns of occupational and educational segregation.¹¹ When designing recruitment efforts, ensure an intentional focus on priority populations that are underrepresented in college and use culturally affirming and sustaining approaches. Use asset-based, supportive language in recruitment materials.



Community. Including families and the community in the design of dual enrollment enlarges the resources and support for students, and it anchors the pathways in community aspirations and opportunities. Develop relationships with formal and informal community leaders for each distinct community or priority population. Ask students and families how to reach students who are from underrepresented groups. Developing and offering pathways that are informed by local labor market data and community-based needs can cultivate a homegrown workforce and support economic development. Engage students in work-based learning experiences embedded in pathways, helping employers see young people as future leaders in local industry.



Success. Dual enrollment can scaffold the transition to college through course content, course modality and student supports. Initial courses should have more structured supports and content that is accessible for first-time college students and may be taught on the high school campus. As students become more familiar with college courses, content can become more advanced, supports gradually become less intensive, and the course modality may be hybrid, online, or even held at the college campus. Intentionally designed pathways connect and build on high school curriculum and experience in a way that meets multiple requirements including A-G,¹² high school graduation through dual credit, and certificates and degrees at colleges and transfer institutions. Integrating work-based learning opportunities into the pathway can be especially engaging because they provide students with real-world work experience and demonstrate where a pathway leads. Understanding the pathway destination can give students a stronger sense of purpose and support transition to college and successful completion.

Questions to Consider

Create a Shared Vision

1. What are the aspirations of the students and families who are underrepresented in college, and how can the dual enrollment partnership support those aspirations? How can dual enrollment offerings build on student interests, foster a sense of purpose, and support development of career goals connected to a program of study?
2. What is the cultural wealth of the communities we serve? We may think in terms of Yosso's identified types of community cultural wealth: aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, resistant, and navigational.¹³ How might we build on those assets?

11 In [Unpacking Program Enrollments and Completions With Equity in Mind](#), Jenkins and Fink present a guide for colleges to disaggregate program enrollment and classify the post-college opportunities programs lead to by wage.

12 A-G requirements are a set of high school courses that California high school students must complete to be eligible for admission to the University of California or California State University.

13 Yosso, T.J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.

3. How do success and completion measures fit in the shared vision? What data, including student voice, can let us know if we are moving toward the vision?

Design for Success

1. Are there students who do not have access to, or who are not supported in dual enrollment? Do we have explicit equity goals and are we meeting them? How do we know this?
2. Do the dual enrollment pathways support student and community aspirations?
3. What does the student experience look like from beginning to postsecondary completion? Are pathways designed for the longest possible educational trajectory for students, even while providing opportunity for students to earn marketable credentials along the way?



Remove Barriers and Demystify College Knowledge

Guided Pathways Pillar: Enter the Path

From enrollment to the classroom experience and success in courses, dual enrollment should be designed with the needs of students at the center. Partners should make design choices that remove barriers for students, increase the richness of the experience, and accelerate progress toward high school graduation and college certificate or degree attainment. Students should have enough information to choose pathways that align with their interests and regional labor market needs and lead to careers with family-sustaining wages. Those pathways should be designed and built to connect learning from high school through college and into career so that students can successfully traverse them.

Remove Barriers

Educators have a responsibility to meet students' unique needs in differentiated ways. To ensure that dual enrollment is equitable, partnerships should regularly collect and examine disaggregated data about student access, retention and success to identify and remove barriers.



Equity. Dual enrollment can provide a seamless transition from high school to college, particularly for students who are underrepresented in postsecondary education including Black, Latine, low-income, and first-generation students. Identify and remove the barriers to student access and success both at the high school and the college. The first barrier students often face is gatekeeping behavior. For example, students might not be invited to participate because of perceptions that they're not "college material" and can't succeed in dual enrollment. This gatekeeping mindset can lead to other barriers such as imposing GPA criteria to participate, a practice that is illegal in California's open-access community colleges.¹⁴ Another barrier is the lengthy application and enrollment process which can discourage high school students before they even start their college coursework.¹⁵ Examining disaggregated data can help identify barriers

¹⁴ In California GPA may be used to support placement of a student in math or English, but not as criteria for participating in dual enrollment. See [California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office memo ESS 23-46](#).

¹⁵ Career Ladders Project (2023). *A Cumbersome Enrollment Process Named the Top Challenge to Dual Enrollment in California*. <https://careerladdersproject.org/a-cumbersome-enrollment-process-named-the-top-challenge-to-dual-enrollment-in-california-03-13-23/>

and determine which student groups are missing or underrepresented in dual enrollment, assess why students are underrepresented, and develop strategies to close gaps where they exist. Types of data to examine include enrollment data, achievement of key academic milestones, course success data, surveys, and focus groups with various stakeholders including students, families, instructors, and counselors. Revisit data for continuous improvement of the dual enrollment partnership and effective integration with high school and college student success and completion efforts.



Community. Identify and remove barriers to student access with community support. Community partners are an important resource

for understanding barriers and problem solving to remove them. Common barriers include misconceptions on the part of students or families about dual enrollment incurring costs to students, along with gatekeeping and deficit mindsets on the institutional side and barriers such as illegal GPA requirements. There may also be barriers such as lack of transportation or feeling unwelcome that stop families and the community from fully accessing the college and utilizing it as a resource. Data from focus groups and surveys may provide insight.



Success. Identify and remove barriers by using disaggregated data to identify equity gaps in course enrollment, success rates, persistence rates, and retention across diverse course types and fields of study. Consider using qualitative data from interviews or focus groups. Clearing obstacles to dual enrollment will enable greater access to multiple pathways,

helping students save time and money in obtaining a certificate or degree.

Demystify College Knowledge

Support students in navigating college in ways that are culturally relevant and affirming. This can be provided by a dedicated community of support personnel including trained near-peer mentors, academic success coaches and counselors.



Equity. Colleges today offer many supports and learning communities tailored to racial and ethnic groups as well as other common experiences, such as being a first-year student. Often cohort-based, these programs create community and provide navigational support

Mount Miguel High School and Cuyamaca College

Mount Miguel High School's Matador Early College (MEC) program enrolls a diverse student body. All MEC students take college courses and one-third of the students are Black. Of those Black students, 65% are male and only 10% would be considered "academically advanced." MEC students have a 90% success rate in their Cuyamaca College dual enrollment courses. The MEC coordinator, Dr. Mark Jeffers, attributes this success to three strategies: community support, outreach, and leadership. MEC includes families in decision making for the program, and MEC is seen as a part of the community. Outreach begins with middle school students and family information sessions. And, as a Black man, Dr. Jeffers believes that Black students and families can see themselves in his leadership.

Cuyamaca College, long recognized for its reform of math and English placement and professional development for faculty and staff, supports the high school students with a dedicated counselor. Basic skills reforms and student supports are foundational to guided pathways, and Cuyamaca College is ensuring that dual enrollment students benefit from guided pathways reforms.

for students. They can also serve as valuable resources in designing culturally affirming outreach, recruitment, and student supports. Culturally focused learning communities such as Puentes and Umoja have pioneered the development and use of these approaches in California community colleges. These approaches can inform program design more generally; partners can even consider extending them into the high school setting.



Community. Families want to support their students; the college and high school need to be explicit about how to do so. Intentional outreach and information sessions can demystify the task of navigating college processes, from enrollment to support with coursework and pathway choice. Community-based organizations may be able to support this work.



Success. Be explicit about teaching navigational skills and communicate college knowledge in outreach and recruitment. First-generation students in particular may find it challenging to navigate college processes such as enrollment or counseling appointments. Dual enrollment should help students navigate processes to have a full college experience; some of these include understanding what majors are and how they relate to careers, how grades can impact financial aid, and what courses are needed to earn certificates and degrees.

Questions to Consider

Remove Barriers

1. How are we recruiting students? Are we intentional in designing outreach and supports to prioritize students from underserved communities? Do our recruitment efforts miss any students? Does our messaging convey a belief in student capacity?
2. What are the barriers that families and communities experience in supporting student access and success? How might our partnership identify and address those barriers?
3. Are partners taking a systematic look at their structures and processes together to identify and remove barriers to student success and completion, particularly those that have disparate impact on underserved student groups?

Demystify College Knowledge

1. What is the explicit information students need to successfully navigate college? How are we communicating that information?
2. Where can we reach out to families to begin conversations about dual enrollment and the broader opportunities of college attainment that families can support?
3. Is it clear to students how a course fits into their educational and career goals and how it counts at both high school and college? Do students understand the path to completion? Do they understand what careers are open to them with a given major, credential, or degree, and what they might earn in each?



Tailor Supports and Foster Belonging

Guided Pathways Pillar: Stay on the Path

The role of the college is to serve the community. Partners should bring all their resources to the table to support students. Students, families and communities have cultural capital (aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance).¹⁶ An asset-based approach acknowledges this cultural capital and builds on it to support students in their educational goals.

Community-rooted dual enrollment meets students where they are, recognizing the cultural capital they bring and providing scaffolded supports to help realize the educational aspirations of students and families. Increased college-going promotes intergenerational economic mobility and wealth and is a cornerstone of a vibrant economic and civic life. Successful community colleges are rooted in service to the community and are responsive to community needs. In that sense, dual enrollment can be seen as a natural extension of service to the community.

East Los Angeles College, CARECEN, and Los Angeles Unified School District

East Los Angeles College (ELAC) approaches dual enrollment as both a service to the community and a way to meet the needs of the entire family. When ELAC works with a high school partner, they also assess the needs of adult learners in the community. Do families need computer classes? Do they need English language learning classes? By offering both credit and non-credit classes to the families of dual enrollment students, ELAC helps build intergenerational college knowledge. Parents and high school students can sit down together to study for their college classes. In some cases, adult and K-12 students can take a class together such as Introduction to Robotics, where parents can make battle-bots with their children.

ELAC partners with community-based organizations like the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) to provide Central American History classes for high school students served by the center. CARECEN provides case management for the students and supports them with enrollment paperwork, tutoring, and access to computers.

In partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District, ELAC is starting a Parent Academy to cover topics such as dual enrollment, the Promise Program, college accommodations for students with disabilities, and math and English courses and supports. The Parent Academy is another college recruitment strategy to build trust and let parents and families in the community know that college is for them too. Dual enrollment is designed along pathways that feed into meta majors at the college. ELAC is working on creating more pathways for adult learners, integrated into their guided pathways efforts. ELAC has institutionalized their commitment to family and community partnerships by establishing the Family and Community Engagement Services (FACES) program that provides holistic educational support to prospective students and their families, including dual enrollment students.

¹⁶ Yosso, T.J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.

Tailor Supports



Equity. Tailor supports to meet students' academic and social needs, particularly first-generation students, English language learners, and students who might be disengaged from school. Support students from underserved communities, such as Black, Latine and low-income students, with culturally affirming, sustaining, and relevant pedagogy and services. Providing tailored student support may require professional development for instructors, counselors and other program staff.



Community. Enlist families, community-based organizations, employers, workforce boards, regional entities and other partners in creating an ecosystem of support for students. These actors and entities can provide a wide range of supports, from encouragement and understanding to case management, mentorship and work-based learning experiences.



Success. Just like adult students in their first college experience, high school students need support in understanding different expectations and ways of working in college courses. Build in this support early in a student's college journey to ease the transition into college. Providing a regular and trusted point of contact, like a near-peer mentor or counselor who proactively reaches out to students to match them with specific services, can bolster success.

Foster Belonging



Equity. Foster belonging through culturally affirming and sustaining student supports and teaching and learning. Students will feel welcome and will be able to see themselves connected to a community of learners both socially and academically. They will feel valued and see their own aspirations and values in the college environment. Strive to hire faculty and student support staff that reflect student demographics, so that students can see themselves in the college and school leadership. Take into account the multiple and intersecting identities of students; these may include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class and others. California's recent ethnic studies requirement may be an opportunity to develop new programming that engages students in learning about their racial backgrounds and communities of origin.



Community. Creating a welcoming atmosphere for families and the community will support students' transition to college and has the potential to create an extended family of learners. Families often feel welcome at high school sites or public institutions like libraries. Creating a regular college presence in places frequented by families and community members can foster more familiarity with the college.



Success. Find ways to make students feel welcome and valued in college courses and on the college campus; they should feel their work is recognized and that their achievements are celebrated. Outreach and mentorship from culturally based learning communities, or special programs designed for first-generation students or foster youth, can support students in feeling welcome and in creating their identity as a college student. Issue college ID cards to students to encourage them to access college events and services that promote retention, persistence, and success.

Questions to Consider

Tailor Supports

1. How are we supporting students in their courses and programs? Are supports appropriate to meet differing student needs? Do we have mechanisms to monitor student progress and provide positive interventions when indicated?
2. How might we engage families and community organizations to build an ecosystem of student support? How can educational partners learn from families and communities in order to better support students?
3. Are support services, such as counseling and the writing center, a regular part of the student experience? Are they embedded in courses, pathways, and other programming?

Foster Belonging

1. How are we ensuring a feeling of belonging and welcome? How do dual enrollment students describe their experience?
2. Do families and community members feel welcome at the college? How do we know this?
3. Do the partners take steps toward creating a college-going culture, including identity affirmation and diverse representation? Do students have college IDs?



Be Responsive and Reflective

Guided Pathways Pillar: Ensure Learning

Intentionally designing dual enrollment pathways to close opportunity gaps requires regular reflection and action. Build into the program design time to pause, review the data on retention and success and the qualitative data coming from students and their families, and pivot as needed to better meet the needs of students and their families. If students aren't staying in the classes, succeeding in the classes, and happy about their progress, a dual enrollment program may need to rethink aspects of the program design. Listen to the community and respond.



Equity. Support instructors and counselors in providing culturally affirming, sustaining and relevant pedagogy. Create space for student voice and leadership to help shape the dual enrollment experience. Provide opportunities for collaboration among college and high school faculty, and students and families.



Community. Seek opportunities for collaboration among partners, working together to pool the community cultural wealth and resources in support of students. Actively engage families and community partners in program planning and ongoing improvement.



Success. Support opportunities for K-12 and college instructors and counselors to collaborate to improve their practice and their support of students. Discipline-specific collaboration time can support work to align curriculum and better understand students' needs.

Madera Community College and Madera Unified School District

Madera Community College, the newest college in the California Community College system, has dedicated resources to the success of dual enrollment. College leaders created the role of Dean of Dual Enrollment and funded two full-time counselors who support high school students in taking college courses. The high school partner, Madera Unified School District, has a Director of College and Career Readiness who oversees dual enrollment. The dedicated positions for dual enrollment are recent and build on the successes of the Madera Community College Advantage Program (MCCAP) program.

MCCAP students enroll in up to four college classes in their senior year and earn both college and high school credit. Students attend a special orientation, have a mandatory session with a college counselor, receive progress reports throughout the semester, and are recognized for achievements. Students report that participating in MCCAP dual enrollment “took away fears” about attending college and “increased self-confidence.” MCCAP students generally maintain a 3.0 or higher GPA in their college courses, have an average success rate of 90%, and have a 90% fall to spring retention rate in college courses during the senior year of high school.

Madera Community College transitioned from a center into a college during the onset of the guided pathways movement in California, and the newly minted college included equity and anti-racism goals in its strategic plan.

Questions to Consider

Be Responsive and Reflective

1. How are we supporting instructors and counselors to create culturally sustaining and affirming experiences for students? How are we incorporating community leaders and mentors into the dual enrollment infrastructure? Is professional development available? Are we practicing equitable recruitment, hiring and retention strategies that enable us to build a diverse dual enrollment teaching and support staff? Are we taking care in faculty assignments to provide excellent and responsive dual enrollment instructors?
2. What resources do community partners bring to the table? Some examples of resources: monetary support; human capital such as knowledge and experience, languages, cultural concepts, and networks; and community-based spaces with flexible schedules for classes or meetings.
3. Is dual enrollment embedded in both the school district’s and the college’s educational plans, goals, and frameworks such that it is part of an overall college-going and college-attaining strategy? How is it connected to major college reforms such as guided pathways? Does it build on and connect initiatives and programs at the high school, such as college and career pathways, Linked Learning, community schools or other evidence-based programs?

Pathway Design

Dual enrollment should be designed as part of a pathway. In well-designed pathways, courses are carefully sequenced to meet multiple graduation, transfer, and degree requirements—including general education and major requirements—and lead to well-paying, in-demand careers providing opportunities for advancement.

All the DE4EC partnerships design dual enrollment as part of a pathway. Some of their pathways focus on flexible general education requirements required for bachelor's degrees within the CSU or UC systems, and others are major-specific and lead to a certificate, associate degree, and/or bachelor's degree.

Partnerships are transparent about where pathways lead. Students know the specific certificates and/or degrees they can obtain through each pathway and which universities or community college baccalaureate programs the courses will transfer to. Partnerships select pathways based on regional labor market demand as well as student interest. Where possible, pathways are designed around and extend existing career-focused high school programs such as career academies or Linked Learning.

Skyline College lists the pathways and dual enrollment offerings by high school.¹⁷ Fresno City College lists the pathways by high school¹⁸ and, in some cases, maps out the certificate or degree pathway by course as with Pre-Allied Health.¹⁹

17 Skyline College. (2024, March 22). *Dual Enrollment: What is Dual Enrollment?* <https://skylinecollege.edu/careerandworkforce/dualenrollment.php>

18 Fresno City College. (2024, March 22). *Dual Enrollment – FREE COLLEGE!* <https://www.fresnocitycollege.edu/admissions-aid/admissions-and-records-office/admissions/dual-enrollment.html>

19 Fresno City College. (2024, March 22). *Pre-Allied Health - Formerly Pre-Allied Health Registered Nursing Option - Major #4526*. <https://fresno.curriqunet.com/alias/AssociateofScienceDegree-Pre-AlliedHealth-FormerlyPre-AlliedHealthRegisteredNursingOption-Major-4526>

Conclusion

Dual enrollment is growing across the U.S. and in California. As colleges and high schools look to develop or expand dual enrollment, it is imperative to maintain a focus on equity and prioritize dual enrollment for students furthest from opportunity including students of color, first-generation students, and low-income students. Without deliberate attention to equity, it's likely that simply expanding dual enrollment opportunities would replicate inequities and widen existing gaps.

In California, policy and system forces are favorable for scaling equitable dual enrollment. A successive wave of legislative reforms and state investments, the Governor's California Community College Roadmap, the community college system's Vision 2030, as well as the focused leadership of California Community Colleges Chancellor Sonya Christian—all are converging on dual enrollment as a critical part of the state's strategy to increase postsecondary attainment and address growing workforce demands in the state. In this context, dual enrollment partnerships and practitioners have a landmark opportunity to open the doors to postsecondary education and the promise of greater economic prosperity.

Through dual enrollment partnerships, colleges and high schools have begun to bridge the gaps that divide our educational systems from each other and from communities. Forging dual enrollment pathways is a concrete and tangible way in which K-12 and college practitioners—and communities and families—are working to create something together. In the process, they can transform institutions and systems.

The DE4EC framework, grounded in the experiences of the DE4EC college-high school partnership sites, offers unique insights to help navigate these choices, particularly as they intersect with guided pathways college redesign efforts. By designing dual enrollment with an intentional focus on Equity, Community, and Success, we can change the educational trajectory for students in communities across California, creating a more just and equitable future of upward mobility and economic well-being.



Appendix: Components of the Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion Initiative

CLP was funded by College Futures Foundation and the Gates Foundation to lead the Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion (DE4EC) community of practice and coordinate with other allied organizations working on scaling dual enrollment as a strategic lever for equitable access and success in attaining postsecondary credentials. CLP worked to provide “connective tissue” across the many organizations and institutions in the California educational reform ecosystem with focus on advancing equitable dual enrollment. DE4EC has been underway for four years, and the effort is ongoing.

The DE4EC initiative was funded by a partnership between College Futures Foundation and the Gates Foundation. The Stuart Foundation and the Tipping Point Community later joined in support of the community of practice. DE4EC has multiple, interwoven and mutually reinforcing components. Taken together, this collective work has moved California toward realizing equitable dual enrollment. The components are described below.

Ten partnership sites participated in a community of practice led by CLP. The sites include the following community colleges and multiple high school partners: Berkeley City College, Compton College, Contra Costa College, Cuyamaca College, East Los Angeles College, Fresno City College, Gavilan College, Hartnell College, Madera Community College, and Skyline College. The sites were chosen based on criteria that included supportive leadership, a demonstrated commitment to equity, and guided pathways implementation at the college. They represent a mix of rural and urban communities, serve different regions in California, and vary in size as well as in numbers of dual enrollment students served. Sites share certain enabling conditions that make dual enrollment for equitable completion possible. One of these key conditions is a partnership among high schools, community colleges and community organizations that share a commitment to addressing the structural constraints inherent in their systems and organizations.

Each site started with a different level of capacity and at a different stage of dual enrollment program implementation, but all of them focused on expanding high-quality dual enrollment to students of color and low-income students in their service areas. The sites also joined the DE4EC community of practice at different times.

The community of practice met 64 times between December 2020 and May 2024. These meetings included structured monthly meetings and additional problem-solving sessions requested by participants. The collective learnings from the 10 DE4EC sites informed development of this framework, and earlier versions were vetted by the community of practice members and college leadership. Seven of the sites were funded by College Futures Foundation, and three by Tipping Point Community. RDP Consulting led a [learning and evaluation](#) of the community of practice.

The community of practice has played a pivotal role in the overall DE4EC initiative. It generated proof points to inform the work of policymakers. It developed promising practices in design and implementation to build capacity in the field. And the college and high school practitioners in the community of practice emerged as champions for equitable dual enrollment.

California-specific research on equitable dual enrollment was conducted by DE4EC-funded research organizations. These studies provided rich insight into the state of dual enrollment across California, highlighted where progress was being made in creating more equitable dual enrollment, and suggested areas for further research. The research organizations involved were the California Education Lab/UC Davis, Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), and the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). California Ed Lab and

Wheelhouse found evidence that structured dual enrollment programs are narrowing equity gaps in dual enrollment [participation](#). PPIC has shown that [CCAP in particular is much more equitable](#) than other forms of dual enrollment, erasing access gaps for Latine students, and improving equitable access overall. While equity gaps do persist in student outcomes, there is evidence that Black and brown students who participated in dual enrollment outperformed similar students who didn't participate.

Findings from the initiative's learning partner, RDP Consulting, illuminate how DE4EC partnership sites ensure that historically underrepresented and low-income students are engaged and successful in dual enrollment. Findings have been shared in a [series of research briefs](#), presentations and webinars highlighting the progress made and resources to support other partnerships working to implement equitable dual enrollment.

Drawing on practitioners from the DE4EC sites, CLP and Engage R+D created a learning agenda for educational leaders, practitioners, community-based organizations and funders. With Stuart Foundation funding, CLP co-published the agenda with Engage R+D as [Learning Priorities for Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment](#). This was followed by qualitative research into the experiences of K-12 practitioners, exploring more deeply with them how to effectively spread and scale equitable dual enrollment. The findings were shared with the field in the brief, [Striving for Equitable Completion: Strengthening Dual Enrollment in California](#).

Building on their insights and partnerships with the DE4EC sites and experience with college and high school partnerships across the state, CLP has continued to develop [tools, briefs, and convenings](#) for dual enrollment practitioners. These emphasize dual enrollment as a potential strategic equity lever that can change the fortunes of young people when combined with other reforms, such as guided pathways and career pathways.

Based on California community college data, EdTrust-West developed [Jumpstart](#), a policy and practice agenda for K-12 and higher education leaders to drive equitable dual enrollment.

The findings and resources generated have provided a deep pool of knowledge and resources for colleges, high schools, system leaders and policy makers in California to draw upon as they review and transform their policies and practices and work to scale more equitable dual enrollment in their regions.

Support and alignment for capacity builders was provided through the Dual Enrollment Coalition of California (DECC). Founded and co-led by CLP and EdTrust-West, DECC is a coalition of key dual enrollment organizations that includes the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium, California Coalition of Early and Middle Colleges, and the California Association of Black School Educators, along with a research advisory group comprising PPIC, Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research, and the California Education Lab. DECC has helped to bring the main capacity building organizations together to create a common understanding of dual enrollment issues and policy challenges, share promising approaches, and align on messaging. DECC also sponsors the yearly Dual Enrollment Digital Week of Action. DECC provides a useful feedback loop between researchers and practitioners that helps illuminate what the data means in practice. The coalition provides a base for ongoing collaboration and convergence across otherwise disparate organizational efforts.

DE4EC provided support to the state educational system offices to center equity and postsecondary completion in the implementation of dual enrollment policy across the state. This investment helped build capacity at the state system level and supported engagement of researchers and practitioners in developing an evidence-based rubric for exemplary dual enrollment programs. It engaged CLP in providing technical assistance to recipients of the state dual enrollment grant program. It also led to

participation by the state agencies and CLP in a national policy academy organized by the national College in High School Alliance and focused on aligning systems to support dual enrollment.

CLP and EdTrust-West launched the California Dual Enrollment Equity conference in 2023. The inaugural conference served as a platform for establishing the California Alliance of Dual Enrollment Partnerships (CADEP), a state chapter of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, and CADEP subsequently joined CLP and EdTrust-West in sponsoring the annual conference. Kern Community College District and the Los Angeles Community College District Foundation have served as fiscal agents for the growing conference. This annual conference provides a much-needed collaborative space for practitioners, administrators, advocates and state leaders from all the California educational segments to share promising practices, strategize to remove barriers and advance more equitable dual enrollment together.

CLP was invited to join regular, cross-functional policy convenings organized by College Futures Foundation that brought together the broader range of advocates and researchers working to improve equity in California's higher education systems. These provided ongoing opportunity for dialogue and for elevating the importance of scaling dual enrollment as a strategic equity lever in California. The overall policy ecosystem strategy led by College Futures Foundation was captured in two publications, [Partnering for Impact: Propelling the movement for an equitable higher education system](#) and [Collaboration, Not Competition: Shifting Philanthropic Approaches to Movement Building for Equity](#).

As part of the DE4EC initiative, CLP also engaged other organizations and entities across California—including community foundations, regional K-16 collaboratives funded by the state, community college regional consortia, educational associations and affinity groups—to help connect the dots across the broad educational reform space, clarify policy challenges and opportunities, and build momentum toward scaling dual enrollment centered on equity and postsecondary completion.

The collective work of the DE4EC organizations helped to position the state and state systems for the myriad policy changes and emergent priorities that have ensued. It has generated a rich body of evidence, promising practices and public goods—as well as momentum—upon which the state has been able to build as it moves to scale equitable dual enrollment pathways across California.



Career Ladders Project promotes equity-minded community college redesign. We collaborate with colleges and their partners to discover, develop, and disseminate effective practices. Our policy work, research, and direct efforts with colleges lead to system change – and enable more students to attain certificates, degrees, transfers, and career advancement.

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