



PRESS RELEASE

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Dual Enrollment Has Large Benefits for Students but Rigor and Location Are Critical, New Studies Find

NEW YORK, NY (December 9, 2011) - Participation in dual enrollment – in which high school students take college classes for credit - has strong positive effects on college enrollment and completion, but where students take dual enrollment classes and what classes they take are critical in driving these effects, two new studies from the National Center for Postsecondary Research have found.

The first study, which tracked all of Florida's 2000-01 and 2001-02 high school seniors, found that students who participated in dual enrollment (DE) were 12% more likely to go to college and 7% more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than similar students who did not participate. However, these strong effects were driven entirely by dual enrollment classes taken on college campuses. Students who took dual enrollment classes exclusively on the high school campus showed no statistically significant gains.

The study also compared the impact of Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment classes on college outcomes. Contrary to popular assertions that AP classes are more beneficial than dual enrollment, the study found that DE and AP participation had similarly positive impacts. DE students were more likely than AP students to first enroll in two-year rather than four-year colleges, but they went on to earn bachelor's degrees at a comparable rate.

The second study, which tracked a subset of Florida's 2000-01 and 2001-02 high school seniors who took a college algebra placement test, found that students who passed the test and enrolled in a rigorous dual enrollment college algebra class were 16% more likely to go to college and 23% more likely to earn a college degree than similar students who did not take the class.

Interestingly, participation in dual enrollment *in general* had no effect on marginal students whose GPA was just above the minimum necessary to participate. These students were no more likely to enroll in or complete college than statistically similar students who did not participate in DE. The combined findings suggest that, at least for some students, the benefits of dual enrollment are driven by the type of class they take.

The two studies offer important insights into how dual enrollment can best be structured to deliver maximum benefits for students. Previous studies of dual enrollment programs in Florida and New York City, conducted by the Community College Research Center, found positive impacts for participating students on a range of college outcomes. However, the studies did not disaggregate the effects of course location and content which – as the new studies demonstrate – vary significantly.

States across the nation have increasingly embraced dual enrollment as a promising intervention to help students of differing abilities and backgrounds gain college knowledge and a head start in obtaining a degree. Almost one million American high school students took a college course in 2002-03 (the last numbers available), and since then the numbers have grown.

The new studies confirm that dual enrollment can be advantageous for students, but also contain a note of warning: dual enrollment programs and experiences vary significantly in the extent to which they benefit students. Districts and colleges should consider tracking outcomes for dual enrollment students in order to use data to adjust program structure for maximum impact.

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The National Center for Postsecondary Research (NCPR) is housed and led by the Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. Established in 2006 through a grant from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education, NCPR measures the effectiveness of programs designed to help students make the transition to college and master the basic skills needed to advance to a degree.