

How States and Systems Can Support Practitioner Efforts to Strengthen Dual Enrollment



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than one million high school students enroll in some type of dual enrollment (DE) college coursework in partnership with a college or university every year. The benefits of participating in one of these programs have been well documented, but so too have the gaps in participation among Black and Hispanic students, English learners, students with disabilities, and other groups not well served in the high school-to-college transition. Furthermore, there is uneven access to well-taught dual enrollment coursework that is aligned with postsecondary academic and career pathways that high school students may want to pursue.

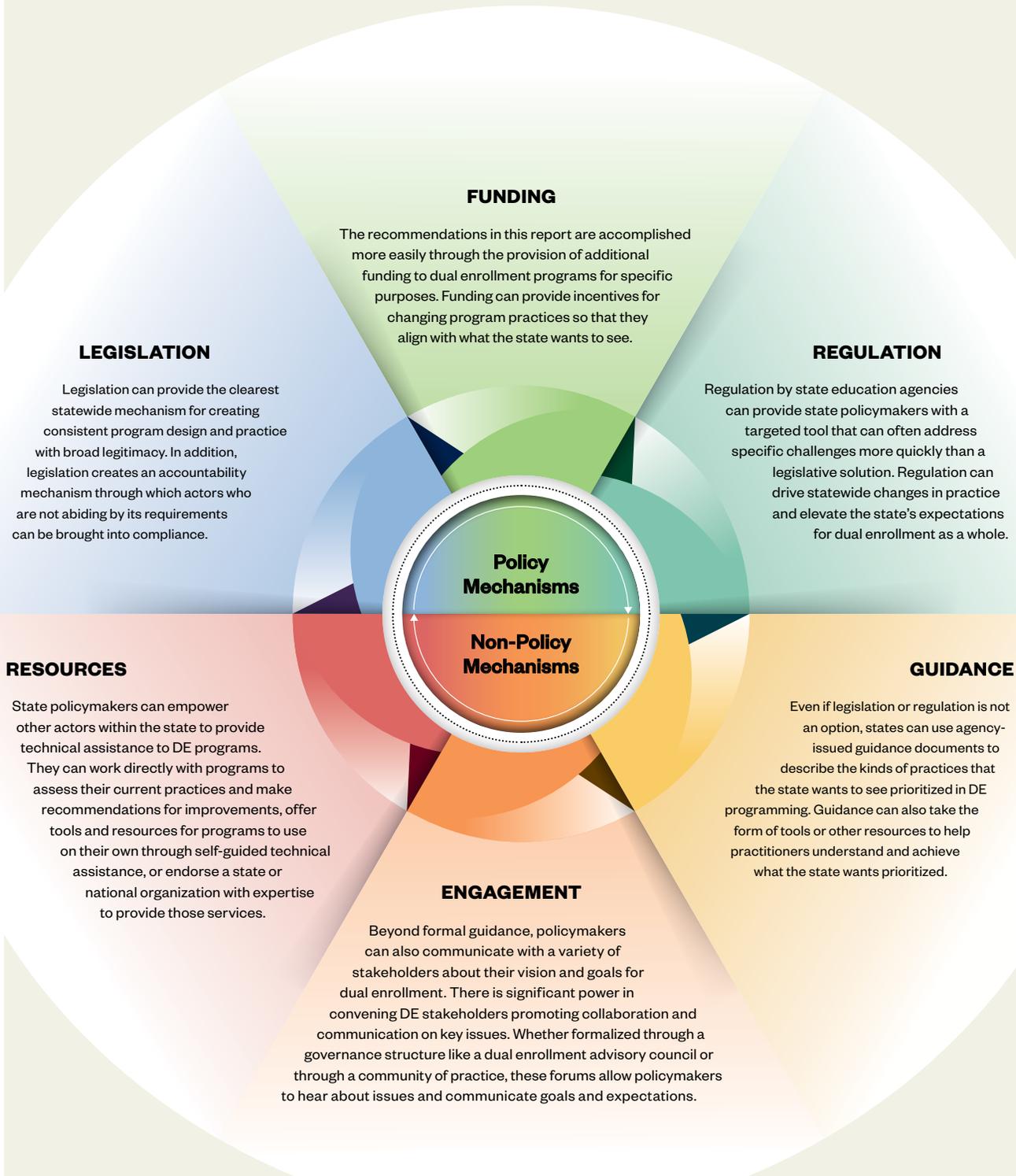
With the expansion of DE programs in recent years, researchers have documented how college and K–12 practitioners are reforming DE to focus on broadening its benefits for all students. In this report, we aim to amplify the work of these practitioners by providing research-based recommendations for states and systems to strengthen dual enrollment. Drawing on findings from interviews with college and K–12 leaders and reformers described in The Aspen Institute and the Community College Research Center’s (CCRC) *Dual Enrollment Playbook* and in CCRC’s research on Dual Enrollment Equity Pathways (DEEP) practices, we provide state leaders with recommendations for improving DE programming in ways that support practitioners’ efforts.

Recommendations are organized by how state leaders can support DE improvement efforts in these three areas:

1. expanding access to DE,
2. strengthening DE as an on-ramp to high-opportunity postsecondary pathways, and
3. building and sustaining DE partnerships between K–12 leaders and colleges that are grounded in a shared vision emphasizing access, quality, and success.

We present recommendations for state and system leaders pertaining to the three areas: expanding access, strengthening on-ramps to postsecondary pathways, and building and sustaining strong partnerships. For each recommendation, we also highlight sample approaches that states across the country have used to aid practitioners in their reform efforts. There are six general mechanisms through which these approaches may be undertaken, three that employ formal policy action—legislation, funding, and regulation—and three that do not—guidance, engagement, and resources.

Six Types of Mechanisms for States



AREA 1**Expanding Access**

Supporting the expansion of access to DE requires deliberate efforts by states and systems to address the state- and system-wide barriers most difficult for individual programs to solve. This involves establishing a data-informed statewide vision for the role of these programs (which includes a clear understanding of who is currently participating in DE and who is not), creating conditions for greater access and participation, and reducing the cost burden for students.

Recommendation 1: Set statewide goals and measure progress.

Recommendation 2: Rethink eligibility requirements.

Recommendation 3: Reduce tuition and non-tuition costs to students and families through state funding.

AREA 2**Strengthening On-Ramps to Postsecondary Pathways**

States and systems can reinforce practitioners' efforts by encouraging and incentivizing and the implementation of DE as well-designed, well-aligned on-ramps to postsecondary programs of study that high school students are interested in. States and systems support DE programs by ensuring that policies and initiatives enable rather than impede mutually beneficial DE partnerships across school districts and colleges/universities.

Recommendation 4: Align and promote credit transfer.

Recommendation 5: Prioritize advising and navigational support.

Recommendation 6: Promote FAFSA completion before graduation.

Recommendation 7: Provide support to strengthen the quality of instruction.

AREA 3**Building and Sustaining Strong Partnerships**

Successful DE requires strong partnerships between K–12 and college practitioners. State-level leaders can help to develop stronger K–12–college networks. While particular colleges and school districts are focused on their own partnerships, often maintained through bilateral articulation agreements or memoranda of understanding, states and systems can provide supportive infrastructure to facilitate and systematize these partnerships.

Recommendation 8: Align college and K–12 incentives to promote dual enrollment access and success.

Recommendation 9: Diversify, expand, and support further credentialing of the instructor pool.

Recommendation 10: Maximize K–12–college partnership potential through relationships and communities of practice.

Recommendation 11: Encourage a culture of equity in dual enrollment programming.

Questions for State and System Leaders

This report is accompanied by a State Policymaker Strategy Development Guide to help states and systems consider what recommendations are most important to them and what new approaches might be the most effective. It introduces a simple three-step process to (1) review the report’s recommendations and sample approaches, (2) inventory current state efforts, and (3) plan new efforts. The following are broad related questions that may facilitate state policy discussion on strengthening dual enrollment.

What policy and non-policy mechanisms are available to your state or system to support practitioner efforts to expand equitable DE access? To strengthen DE as an on-ramp to a postsecondary pathway? To build and sustain strong equity partnerships?

What approaches are your state or system already implementing to advance efforts to expand equitable DE access? To strengthen DE as an on-ramp to a postsecondary pathway? To build and sustain strong equity partnerships?

What new approaches might your state or system pursue to expand equitable DE access? To strengthen DE as an on-ramp to a postsecondary pathway? To build and sustain strong equity partnerships?

How does your state or system plan to engage with stakeholders and practitioners to adequately address the questions above?