

High School Students Who Combine Dual Enrollment and Advanced Placement Courses Graduate College at Higher Rates and Earn More After College

CTE Students Who Take Dual Enrollment Also Have Better Outcomes

New York, October 14, 2025 — A new report from the Community College Research Center looks at Texas high school students who take accelerated coursework and finds that students who combine dual enrollment (DE) courses with Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate (AP/IB) courses have higher college graduation rates and earn more at age 24 than students with AP/IB coursework alone. The report finds similarly strong results for students who combine DE with a CTE focus. However, CTE students' participation in DE remains low.

The report, [*Promising Combinations of Dual Enrollment, AP/IB, and CTE: The College and Earnings Trajectories of Texas High School Students Who Take Accelerated Coursework*](#), follows students from Texas high schools who were expected to graduate in 2015-16 and 2016-17 for six years after high school. Additional data from the 2019-20 and 2022-23 cohorts provided more information on students in early college high schools.

While previous research has shown that dual enrollment and other accelerated coursework improves college outcomes, this new report is the first to focus on the students who are combining DE with different types of accelerated coursework. It also looks at income trajectories several years after high school for those students.

“Most dual enrollment students in Texas also take other accelerated courses, and those who do tend to have stronger college and earnings trajectories,” said CCRC Senior Research Associate Tatiana Velasco. “It’s a pattern we hadn’t fully appreciated before, which offers clues for how to expand the benefits of dual enrollment to more students.”

The Findings: High School Students Who Combine Dual Enrollment with Other Accelerated Coursework Have Better College and Earnings Outcomes

1. Students who take accelerated coursework have much stronger postsecondary and earnings outcomes in their early 20s than those who do not take any accelerated coursework. By age 24, less than 40% of students with no accelerated coursework had enrolled at a postsecondary institution, and only 10% completed a postsecondary credential.

2. Students who combine dual enrollment and AP/IB courses have the strongest college outcomes, even after controlling for student demographics, test scores, and school characteristics. More than 90% of DE and AP/IB takers enrolled in college or completed a credential by the first year after high school, and 71% earned a credential by the sixth year, including 60% who completed a bachelor's degree. However, students who take AP/IB in combination with DE are less diverse than students who take AP/IB alone.
3. Students who combine DE and AP/IB have the strongest earnings gains. They earned an average of \$10,306 per quarter at age 24, compared to \$9,746 per quarter for students who took only DE and \$8,934 per quarter for students who took AP/IB but not DE. The advantage associated with combining DE and AP/IB persisted after accounting for student demographics, test scores, and school characteristics.
4. Fewer than 5% of students combine a CTE focus (taking 10 or more CTE courses) with dual enrollment, but those who do have significantly stronger postsecondary enrollment and attainment rates than those with a CTE focus only, even after accounting for student and school characteristics. By age 24, the earnings of DE takers with a CTE focus jumped to an average of \$9,746 per quarter—well above the earnings of CTE-focus-only students (\$8,097) and below the earnings of only one other profile group, the DE and AP/IB takers (\$10,306).
5. Early college high school students are more diverse than other students taking accelerated courses. They complete associate degrees at a higher rate and earn more than Texas students overall by age 21, but they make up only 5% of high school students statewide.

Recommendations for Broadening the Benefits of Accelerated Coursework

With only one in five Texas students taking dual enrollment, there's an opportunity to broaden the benefits of accelerated coursework to more students. The authors recommend that K-12 districts and colleges:

- Expand dual enrollment participation,
- Ensure that dual enrollment complements—rather than competes with—AP/IB offerings,
- Increase access to dual enrollment for students in high school CTE programs, and
- Add supports to promote student success in dual enrollment.

The Community College Research Center has been a leader in the field of community college research and reform for over 25 years. Our work provides a foundation for innovations in policy and practice that help give every community college student the best chance of success.