The implementation of dual credit programs in six nonurban Kentucky school districts

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About This Study

Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Appalachia partnered with members of its Kentucky research alliance to study how six school districts are implementing dual credit programs. Since 2009, Kentucky has encouraged school districts to offer dual credit programs to better prepare students for college and careers. Educators have requested information about how these programs are implemented, particularly in nonurban school districts.

Nuts and Bolts

This study examined dual credit programs in five rural and one suburban school district in Kentucky. REL Appalachia developed a profile of each district using data from phone interviews with stakeholder groups and reviews of program documents. Profiles describe:

- District demographics
- Program policies and practices
- Student participation
- Postsecondary partnerships
- Course offerings
- Course location and scheduling
- Instructors and credentialing
- Student supports
- Quality assurance
- Costs and funding sources
- Perceived successes and challenges

Key Findings

Dual credit programs are an **important feature of college readiness efforts** in all six school districts included in the study.



Implementation varies widely across and within school districts, including the number and types of programs available to students and the costs to families.



Each school district **works with at least one 2-year and one 4-year institution** to offer dual credit programs and courses.



The limited availability of **credentialed high school teachers** in the six school districts is a barrier to expansion of dual credit programs.



The **most prevalent approach offers dual credit courses at the high school campus,** taught by credentialed high school teachers.



Dual credit programs enable high school students to earn college credit at a discount, but **costs and financial support vary widely.**

What now?

> "Districts would like to expand dual credit access and offerings but are challenged by such barriers as insufficient staff to meet the growing demand for these programs."
>
> *–Patricia Kannapel, Ph.D., REL Appalachia Director and Report Author*

Implementation Facilitators

Key facilitators of implementation identified by program coordinators include:

- Dedicated staff to manage dual credit programs at postsecondary institutions.
- Positive relationships and communications between district and postsecondary staff.
- Geographic proximity to postsecondary institutions.

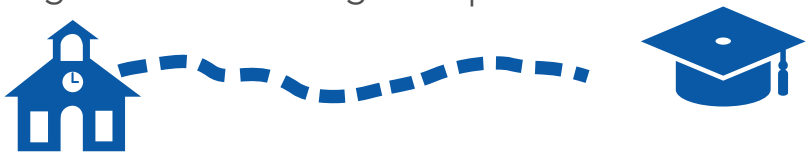
Challenges

As Kentucky seeks to expand dual credit programs, findings from this study indicate that creative solutions may be needed to address challenges related to:

1. Increasing the number of instructors credentialed to teach dual credit courses.
2. Increasing access to dual credit opportunities, especially in remote, rural locations.
3. Ensuring students are ready for college-level coursework.
4. Making dual credit programs affordable for all eligible students across the state.
5. Ensuring course quality.
6. Providing enough dedicated staff at secondary and postsecondary levels to effectively manage dual credit programs.

Issues to Consider

Geography Matters: Educators reported that schools located at a distance from postsecondary institutions face challenges when securing credentialed instructors and offering courses on college campuses.



Costs: Even with tuition discounts and scholarships, costs can be a barrier for some students.

Variable Access: Dual credit programs vary at the school level based on local conditions, which can result in inequitable opportunities across schools.



Read the full report at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=437

Piontek, M. E., Kannapel, P. J., Flory, M., & Stewart, M. S. (2016). *The implementation of dual credit programs in six nonurban Kentucky school districts* (REL 2016-136). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia.