LEARNING PRIORITIES FOR ADVANCING EQUITABLE DUAL ENROLLMENT IN CALIFORNIA

Prepared by Career Ladders Project and Engage R+D

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Background and Understanding

> "[I'm proud] of the opportunity dual enrollment is giving students that possibly wouldn't be targeted as your higher-achieving students. We have a multitude of those students that are flourishing in our dual enrollment program."
> ~ Focus Group Participant

Students who participate in high-quality dual enrollment during high school are more likely to graduate, enter college, and persist in college to completion than their peers who don't, according to multiple studies. For students with little "college knowledge" in their families, dual enrollment in community college provides an introduction to higher education, helping them see they can do college work. Dual enrollment also offers a low-cost or no-cost way to earn college credit and may help students obtain a degree faster. And studies show it can provide the biggest boost to young men of color and low-income and first-generation college students, improving educational equity.

Despite these advantages, California high schools encounter significant challenges when they try to implement dual enrollment. To understand these barriers — and ultimately how to overcome them — Career Ladders Project (CLP) partnered with Engage R+D to hear directly from K12 education leaders and their partners about what's working, what's not, and what we need to learn more about in order to effectively spread and scale programming. We surfaced five priority areas for future learning:

- **Success.** Education leaders are eager to learn more about what constitutes an effective dual enrollment program and to learn from other programs. There is also interest in deepening capacity to measure the effectiveness and impact of dual enrollment programs.

- **Equity.** Dual enrollment programs are seen as a critical tool for advancing educational equity. There is opportunity to further clarify the different dimensions of equity that come into play with this work and how to strengthen both practice and outcomes on this front.

- **Staffing and Resources.** Education leaders are highly resourceful when it comes to braiding together human and financial resources needed to implement dual enrollment. Obtaining insight into the various approaches being applied across contexts and what's needed to further strengthen them is essential to further spread and scale.

- **Enrollment.** Enrollment is a major pain point across diverse education contexts. Education leaders are interested in streamlining and strengthening the enrollment process, both for students and program staff.

- **System Conditions.** Dual enrollment programs exist within the context of K12 and higher education systems. A clearer understanding of the conditions needed to support successful dual enrollment programs and partnerships can help to maximize the impact of program efforts.

The chart on the following page outlines key questions that emerged in each of these areas and findings from our initial research. Over the next 1-2 years, Career Ladders Project will partner with Engage R+D to conduct further inquiry into these areas and lift up findings from that research for broader benefit. In addition to informing CLP's own technical assistance work our hope is that findings from this effort can expand knowledge within the California education field about the current state of dual enrollment programming, what's needed to implement, grow, and scale dual enrollment and its impact, and how funders and others can contribute to this effort. We look forward to sharing learning and being in dialog with dual enrollment education leaders, their community-based partners, and civic and philanthropic leaders about how California can continue to advance educational equity through dual enrollment.

Topic	Learning Questions	What We Learned and Why It Matters
1. Success	• How would we recognize successful dual enrollment, from the high school perspective? What are some examples of successful programs? • What are the essential elements of high-quality, high-impact dual enrollment? What mindsets are critical to have in place on the part of students and families, educators, and administrators to ensure a positive student experience? • What data is available to assess progress and impact at the student, program, and systems levels? What data is needed?	• Education leaders (*i.e., educators, counselors, administrators, and program staff*) are interested in learning from program exemplars, as these are currently not widely known in California. • Community-based partners will be better positioned to meet student needs if essential elements of high-quality, high-impact programs are well documented and understood. • Funders know that expanding access to programming is insufficient. Programming must also be of high quality and able to demonstrate progress and impact at multiple levels.
2. Equity	• How is dual enrollment helping to advance equity? What is needed to make dual enrollment even stronger on this front? • What are the different dimensions of equity that come into play with this work, and how can both practice and outcomes be strengthened?	• Education leaders, community-based partners, and funders are all interested in advancing equitable completion. Currently, there is not yet a shared understanding for thinking about equity in this context.
3. Staffing & Resources	• What are effective staffing approaches across programs? • What do these approaches look like across diverse contexts (i.e., early vs. middle high school, urban/suburban/rural, district-wide)? • How are schools braiding together resources to support programs? What's working and what else is needed?	• Education leaders are interested in learning different approaches to staffing and resourcing dual enrollment programs. • Community-based partners will be better positioned to meet student needs if more is understood about different staffing and resource approaches, what's working, and what's needed. • Funders understand that staffing and resources are critical to program effectiveness and impact. They will be better positioned to support and advocate for these if the needs are well understood.

Topic	Learning Questions	What We Learned and Why It Matters
4. Enrollment	• What are promising practices for streamlining and strengthening the enrollment process at the local and state level? • What approaches are working and/or needed to ensure access for special populations (i.e., undocumented students, students experiencing homelessness)? • What system-wide barriers to enrollment exist and how can they best be addressed?	• **Education leaders** identified enrollment as a major pain point and expressed interest in learning from peers and improving statewide systems. • **Funders** are interested in learning about ways they can support local solutions to enrollment barriers along with solutions that can help ease the burden at a statewide level. • **Community-based partners** will be better positioned to meet student needs if more is understood about effective local solutions and statewide improvements that are also needed.
5. System Conditions	• What conditions does it take to successfully grow and scale dual enrollment within K12 and higher education systems? • What are characteristics of effective dual enrollment partnerships among high schools and community colleges? What is needed to support strong partnerships? • What local and regional CBOs are partnering to enhance capacity, and what supports do they need to enhance impact? Where are opportunities for collaboration and innovation? • How can local and state resources be leveraged to support strong dual enrollment and partnerships?	• **Education leaders** are interested in knowing what it takes to grow programs over time (i.e., attract and serve more students), including best practices in recruitment, support, re-enrollment, and partnership. They are also interested in understanding how to spread programming district-wide. • **Community-based partners** will be better positioned to support partnerships and grow dual enrollment if there is a better understanding of the system conditions that need to be in place. • **Funders** are interested in understanding how to support partnerships, what it will take to scale dual enrollment more broadly, along with the supports and resources needed to achieve that over time.

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