



..... ***USING*** .....

# **DUAL ENROLLMENT**

TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES  
..... OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS .....

# A MULTIYEAR PLEDGE TO EXPAND DUAL ENROLLMENT

ACT is launching a multiyear commitment to increase the number of eligible high school students in dual enrollment programs across the nation.

With the assistance of several prominent national education organizations, ACT will work with federal and state policymakers to ensure that all eligible students have the opportunity, at as little cost to them as possible, to earn college credit from qualified instructors in high-quality dual enrollment programs.

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ACT would like to acknowledge the following national organizations for their collaboration on the development of this policy paper.

American Association of Community Colleges  
Education Commission of the States  
National Association for College Admission  
Counseling  
National Council for Community and Education  
Partnerships

Council of Chief State School Officers  
National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment  
Partnerships  
National Association of State Boards of Education  
National Governors Association

# SETTING THE POLICY CONTEXT

The link between college readiness in high school and subsequent success in postsecondary education has been firmly established.<sup>1</sup> While states are adopting more rigorous college and career readiness standards in K–12 education to reinforce this link, increasing rigor is just one necessary step toward improving postsecondary completion. Two others are (1) decreasing the length of time students take to earn a credential, and (2) helping students adjust to the academic expectations of postsecondary education.

Shortening the amount of time students spend working toward a postsecondary credential can reduce their total college costs, which is highly desirable to students, their parents, and policymakers. Equally important is finding convenient and effective ways to ease students' transition to college coursework. Critically, both of these factors disproportionately affect students from low-income families and/or students who are the first in their families to attend postsecondary education.<sup>2</sup> With this in mind, education leaders and policymakers are looking to dual credit and concurrent enrollment (hereinafter referred to together as “dual enrollment”) programs to address these issues.

## Key Benefits of Dual Enrollment

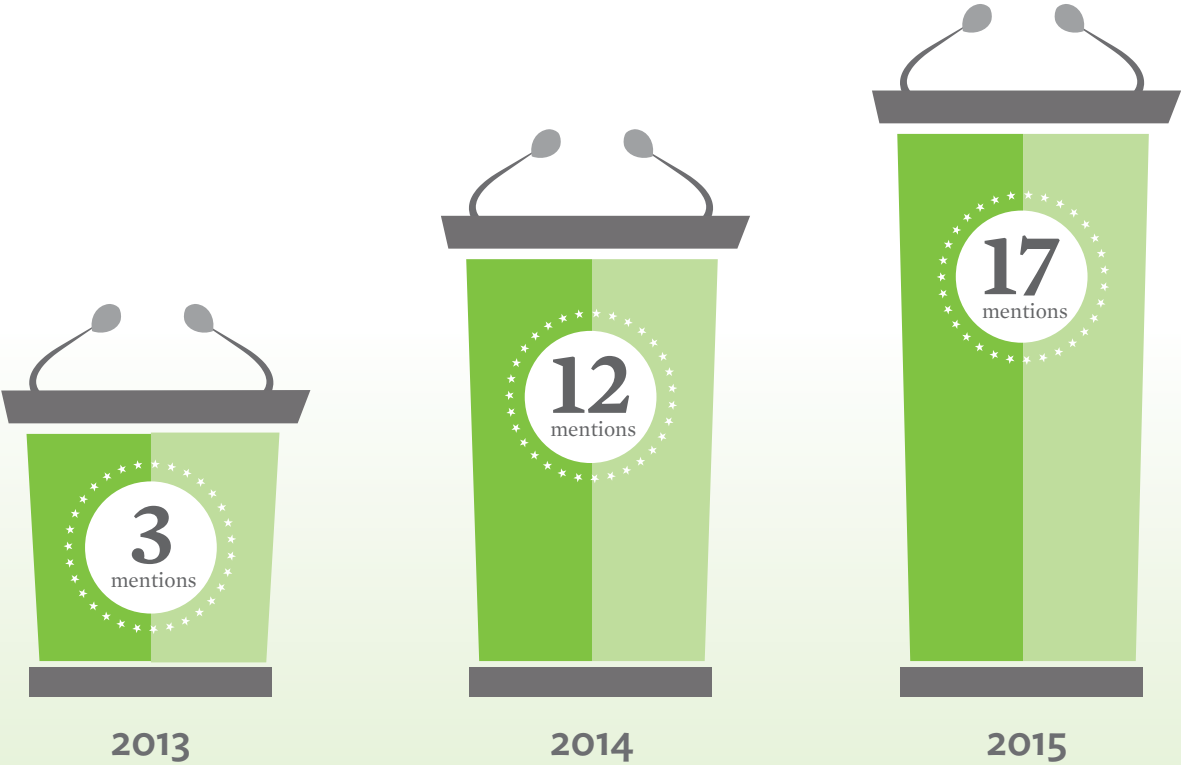
**CUTTING TIME TO COMPLETION:** Shortening students' timeline to degree completion can save them and their families a considerable amount of money.

**ADAPTING TO EXPECTATIONS:** Easing students' transition to college coursework and college expectations can improve persistence, promote academic integration, and increase degree attainment.



As the number of participants in dual enrollment programs continues to rise, so has the popularity of these programs among **policymakers** and **education leaders**.

NUMBER OF UNIQUE MENTIONS OF DUAL ENROLLMENT IN STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESSES



Source: American Association of State Colleges and Universities

Dual enrollment allows high school students to earn college credit by taking college courses at postsecondary institutions, their own schools, or online. In some states, credits earned through dual enrollment can be applied to meeting degree requirements once the student enters a postsecondary program, thus potentially reducing time to completion, tuition costs, and some of the early strain of adjusting to college expectations. Accordingly, demand for dual enrollment offerings has been strong.

In 2002-03, roughly 1.2 million students participated in a dual enrollment course. Less than a decade later, the number swelled to 2 million, an increase of 75 percent.<sup>3</sup> And as the number of participants in dual enrollment programs continues to rise,<sup>4</sup> so has the popularity of these programs among policymakers and education leaders. For example, in 2013, dual enrollment was mentioned in three gubernatorial State of the State addresses. One year later, the number of new mentions rose to 12, and this past year an additional five governors used this high-profile opportunity to introduce dual enrollment proposals or highlight existing program success.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the interest in dual enrollment, some challenges remain surrounding who has access, where instruction takes place (and led by whom), and how and when programs are evaluated. For these reasons, ACT is launching a multiyear commitment to increase the number of eligible high school students in dual enrollment programs across the nation. ACT will work with federal and state policymakers and several prominent national organizations to ensure that all eligible students have the opportunity, at as little cost to them as possible, to earn college credit from qualified instructors in high-quality dual enrollment programs.

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# THE EMPIRICAL FOUNDATION FOR ACT'S COMMITMENT TO DUAL ENROLLMENT

Dual enrollment programs have shown great promise in improving student success in postsecondary education and progress toward a postsecondary credential.<sup>6</sup> ACT research shows that high school graduates who enter college with credits from dual enrollment are more likely to be successful in college, including completing a bachelor's degree in less time, than are students who enter college without such credits.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, findings from ACT's most recent *Condition of College and Career Readiness* report<sup>8</sup> suggest that a sizable population exists of students eligible for dual enrollment programs. According to the report, 42 percent of the most recent cohort of high school graduates who took the ACT test were ready for college-level mathematics and 38 percent were ready for college-level science. Overall, 28 percent were college ready in all four subject areas (English, reading, mathematics, and science).<sup>9</sup>

Dual enrollment programs can also help advance a more rigorous high school curriculum, potentially reducing the gap between high school teachers' perceptions of the college readiness of their high school graduates and college instructors' perceptions of the readiness of their incoming first-year students for college-level coursework. Large majorities of the high school teachers surveyed periodically by ACT report that their students are "well" or "very well" prepared for college-level work in their content area, but only about one-fourth of the college instructors surveyed report this about their incoming students.<sup>10</sup>

ACT also believes that there are benefits beyond improved academic preparation for students who participate in dual enrollment programs. While research supports the value of test scores in predicting postsecondary academic success, other factors are crucial determinants of both college and workplace success, including crosscutting capabilities such as critical thinking; collaborative problem solving; behavioral skills such as persistence and self-regulation; and education and career navigation skills.<sup>11</sup> Participation in dual enrollment programs exposes students to experiences that have the potential to strengthen their familiarity with these factors as well.

According to ACT's *Condition of College and Career Readiness* report, a sizable population of students are eligible for ***dual enrollment*** programs.

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# COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS

To help identify promising dual enrollment policies and programs, ACT used a rubric designed by the Education Commission of the States (ECS),<sup>12</sup> one of ACT's partners in this initiative. For nearly a decade, ECS has been advising state policymakers on how to design effective statewide dual enrollment programs, including use of this rubric, which is constructed around principles of effective policy.

The ECS rubric contains 13 model components grouped into four categories: access, course quality, finance, and credit transferability (see Table 1 on the next page). The policy recommendations in the next section of this brief address all but the last of these categories.<sup>13</sup>

**ACT's recommendations** are intended for both federal and state policymakers and exhibit plenty of flexibility to fit multiple policy environments and policy levers.



**TABLE 1:**

# Principles For Designing Effective Dual Enrollment Programs<sup>14</sup>

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## 1. Access

Policies should increase the likelihood that students, especially those from underserved populations, will participate.

- » All eligible students are able to participate.
  - » Student eligibility requirements are based on the demonstration of ability to access college content.
  - » Caps on the maximum number of courses students may complete are not overly restrictive.
  - » Students earn both secondary and postsecondary credit for successful completion of approved postsecondary courses.
  - » Program information is regularly made available to all students and parents.
  - » Counseling is made available to students and parents before and during program participation.
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## 2. Course Quality

Policies should maintain consistent academic rigor across all course delivery options.

- » Courses have the same content and rigor regardless of where they are taught.
  - » Instructors meet the same expectations as instructors of similar traditional postsecondary courses, and receive appropriate support and evaluation.
  - » Districts and institutions publicly report on student participation and outcomes.
  - » Programs undergo evaluation based on available data.
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## 3. Finance

Policies should minimize financial barriers for students and financial disincentives for districts and colleges.

- » Responsibility for tuition payments should not solely fall on families.
  - » Districts and postsecondary institutions are fully funded or reimbursed for participating students.
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## 4. Credit Transferability

Policies must ensure dual enrollment credit is treated equitably.

- » Postsecondary institutions accept dual enrollment credit as transfer credit, provided measures of quality are ensured.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXPAND DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS**

This section presents four recommendations aimed at increasing the number of eligible students participating in high-quality dual enrollment programs. It also offers examples of state policies and programs that can help advance each recommendation.

The recommendations apply to both federal and state policy (including state efforts to support existing or planned dual enrollment programs initiated and operated by local school districts) and exhibit plenty of flexibility to fit multiple policy environments and policy levers.

With a strong research base and the support of our national partners, ACT is confident that these recommendations will help enable continued growth of effective dual enrollment programs for all eligible students, particularly low-income and first-generation students.

# 1. Develop funding mechanisms and nonmonetary incentives to encourage more equitable participation in dual enrollment programs.

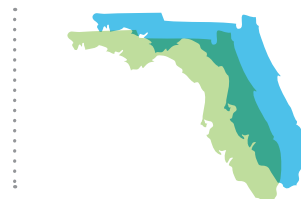
Funding is one of the most significant barriers preventing greater student participation in dual enrollment programs. Of the one million ninth graders in 2009 who took at least one dual enrollment course at some point during their time in high school, 11 percent were from a high-poverty background.<sup>15</sup> Yet only eight states eliminate all or most tuition costs for dual enrollment students (in some cases, books, fees, and transportation to the college campus are also covered), and in nine states students are responsible for the full cost of participating.<sup>16</sup>

Quite simply, requiring students to pay for dual enrollment restricts participation. Also, while discretionary funding, such as need-based scholarships, may help defray some or all of the costs of participation, they are subject to other budgetary pressures. ACT recommends exploring funding mechanisms to expand program participation, especially among low-income and first-generation students. The mechanisms should not overly inconvenience students; for example, by requiring them to pay up front for college tuition, fees, and textbooks and reimbursing them later.

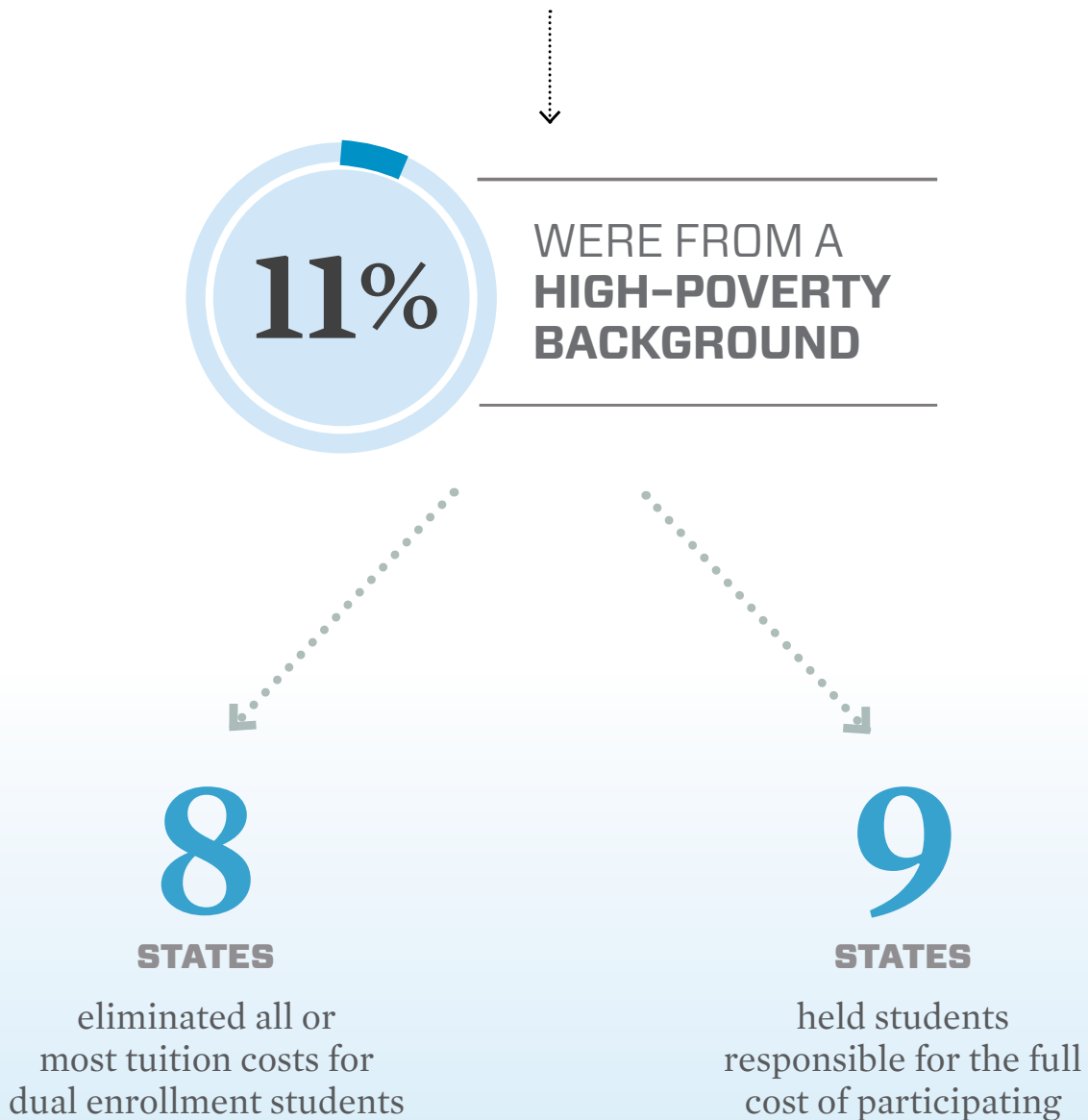
ACT also recommends using nonmonetary incentives. For example, some states have required high schools to offer dual enrollment courses and/or make the completion of a dual enrollment course necessary to earn a diploma.<sup>17</sup> Others include:

- » *Special consideration in college admissions and merit-based scholarships for students who take dual enrollment courses;*
- » *Added weight for dual enrollment coursework in GPA calculations; and*
- » *Incorporating dual enrollment participation rates into a state accountability system.*

**Example:** In Florida, dual enrollment students taking courses at a public postsecondary institution are exempt from paying for registration, tuition, or fees (Fla Stat. § 1007.271(2)).



Of the ***one million ninth graders in 2009*** who took at least one dual enrollment course at some point during their time in high school



## 2. Provide incentives for high school teachers wishing to teach in dual enrollment programs to obtain the academic degrees needed to teach at the college level.

Increasingly, high school teachers who are interested in teaching dual enrollment courses are finding it difficult to do so if they do not already hold a master's degree (or a sufficient number of graduate-level credits) in a relevant subject area. Certification is obviously not an issue for programs in which college instructors teach dual enrollment courses in a high school setting. However, for far too many schools, especially those that are under-resourced or geographically isolated, such programs are not a viable option.

Despite the challenges, certifying high school teachers for dual enrollment programs is valuable not only because it brings greater rigor to the programs but also because of the positive influence certification can have on the teachers' non-collegiate courses.

Therefore, ACT recommends that states develop a teacher improvement fund, or use federal professional development funds available in Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, to support high school teachers in obtaining the necessary certification for dual enrollment programs. In addition, states should look at alternative approaches and partnerships to ensure that teachers can access master's degree-level courses.

**Examples:** Ohio's College Credit Plus program offers scholarships for high school teachers interested in teaching dual enrollment courses to attain the requisite credential or graduate-level credits in a specific subject (Ohio Am. Sub. H.B. No. 64. § 263.323). Also, the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative—a partnership between rural Appalachian districts and the not-for-profit Battelle for Kids—offers master's-level courses through flexible and compressed scheduling that can accommodate teachers' schedules.

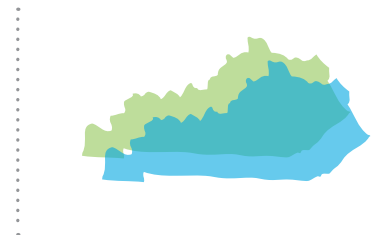


### 3. Ensure that students are prepared to meet the challenge of dual enrollment coursework and that their progress is regularly monitored to keep them from potentially becoming overwhelmed.

A beneficial college experience for high school students often means learning subject matter at a depth and pace that can be both unfamiliar and challenging to students. Students need to be aware of this as early as possible prior to participation in a dual enrollment program. School districts should ensure that students who take a dual enrollment course in high school or online are primed for success by being ready, engaged, and not overwhelmed; students who take a course on a college campus should be made aware of available academic supports and encouraged to take advantage of them.

ACT recommends that students—and their parents—be required to meet with a high school counselor or program coordinator prior to participation to discuss the challenges of and supports available in dual enrollment programs. Students' progress in dual enrollment courses should also be continually monitored by both the high school and the college, and activities to prepare students for the higher level of rigor in the courses should be routinely evaluated to make sure that they are in fact helpful.

**Example:** Kentucky requires that students' success in dual enrollment programs be monitored and annually reported to students and their parents. The state also encourages eligible students to meet with coordinators at the postsecondary institution and advisors at their own schools prior to course participation.<sup>18</sup>



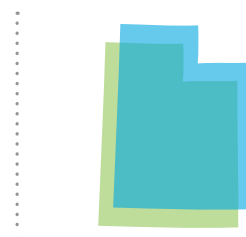
## 4. In places where a postsecondary institution is not conveniently located, use online resources or other approaches to help ensure access to dual enrollment programs.

Dual enrollment programs are designed to expose high school students to the real rigors and expectations of college. While dual enrollment courses taken in a high school classroom can replicate the content of college coursework, courses taken on a college campus have the added benefit of exposing high school students to the atmosphere of postsecondary education, including better acquainting themselves with the pace of learning and the experience of interacting with college faculty. However, it is difficult for students to take advantage of these additional benefits when a postsecondary institution is not conveniently located.

Therefore, ACT recommends that states and school districts seek out online partnerships with postsecondary institutions to permit students who wish to take courses at a college to access some aspects of that experience. Given technology challenges in some rural areas, states should ensure that bandwidth and connectivity issues are addressed so that all prepared students are able to access online dual enrollment courses.

States can also consider hybrid delivery approaches, whereby a postsecondary faculty member is the online instructor of record while a high school instructor ensures that students are making course progress and provides supplemental instruction as needed. States can also look at approaches using two-way videoconferencing, which allows students and postsecondary instructors to interact in real time.

**Examples:** In rural Utah, Snow College serves as a single statewide hub for students to take dual enrollment courses via interactive two-way videoconferencing and access academic advising through online chats with specific school-appointed advisors.







## CONCLUSION

Providing more high school students with meaningful college experiences through participation in dual enrollment programs is a valuable tool for helping to increase their readiness for life beyond high school, not just academically but in the other ways that contribute to education and workplace success.

ACT looks forward to collaborating with our partner organizations to expand and improve dual enrollment opportunities for all eligible students.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Jeff Allen, *Updating the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, 2013); Patrick Callan et al., *Claiming Common Ground: State Policymaking for Improving College Readiness and Success* (San Jose, CA: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2006); Melissa Roderick, Jenny Nagaoka, and Vanessa Coca, "College Readiness for All: The Challenge for Urban High Schools," *The Future of Children* 19 (2009): 185–210.
- <sup>2</sup> Ernest T. Pascarella et al., "First-Generation College Students: Additional Evidence on College Experiences and Outcomes," *Journal of Higher Education* 75 (2004), 249–284; Patrick T. Terenzini et al., "First-Generation College Students: Characteristics, Experiences, and Cognitive Development," *Research in Higher Education* 37 (1996), 1–22; Marvin A. Titus, "Understanding College Degree Completion of Students with Low Socioeconomic Status: The Influence of the Institutional Financial Context," *Research in Higher Education* 47 (2006), 371–398.
- <sup>3</sup> Stephanie Marken et al., *Dual Enrollment Programs and Courses for High School Students at Postsecondary Institutions: 2010–11* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2013); Brian Kleiner and Laurie Lewis, *Dual Enrollment of High School Students at Postsecondary Institutions: 2002–03* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).
- <sup>4</sup> Currently, 47 states have a statewide dual enrollment program. Between 2002–03 and 2010–11, dual enrollment programs experienced an annual growth rate of more than seven percent.
- <sup>5</sup> "The 2015 Gubernatorial State of the State Addresses and Higher Education," American Association of State Colleges and Universities, accessed October 19, 2015, <http://www.aascu.org/policy/state-policy/2015StateoftheStates.pdf>; "The 2014 Gubernatorial State of the State Addresses and Higher Education: State Summary," American Association of State Colleges and Universities, accessed October 19, 2015, <http://www.aascu.org/policy/state-policy/2014StateoftheStateAddresses.pdf>; "2013 Gubernatorial State of the State Speeches and Higher Education," American Association of State Colleges and Universities, accessed October 19, 2015, <http://www.aascu.org/policy/state-policy/2013/documents/stateofthestateaddresses.pdf>.
- <sup>6</sup> Jill D. Crouse and Jeff Allen, "College Course Grades for Dual Enrollment Students," *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 38 (2014), 1–18; Justine Radunzel, Julie Noble, and Sue Wheeler, (2014). *Dual-Credit/Dual-Enrollment Coursework and Long-Term College Success in Texas* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, 2014); Xueli Wang and Kelly Wickersham, "Postsecondary Co-Enrollment and Baccalaureate Completion: A Look at Both Beginning 4-Year College Students and Baccalaureate Aspirants Beginning at Community Colleges," *Research in Higher Education* 55 (2014), 166–195; Xueli Wang and Bo McCready, "The Effect of Postsecondary Co-Enrollment on College Success: Initial Evidence and Implications for Policy and Future Research," *Educational Researcher* 42 (2013), 392–402; Brian P. An, "The Impact of Dual Enrollment on College Degree Attainment: Do Low-SES Students Benefit?," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 35 (2013), 57–75; Ben Struhl and Joel Vargas, *Taking College Courses in High School: A Strategy for College Readiness—The College Outcomes of Dual Enrollment in Texas* (Boston / Washington, DC: Jobs for the Future, 2012); Cecilia Speroni, *Determinants of Students' Success: The Role of Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Programs* (New York: National Center for Postsecondary Research, 2011); Nancy Hoffman, Joel Vargas, and Janet Santos, (2009). "New Directions for Dual Enrollment: Creating Stronger Pathways from High School through College," *New Directions in Community Colleges* 2009 (2009), 43–58; Melinda Mechur Karp, et al., *State Dual Enrollment Policies: Addressing Access and Quality* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2004). There is also a special issue of *New Directions for Community Colleges* devoted to dual enrollment (Volume 2015, Issue 169).
- <sup>7</sup> Radunzel, Noble, and Wheeler, *Dual-Credit/Dual-Enrollment Coursework*.
- <sup>8</sup> ACT, *The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2015: National* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, 2015).
- <sup>9</sup> Specifically, 64 percent of tested students met the ACT College Readiness Benchmark for English, 46 percent met the Benchmark for reading, 42 percent met the Benchmark for mathematics, and 38 percent met the Benchmark for science.
- <sup>10</sup> See, for example, *ACT National Curriculum Survey 2012: Policy Implications on Preparing for Higher Standards* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, 2013).
- <sup>11</sup> Krista Mattern et al., *Broadening the Definition of College and Career Readiness: A Holistic Approach*, (Iowa City, IA: ACT, 2014).
- <sup>12</sup> Jennifer Dounay Zinth, *Increasing Student Access and Success in Dual Enrollment Programs: 13 Model State-Level Policy Components* (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 2014).
- <sup>13</sup> "Dual Enrollment - All State Profiles," Education Commission of the States, accessed October 19, 2015, <http://ecs.force.com/mbdata/mbprofallRT?Rep=DE14A>.
- <sup>14</sup> Dounay Zinth, *Increasing Student Access and Success*.
- <sup>15</sup> Estimates generated from the EDAT tool using public release data from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09). "High poverty background" refers to families at or below the 2011 poverty threshold set forth by the U.S. Census Bureau. Both family income and household size are considered when calculating a family's standing with respect to the threshold. More information is available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld>.
- <sup>16</sup> "Dual Enrollment: Who Is Primarily Responsible for Paying Tuition," Education Commission of the States, accessed October 19, 2015, <http://ecs.force.com/mbdata/MBQuestRTL?Rep=DE1404>.
- <sup>17</sup> High schools in Florida, Indiana, New Mexico, and Texas and public colleges in Florida and Oregon are required to offer dual enrollment courses. New Mexico requires completion of an accelerated course (such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or dual enrollment) for high school graduation, while Florida, Indiana, and Tennessee require completion of an accelerated course for honors diplomas.
- <sup>18</sup> "Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education and Kentucky Department of Education Dual Credit Policy for Kentucky Public and Participating Postsecondary Institutions and Secondary Schools," accessed October 19, 2015, <http://education.ky.gov/comm/news/Documents/Dual%20Credit%20Policy%20Draft%20Final.pdf>.

Guided by our mission to help individuals achieve education and workplace success, and with more than 50 years of data to draw upon, ACT is uniquely positioned to identify pressing policy issues and offer potential solutions across the continuum from kindergarten through career.