
Dual Enrollment in Maryland and Baltimore City: An Examination of Program Components and Design

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Introduction

As part of Maryland's effort to enhance college and career readiness, and college completion, the General Assembly passed the *Maryland College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013* (CCR-CCA), which included provisions to encourage high school students to enroll in college-level courses. Traditionally, dual enrollment programs have appealed to high-performing college-bound students; however, today there is growing interest among policymakers in encouraging access to dual enrollment programs for a broader range of students.

So far, participation rates in Maryland's dual enrollment program have been low and a diverse range of students has not accessed the program. In 2014-15, just 11 percent of 12th grade students statewide dually enrolled in one or more college courses while in high school. Moreover, minority and low-income students were less likely than their white and more affluent peers to take advantage of the program. When juxtaposed against college-going trends that show a decline in college enrollment among African-American students and a school-aged population that is becoming more racially, ethnically, and economically diverse (i.e., poorer), it is clear that

more needs to be done if the state is to reach its goal of increasing college and career readiness.

How can Maryland encourage broader enrollment? To date, there is surprisingly little research on which components of dual enrollment programs have the greatest influence on students' decisions to enroll. Because legislation in most states, including Maryland, does not specify how school systems should provide dual enrollment programs, there is substantial variation in program components and design across school systems. Understanding which components and designs promote greater access and success for low-income and minority students is, therefore, a necessary first step in expanding the benefits of dual enrollment programming to all students.

This study focused on the components of dual enrollment programs and how those components may influence students' decisions to enroll in a college course while in high school. It used a comparative case study method to examine the design and implementation of dual enrollment in four Maryland school districts—Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and

Table 1: Demographic Composition and Enrollment by District and State, 2014-15

District	Black %	White %	Latino %	Asian %	Multiracial %	FRPM %	Total Enrollment
Anne Arundel County	20.4	57.8	11.9	3.6	5.8	33.5	79,518
Baltimore City	82.7	8.0	7.4	1.0	0.5	84.0	84,976
Baltimore County	38.8	42.1	7.7	6.7	4.2	47.5	109,830
Prince George's County	62.6	4.5	27.9	2.8	1.6	64.8	127,576
State of Maryland	34.6	39.9	14.7	6.2	4.2	45.0	874,514

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Common Core of Data*.

Note: Eligibility for free and reduced-price meals (FRPM) is used to measure the number of students from low-income households.

Prince George's County. This approach allowed us to explore the nuances of dual enrollment programs and provided contextual information that furthered our understanding of program design and implementation. This research was exploratory. The goal was not to show that one way of designing and implementing dual enrollment was preferred, but to discover what factors may facilitate or constrain enrollment and to identify additional information that might be helpful in developing robust programs.

Selected District Characteristics and Enrollment Patterns

Before presenting the study's findings, we outline key demographic and enrollment data for the comparison counties (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Prince George's counties, and Baltimore City). The comparison counties were selected based on three criteria: (1) the demographic characteristics of the students (i.e., counties with significant minority and low-income enrollment); (2) dual enrollment

program enrollment (i.e., counties with higher enrollment that may help identify "promising practices"); and (3) geographic proximity to Baltimore City.

Table 1 (above) shows the demographic characteristics and enrollment of the four districts and the state as of 2014-2015.

As shown in Table 2 (p. 3), between 2011-12 and 2014-15, the proportion of dually enrolled students increased in three districts—Anne Arundel County (3 percentage points), Baltimore County (4 percentage points), and Prince George's County (3 percentage points)—and remained unchanged in Baltimore City. The statewide increase in dually enrolled students was 4 percentage points.

Findings

Our study of dual enrollment in these four districts shows the complexity of designing and implementing a robust program. As expected, there was considerable variation across districts on all elements of program

Table 2: Number and Percentage of Dually Enrolled 12th Grade Students by District and State, 2011-12 to 2014-15

District	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		Percentage Point Increase, 2011 to 2015
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Anne Arundel County	512	10	534	10	724	14	709	13	3 percentage points
Baltimore City	124	2	125	2	146	3	119	2	0 percentage points
Baltimore County	625	8	551	7	672	9	905	12	4 percentage points
Prince George's County	261	3	231	3	238	3	501	6	3 percentage points
State of Maryland	4,585	7	4,732	7	5,453	9	6,548	11	4 percentage points

Source: Maryland Longitudinal Data System. For 2011-12 to 2013-14 data: Henneberger, Shaw, Uretsky, & Woolley, 2015. For 2014-15 data: Henneberger et al., 2016.

design and implementation, including variability on requirements specified in the law such as how much colleges and universities can charge for tuition. The law's relative silence on many components of dual enrollment gives districts and colleges flexibility to design programs that meet local needs and address availability of resources.

However, the CCR-CCA greatly oversimplifies the effort and resources needed to develop a robust program. While it mandates tuition discounts that benefit students, particularly low-income students, it neglects the resources that districts and colleges need to administer the program, and to provide the support students need to navigate the enrollment process and engage in career exploration and planning. By shifting tuition costs onto districts, and to a lesser extent onto colleges, the CCR-CCA places additional burdens on district and college budgets without providing additional resources.

Variation in Program Design

Because the CCR-CCA is silent on most design elements, with the exception of funding, dual enrollment program decisions are made locally by partnering institutions. Thus, we found considerable variation among the four districts in this study on how they designed and implemented dual enrollment.

Funding Arrangements: At the most basic level, dual enrollment under the CCR-CCA is a payment plan. The legislation codified statewide tuition guidelines for assessing and paying tuition costs, and now ensures that dually enrolled public school students receive a reduction in tuition when they enroll in a college course during high school. Tuition costs were shifted from students onto the districts, colleges, and universities, with districts responsible for a significant portion of tuition.

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Because the program is implemented locally, tuition and fee arrangements differ by district—and within districts—by college or university. We found funding policies differed on the following: the size of the tuition discount offered by colleges, the amount of the tuition subsidy provided by the district, which students received a tuition subsidy from the district, and whether the college or district covered the cost of books and fees.

Eligibility Requirements: One goal of the CCR-CCA was to increase opportunities for high school students, particularly low-income students, to gain college experience and earn college credit while in high school. But to enroll, students must demonstrate the ability to succeed in college-level courses. Because the law is silent on eligibility requirements, colleges determine these criteria, although districts may provide input or have additional requirements.

In all four districts, student eligibility requirements were based on objective indicators of a student’s ability to succeed in a college course and did not include difficult-to-measure student attributes such as motivation or ability to benefit from dual enrollment. However, “student readiness” for college-level coursework was a challenge, particularly in Baltimore City where few students met the eligibility requirements. Among the measures used to assess college readiness, districts identified placement scores on college entrance exams as an obstacle to enrollment, especially for nontraditional college-going students.

Student Support Services: The law is silent on providing students with support, counseling, or guidance when considering or enrolling in college courses, and does not provide additional resources to cover the cost of support services. Nonetheless, students with less social and cultural capital, particularly low-income and first-generation college students, often require additional support and guidance to navigate access and ensure success in a college system.

Both districts and colleges recognized the need for and importance of student support services to help students navigate the enrollment process and advise them on course selection and career planning. However, finding resources and personnel to adequately provide these services was a challenge. We found that the job of providing these services often fell on high school counselors and the college admissions office, and was added on top of their other responsibilities, thus constraining the ability to provide systematic and sustained support.

Communication: The law requires that “each county board shall make all high school students who meet mutually agreed on enrollment requirements aware of the opportunity to dually enroll . . .” (State of Maryland, 2013; 18-14A-05). Districts met this minimum requirement by notifying students that they were eligible to apply for dual enrollment and using a variety of formats to communicate information on

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dual enrollment. Districts and colleges also recognized that effectively communicating with parents and students was multifaceted, and required the communication of both information and expectations. However, communicating expectations and making sure that parents and students understood the benefits of participating were challenges that required multiple approaches and resources.

Institutional Arrangements Facilitating or Constraining Dual Enrollment

Theoretically, students can dually enroll in any college or university in Maryland. However, we found that institutional factors—such as the location of colleges, the agreements or MOUs (or lack thereof) put in place between colleges and districts, transportation options, and agreements or laws that facilitate the transfer of credit—were likely to influence decisions students made about dual enrollment.

- Community colleges were the clear beneficiaries of dual enrollment, attracting the majority (86 percent in 2013-14) of dually enrolled students. The proximate availability of community colleges to students (community colleges are regional), active outreach by community colleges to local school systems, and a close fit between the goals of dual enrollment and the colleges' goals of attracting and retaining economically disadvantaged and diverse students facilitated student access and enrollment.
- MOUs between a district and college facilitated dual enrollment because

they encouraged cooperation across districts, stipulated avenues for addressing challenges to implementation and participation as they arose, and often provided additional resources and supports that were coordinated across institutions.

- Transportation can be a significant obstacle for students. In many counties where college campuses are located far from a student's home or high school, public transportation options are limited. In Baltimore City, students have access to public transportation, but transportation was still an issue.
- The law is silent on transferring dual enrollment credit from one institution to another. Study respondents suggested that the transfer of nongeneral education courses was problematic, particularly between community colleges and four-year institutions. Because each institution decides which nongeneral education courses to accept, it is very difficult for students to determine which institutions will accept their community college credits.

Recommendations

Maryland's CCR-CCA legislation set the laudable goal of increasing college and career readiness, and established dual

If Maryland is to provide equitable access to effective dual enrollment programs, legislators and local policymakers need to strengthen the program so districts and colleges can make good on that promise.

enrollment as one mechanism to facilitate that goal. As this study shows, however, designing and implementing a robust dual enrollment program that reaches a broad spectrum of students requires more than simply making the program available and expecting that students will take advantage of it. It requires resources, support personnel, and flexibility for administrators to respond to a range of implementation issues as they arise.

If Maryland is to provide equitable access to effective dual enrollment programs, legislators and local policymakers need to strengthen the program so districts and colleges can make good on that promise.

When thinking about improving Maryland's dual enrollment legislation, it is important to consider how much flexibility should be retained, and how much and what kind of additional regulation and resources may be needed. Our recommendations are based on the premise of maximizing the benefits for students while retaining local flexibility over program design. With that in mind, there are a number of policies that Maryland could adopt that would nudge colleges and school districts in the direction of strengthening their programs while ensuring program quality and student access.

1. Fully fund or reimburse districts and institutions of higher education for participating students.

- Maryland should consider fully reimbursing districts the costs of tuition for students that are dually enrolled. At a

minimum, fees for low-income students should also be funded by the state.

- Districts and colleges should receive some reimbursement for any administrative costs associated with implementing dual enrollment.
- Districts and colleges should receive funding to provide students and their parents with counseling and advising, both before they enroll and during program participation.

2. Require and fund the provision of student support services.

- Require and fund support services to help students and their parents navigate the enrollment process, develop college and career plans, and understand the risks and obligations of dual enrollment.
- Prior to enrollment and during dual enrollment course participation, counseling services should be available at both the high school and college levels.

3. Facilitate the transfer of credits.

- Require postsecondary institutions to accept and apply credit earned for nongeneral education courses through dual enrollment. Current law requires the transfer of general education course credit, but not for nongeneral education courses.

- Standardize the numbering system for similar courses across the Maryland educational system.

4. Incentivize other program models that incorporate dual enrollment.

- Provide incentives for districts to develop other models that incorporate dual enrollment.
- Extend the tuition discounts to include developmental courses, with provisions that allow students to enroll in a college course if they successfully complete the developmental course.

5. Evaluate the implementation of dual enrollment programs.

- Appropriate state funding to support a robust evaluation of dual enrollment that includes examining short-term and long-term outcomes as well as program design and implementation.
- Appropriate state funding to support research that examines the characteristics of students who are eligible for dual enrollment to better understand why some of these students participate and others do not.

6. Consider alternative eligibility assessments.

- Develop a metric so that PARCC can be used in place of college placement scores.

A link to the full report can be found at:
<http://www.abell.org/publications/dual-enrollment-maryland-and-baltimore-city>.

About the Author

Gail L. Sunderman, Ph.D., is research scientist in the College of Education, University of Maryland and director of the Maryland Equity Project. Her research focuses on the role of the state and federal government in education and the impact of policy on the educational opportunities of low-income and minority students.

The Maryland Equity Project is a research center in the Department of Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership in the College of Education at The University of Maryland. It conducts, synthesizes, and distributes research on key educational issues in Maryland, facilitates collaboration between researchers and policymakers, and seeks to improve education through research that supports an informed public policy debate on the quality and distribution of educational opportunities.

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