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PROGRAM

The Experiential Dual-Enrollment Program: Building a College-Going Culture for First-Generation Youth and Families

Pamela Fisher
Stephen Abbott

Great Schools Partnership, Inc.

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Introduction

As many commentators have recently noted, we are entering the fourth decade of secondary school "reform" that followed the publication of *A Nation At Risk* in 1983, and efforts to improve student success in high schools, reduce the number of dropouts, and increase college-going rates have not been as successful as many once hoped and expected. The pipeline to college and the attainment of a postsecondary degree remains broken for far too many students, especially those from lower income, minority, or less educated backgrounds. According to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, "For every 10 students who start high school, fewer than 7 will get a high school diploma, 4 will enroll in college, and fewer than 2 will complete an associate or bachelor's degree within 150 percent of the required time," and by age 30, only 29 percent of Americans have earned a bachelor's degree and 7 percent hold associate degrees (Pennington, 2004). In the 21st century, these figures can be seen as disheartening, if not alarming. Despite the fact that more students than ever are *aspiring* to higher education (Adelman, 1999; Ingels and Dalton, 2008), a significant percentage either never enroll in a postsecondary-degree program or fail to persist and earn a degree. The diminishing, funnel-like trajectory of educational attainment in the United States has long been a cause for concern, and the sheer quantities of students affected necessitates systemic, affordable, and imaginative solutions that can be implemented on a national scale.

Many of the most popular educational reform models—such as charter schools or small, theme-based academies—often require the creation of new schools and facilities or large financial investments that are beyond the means of many communities. Although these models can be transformative for the students they serve, only a relatively small percentage of the total secondary population in the United States is able to take advantage of these learning opportunities. Consequently, the problem they pose is not one of efficacy, but rather of scale and equity. Given that the comprehensive high school continues to serve the majority of the Nation's adolescents, the widespread failure to innovate effectively *within*—not outside of—America's existing high schools remains arguably the primary shortcoming of decades of education reform.

To improve learning opportunities and life outcomes for the current generation of high school students, educators and reformers need to meet students where they are: in our Nation's comprehensive public high schools. One of the more recent and promising innovations in secondary education is known as *Dual Enrollment*.[1]

[1] The terms *Dual Enrollment* and *early college* are often used interchangeably. For the purposes of clarity, only *Dual Enrollment* will be used in this paper, except when referring to early college high schools or specific Maine programs.

Throughout the United States, Dual-Enrollment programs and experiences are rapidly becoming a popular and highly effective strategy for engaging disadvantaged, underserved, and first-generation youth (see appendix 1), and for promoting higher educational aspirations among students from communities and families with little or no college-going history (Barnett and Stamm, 2010). Dual-Enrollment opportunities allow high school students to take college-level courses before graduating, often to earn both secondary and transferable postsecondary credit for completing a college course. Although numerous models are being used across the country, Dual-Enrollment opportunities generally take one of the following three forms:

- college courses taken at a high school and taught by college faculty—or, in many cases, by high school teachers who have been certified as adjunct faculty by a local community college or public university;
- Dual-Enrollment opportunities that provide on-campus postsecondary learning experiences and are offered as an extension of an existing high school program; or
- independent *early college high schools* that award graduates an associate's degree or 2 years of transferable college credit after 4 or 5 years of combined secondary and postsecondary study (National High School Center, 2007).

Although all of these models are effective in engaging their target student populations, some of the most promising share three high-impact attributes: firsthand exposure to collegiate life as an experiential aspiration-building strategy; a focus on proactive outreach to and support for high school students with a history of low aspirations or achievement as a strategy for increasing college enrollment, persistence, and degree-attainment rates; and the incorporation of Dual-Enrollment experiences into existing high schools as a strategy for promoting higher learning expectations at the high school level and fostering a stronger college-going culture.

This paper will provide a variety of practical strategies for building successful school-based Dual-Enrollment programs that integrate on-campus college experiences. The rationale behind the three attributes above will also be discussed, including the barriers to postsecondary education encountered by many students from disadvantaged backgrounds and less educated households. In addition to discussing how these programs can serve as a catalyst for elevating youth aspirations, the paper will also explore Dual Enrollment as a strategy for promoting reform at the secondary level.

The Potential and Limitations of Early College High Schools

Among the Nation's many Dual-Enrollment models, early college high schools have received the most attention and have been the most heavily researched. The more than

200 early college high schools in the United States provide integrated secondary and postsecondary learning experiences to their students, usually over the course of 4 or 5 years (Jobs for the Future, 2010). Some models begin in the middle grades, but all of these programs culminate in a high school diploma and either a 2-year associate's degree or 2 years of transferable college credit that can be applied toward a bachelor's degree. Early college high schools may be independent institutions or affiliated schools housed on a college campus (see appendix 2), but they are either entirely or largely separate from their local secondary schools (National High School Center, 2007; Nodine, 2009; Jobs for the Future, 2010).

Like charter schools, early college high schools are alternatives to existing and more traditionally structured high schools, and they can be highly successful for their target student populations. Although early college high schools are growing in number—approximately 50,000 students were enrolled in these schools nationwide in 2009–2010 (Jobs for the Future, 2010)—they enroll only roughly .003 percent of the country's 15 million high school students. Conversely, in 2002–2003 (the most recent school year for which national data are available), 813,000 high school students—or 5 percent—took at least one Dual-Enrollment course, and 680,000 of these students took courses through established Dual-Enrollment programs (Kleiner and Lewis, 2005). In that same year, 11,700 public high schools—or 71 percent—offered dual-credit courses, which include both Dual-Enrollment courses and exam-based courses such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate that allow students to earn college credit (Waits et al., 2005). Although early college high schools must be seen a critical component of our Nation's growing portfolio of successful reform strategies, the costs and complexities of creating and maintaining early college high schools limit the potential for widespread expansion of the model. Conversely, Dual-Enrollment programs can be integrated into any high school or college, are much more affordable to operate, can be readily and rapidly expanded, and, in aggregate, are able to enroll much greater numbers of students.

Maine's Experiential Dual-Enrollment Model

In 2006, the Great Maine Schools Project at the Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute published *Early College in Maine: Lessons Learned from One Model*.[2] The report describes the York County Community College Dual-Enrollment program, which was funded by the Great Maine Schools Project as part of a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. York County Community College developed its Dual-Enrollment model over 5 years in close partnership with Wells High School, which was located roughly a mile from the community college campus. Participating students continued to take regular high school courses and were considered full-time students

[2] In this case, the term *early college* refers to *Dual Enrollment*, not *early college high schools*.

(consequently, there was no loss of state funding for the high school), while they also took on-campus college courses, usually one or two per semester, with college professors. A Dual-Enrollment coordinator from the community college, working in collaboration with high school guidance counselors, provided not only program management and leadership, but also consistent support for participating students to ensure a successful collegiate learning experience.

In 2005–2006, the students who participated in the program increased their college aspirations by 75 percent and improved the quality of their high school academic work by 70 percent (Great Maine Schools Project, 2006). Teachers also reported that 73 percent of the students showed improved motivation and performance in their regular high school courses; class attendance and behavior also improved. Ninety-four percent of teachers at the high school said that the program—which involved only 60 students at the time—had a positive impact on the school as a whole. After only three semesters, approximately 12 percent of York County Community College's enrollment was composed of concurrently enrolled students from Wells High School and other local sending schools. These strong early results, which continued in successive years, suggest that experiential, school-based Dual-Enrollment programs—when carefully designed to address the academic and social needs of participating youth—can have a significant impact not only on the students involved, but also on the culture of the participating school, including the beliefs and expectations of teachers. These findings have subsequently been confirmed by other Dual-Enrollment studies (Barnett and Stamm, 2010).

The York County Community College model became a template that was replicated in other schools throughout Maine. In 2008, a follow-up report, *Early College in Maine: Expanding Opportunities*, found that Dual-Enrollment participation had doubled across the state, jumping from 1,000 students in 2005–2006 to more than 2,000 students in 2006–2007 (much of this increase can be attributed to a statewide program that was modeled after the York County Community College program). The report's strongest finding was that four out of five students (80 percent) who had participated in a Dual-Enrollment program enrolled in college within a year of graduating from high school, compared to the overall college-going rate of 60 percent at the high schools studied. Despite the fact that 72 percent of students came from families in which neither parent had earned a bachelor's degree, 83 percent of these students passed their college courses. A recent statewide survey found that 95 percent of Maine public high schools allow students, as a matter of district or school policy, to take college courses and earn dual credit prior to graduation (Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute, 2009).

Given the success of the program, the following critical features of the York County Community College Dual-Enrollment model can serve as a guide for other programs:

- The Dual-Enrollment program is open to 11th- and 12th-grade students from area high schools, as well as to home-schooled students.
- Students take Dual-Enrollment classes both during and after the regular school day, including in the evenings. Whenever possible, participating high schools make scheduling and policy accommodations so that students can leave the high school grounds to take Dual-Enrollment courses during normal school hours.
- All Dual-Enrollment courses are taken on the community college campus and taught by college instructors. Participating students are enrolled in regular college classes alongside matriculated college students, and they are given other typical benefits that promote identification as a college student, such as a student ID, e-mail address, and access to college facilities.
- Initial funding for the program came exclusively from a 5-year start-up grant, but over time, the program subsidized tuition costs from a variety of sources, including earmarked funds in annual school budgets, funding from a state Dual-Enrollment program, scholarships, and local fundraising. Students make their own transportation arrangements and are responsible for purchasing any required texts.
- Dual-Enrollment students who meet standard course requirements can take any course offered by the college, provided it is not overenrolled. The high school has adopted policies that allow Dual-Enrollment courses to satisfy graduation requirements, but students are also encouraged to take high-interest elective courses that are likely to provide either career direction or reinforce collegiate aspirations, such as accounting, architectural drafting, digital media, culinary arts, early childhood education, or website development.
- Although the program serves a variety of area schools, the primary coordination responsibilities and support systems reside at the college. The part-time program coordinator works closely with staff members from the sending high schools (in most cases, a guidance counselor) who facilitate student selection, resolve policy issues, and provide other forms of support. In addition to orientation activities and regularly scheduled meetings with participating students, the Dual-Enrollment coordinator has an office at the community college, and students are welcome to stop in any time with questions or concerns.

Another experiential Dual-Enrollment program at Lewiston High School in Lewiston, Maine, has been in operation since 2004 and serves a diverse cross-section of students. In fact, during the 2009–2010 school year, the school's Somali immigrant students participated at three times the rate of the general school population, largely due to proactive outreach, communication, and recruitment strategies. Altogether, 120 Somali students, or 11 percent of the student body, are participating, which also represents a significant percentage of the school's minority population (J. Dowd, personal

communication, July 8, 2010). Given the enormous cultural and language barriers facing these students, many of whom have received comparatively little formal education, the program's success is remarkable. Several noteworthy features of the Lewiston High School program contribute to its success:

- a dedicated "Aspirations Coordinator" whose full-time job is to promote a college-going culture in the high school, market the program to the target student populations, provide college guidance and information to students and their families, and coordinate the Dual-Enrollment program;
- integration with a high-school-based college-planning center, called the Aspirations Lab, that is open to all students in the school and that helps students conduct college searches, practice taking college-entrance exams, and learn about financial aid (parents are also invited to use the center);
- the ability to serve students from a variety of familial and academic backgrounds while focusing on students who may face barriers to a college education and whose high school grade point average (GPA) places them roughly in the middle of their class (i.e., students who are sufficiently successful and prepared academically for college, but whose aspirations for the future may be less certain);
- a requirement that all participating students maintain passing grades in their regular high school classes;
- the Dual-Enrollment partnerships and agreements with multiple local collegiate institutions, including a small private college, a community college, two public university campuses, and Bates College, a highly selective liberal arts institution (the ability to take Dual-Enrollment courses at several different college campuses not only greatly expands course-taking options, but it makes logistics, such as travel arrangements or scheduling concerns, easier to negotiate because students are more likely to find a high-interest course offered at a time that works with their high school or family schedules); and
- a proactive fundraising campaign that sustains the program and reduces student costs (on average, students pay less than $100 to take a Dual-Enrollment course, which includes the cost of books, and many lower income students pay no tuition or fees).

Defining the Target Student Population

For many students, the prospect of attending college is an intimidating, unfamiliar idea that has not been supported by the cultural or familial environments in which they were raised. In addition, traditional educational strategies—from academic tracking to class

ranking—can indirectly reinforce the belief that some students are simply not "college material" (a particularly unhelpful characterization given its implication that collegiate potential is somehow a fixed, predetermined, and strictly biological attribute).

Creating an explicit commitment to engaging students who are underachieving, who come from lower income households, who would be first-generation college graduates, and who may need more encouragement and support to enroll in and succeed in college can—and perhaps *should*—be one of the central organizing rationales of a Dual-Enrollment program. If aspirations arise from cultural context and personal experience, then exposure to new cultural environments and experiences can fundamentally alter aspirations. Although research on the impact of Dual-Enrollment programs on student aspirations remains relatively scant, a growing body of research has shown that tracking, low academic expectations, and unchallenging coursework not only negatively impact student preparation for and success in college but also reinforce low aspirations by fostering negative self-images of academic or career potential (Byun et al., 2010). In addition, it has been shown that both high-performing and lower performing students are more successful when enrolled in challenging courses that have higher expectations for students (Adelman, 1999, 2006; The Education Trust, 2003; also see appendix 3).

Some educators question the rationale of accelerating students to collegiate-level learning when they may not be doing well in their high school courses. Although seemingly counterintuitive, enrolling underperforming high school students in college courses or other rigorous courses stimulates academic motivation and elevates educational aspirations. Research strongly suggests that high academic expectations and the provision of challenging learning experiences can be a much stronger motivator than remediation (The Education Trust, 2003; Hoffman and Bayerl, 2006), which, in many traditional high school settings, entails *lowered* expectations and further carries the negative stigma associated with failure. Among early college high school students, academic acceleration encourages students to take learning more seriously. In addition, students are less disengaged or bored when the expectations are high (Hoffman and Bayerl, 2006). This finding also affirms findings about the negative affects of ability grouping and academic tracking.

Although Dual-Enrollment programs that set out to increase college enrollments and raise aspirations can and should remain open to already college-bound, high-performing students, they will also need to adopt an explicit focus on disadvantaged students. A Dual-Enrollment model that is anchored in existing high schools has the potential to reach the greatest number of students, but success requires the appropriate academic, experiential, and strategic conditions. In addition, making an explicit commitment to enrolling disadvantaged or underachieving students who may need more encouragement and support sends a clear message to a school community about beliefs and expectations. If a previously underachieving, low-aspirations student from a disadvantaged background not only succeeds in a Dual-Enrollment program but also enrolls in college after graduation, what does that success indicate about a high school

program that may be built on the assumption that some students are college bound, while other students are not?

Identifying the Barriers to Higher Education

As discussed above, student aspirations stem from a complex interplay of personal, cultural, economic, familial, and educational influences, which makes the identification of any specific "cause" of low educational aspirations nearly impossible. And in public schools, which are obligated to educate all students well regardless of where they came from or what they intend to do after graduation, the *causes* of low aspirations are far less important than the *solutions* needed to overcome them. Still, the development of effective Dual-Enrollment strategies requires that educators have a strong understanding of the common barriers students encounter on the path to higher education.

Although the challenges faced by students in urban settings are comparatively well documented, rural culture remains a significant but often overlooked consideration when it comes to understanding youth aspirations and educational attainment in the United States. In mill, mining, farming, and tourism towns—that is, in local economies built largely on natural resources and with a history of blue-collar labor—cultural conditions may tend to tacitly or explicitly encourage students to remain "at home" and enter the workforce immediately after high school (Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute, 2007). In less educated families with little or no college-going history, the value of a postsecondary education is not typically instilled in children from an early age, and, in some cases, a resistance to or disdain for collegiate education may be present (Bozick, 2007). Overall, rural youth are 36 percent less likely than nonrural youth to attend college (Byun et al., 2010), although 9 out of 10 rural students indicate that they aspire to attend college (Meece et al., 2010)—a staggering disparity. In rural areas, perhaps disproportionately, the fear of youth outmigration and its resulting impact on families and communities is a source of diminished educational aspirations, because college is more likely to be perceived not as a long-term career-building opportunity, but as an alien and esoteric world that historically has had little bearing on career choice or success as locally defined.

Successfully transitioning youth from small, tight-knit communities into college may require additional attention and support. Fewer than 15 percent of rural high school graduates attend competitive colleges, and 53 percent attend the 20 percent of American colleges located in more rural areas (Guiffrida, 2007). In addition, higher performing students from rural high schools were often more likely to leave college early or transfer colleges, indicating that personal and cultural factors—such as inadequate support systems at the college, feelings of anonymity and isolation,

exposure to racial and ethnic differences, and the general experience of being overwhelmed by new expectations and cultural situations—rather than academic preparation play a significant role (Guiffrida, 2007). As a transitional strategy—a way for students to "try out" college before making the commitment to apply and enroll in a postsecondary-degree program—Dual Enrollment can provide the academic preparation, personalized support, and concrete life experiences likely to increase the chances of college success.

The rising expense of postsecondary-degree programs—and the resulting prospect of significant college-loan debt—pose another obstacle to collegiate education. In lower income, blue-collar communities in particular, a college degree is more likely to be seen as an abstract and unnecessary risk than as a tangible, career-building investment (Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute, 2007). The significant financial outlay required to fund a 4-year degree, even at public universities, may be enough of a disincentive to convince a large proportion of students to enter the workforce directly after high school, rather than take on a debt that may take decades to pay off. In subsidized Dual-Enrollment programs that do not require participating students to pay tuition or fees, the ability to earn "free" or low-cost college credits helps mitigate one of the more significant barriers for lower income students.

Providing students and parents with practical college-planning guidance can also help raise student aspirations and increase college enrollments (Kirst, 2004), but an even stronger predictor may be exposure to and participation in a "college-going culture" (Chenoweth and Galliher, 2004). Among the many promising strategies for increasing college awareness and support are providing detailed information about the courses required for success in college; explaining the differences between high school exit exams and college-entrance exams; promoting college to a range of students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds; and helping students bridge the gap between "getting in" and persisting by taking college-placement exams early on in high school and using the senior year to address preparation deficiencies (Kirst, 2004).

Although numerous cultural or familial factors may be well beyond a public high school's control, educators nevertheless play a critical role in fostering and encouraging higher educational aspirations, especially for underrepresented youth. Public schools in the United States are slowly trying to extricate themselves from a near century-old, factory-style educational model that sorts and tracks students based on presumptions about learning abilities and career aspirations. A growing body of research has shown that practices such as academic tracking can negatively affect student success in college (Byun et al., 2010). And the most consistently salient predictor of college enrollments and persistence remains academic preparation—specifically, the quality and rigor of the high school curriculum (Adelman, 1999, 2006), which can be enhanced by the integration of Dual-Enrollment experiences. High expectations foster higher aspirations, just as they do higher performance (see appendix 3). Although cultural or familial influences may be stronger than classroom influences, this fact is not a rationale—or an

excuse—for lowering course standards and collegiate expectations for certain students and not others, particularly because research has shown that educators inaccurately perceive student aspirations to be lower than they are (see appendix 4). Moreover, when influences at home are weaker, the influence of a school or teacher is much stronger (Chenoweth and Galliher, 2004). Dual-Enrollment programs that specifically target and enroll underachieving high school students in college classes can be seen as a direct extension and practical application of this research.

The Importance of the On-Campus Collegiate Experience

The most potent demystification strategy is *first-hand experience*. Providing students with on-campus collegiate learning opportunities—from campus tours and social interactions with college students to attending courses alongside full-time college students and receiving a student ID—can be transformative when it comes to not only postsecondary aspirations, but also the motivation and preparation required to enroll in college and earn a degree. Some high schools offer college-level courses taught by adjunct college faculty or specially trained high school teachers. These courses may be an excellent addition to a challenging, college-preparatory course of study, but high school-based college-level courses do not provide the kinds of first-hand collegiate experiences that attend to the social, emotional, and developmental preparation of the participating student. Maturity, confidence, self-sufficiency, and other personal characteristics, though harder to identify and measure, can have as significant an affect on postsecondary aspirations and success as academic preparation. College courses—and collegiate life in general—demand greater independence and maturity as part of their inherent cultural expectations. Consequently, Dual-Enrollment students frequently rise to the level of these elevated expectations, just as they do with academic expectations, which can tone down many less mature teenage behaviors, promote a "future-focused orientation," and encourage a greater sense of personal autonomy and responsibility—all of which can be brought back to a student's high school experience.

When designing an experiential Dual-Enrollment program, the following strategies are worth considering:

- Attend to social and emotional youth development by providing—to the greatest degree possible—personalized, one-on-one support at the participating secondary and postsecondary institutions. A Dual-Enrollment coordinator at the college is critical, because this person can facilitate the transition for participating students (by providing information, answering questions, counseling them on course selection, or simply listening to concerns) and work closely with the high school staff (in many cases, guidance counselors) who are responsible for implementing the Dual-Enrollment program at the high school.

- Provide high-quality orientation activities that introduce high school students to college life and the specific procedures or requirements of the college, including strategies such as campus tours, welcoming events or information sessions for parents, or shadowing a college student during a typical day.

- Build in support and safety nets at the high school and college that include program coordinators or student mentors meeting regularly with participating students. Pairing a college-student mentor with a Dual-Enrollment student is an excellent way to enhance on-campus support, particularly because peer relationships are qualitatively different than the relationships students have with adults. Allowing high school students to "shadow" a college student for a day can be a more effective informational—and motivational—resource than even the best college brochures.

- Schedule regular meetings with college professors and student mentors to review performance and address academic needs.

- Implement a robust outreach, communications, and recruitment program, specifically one that is focused on engaging those students and parents who may not be considering college as an option.

- Provide logistical support and make accommodations at the high school, which may include policy modifications (to facilitate credit transferability between the college and the high school, for example), adjustments to the school or student schedules, or the provision of transportation.

Among the strategies listed above, perhaps none is as important as the program coordinators, who act as counselors, mentors, and advocates for the students. If questions or issues arise, Dual-Enrollment students need a single point person who they can contact for answers and support at both the partnering college and the high school. Creating part-time or full-time coordinator positions at both the high school and college (depending on the program's size and resources) is strongly recommended, and coordinators should meet with students at least weekly. In many cases, high school guidance counselors will serve in this capacity, while colleges will assign personnel who perform a similar role. In addition to student support, program coordinators also address logistical issues, raise funds for the program, connect students with peer mentors, and act as liaisons between two (or more) institutions with divergent policies, schedules, and priorities.

The most effective Dual-Enrollment programs make the unfamiliar familiar by providing a transitional experience that bridges the cultural and experiential divide between secondary and postsecondary education. The more robust and consistent schools can make the support they provide, the more successful their students will be.

The High School-College Partnership

At the heart of the Dual-Enrollment program is the partnership between the participating high schools and colleges. Beyond the educational and life experiences Dual-Enrollment programs provide to students, they are also playing a role in mitigating the historical disconnect that has existed between secondary and postsecondary programs, which includes an often significant divergence in academic expectations. It is not uncommon for collegiate educators to blame inadequate student preparation on high school teachers, even while the institutions they work for take no active steps to communicate their expectations to high schools or reduce inadequate preparation. In general, secondary and postsecondary traditions share responsibility for perpetuating insular cultures that have largely failed to collaborate and communicate more effectively on behalf of the students they both serve. Given this situation, Dual-Enrollment programs present an ideal opportunity for improved secondary-postsecondary relations, in which educators from disparate institutions share data, collaborate on program development, and work to align academic expectations as a long-term strategy for increasing student success.

Given the historical disconnect between high schools and collegiate institutions, Dual-Enrollment program coordinators and participating faculty will have to clarify institutional needs and communicate proactively before potential issues arise. Strong leadership and thoughtful programmatic structures are required to bridge existing cultural or political divides, while helping each institution remain focused on the larger mission: increasing collegiate access, preparation, and degree attainment for all youth. To forge partnerships that support educational and cultural reform, schools and colleges should consider the following strategies:

- Establish a Dual-Enrollment leadership team that consists of faculty and staff from the college and high school, students (from both the high school and college), parents, business leaders, and other community members when appropriate. A leadership team will act as a powerful source of advocacy as well as a centralized, cross-institutional decisionmaking body. The leadership team should also develop a vision statement for the program and a long-range strategic plan that attends to issues such as policy alignment, sustainability, and funding.

- Assign a program coordinator (or coordinators) to manage all aspects of the program, including student selection, transportation, scheduling, dual-credit issues, parent outreach and communication, data analysis, logistical troubleshooting, program marketing, and the facilitation of orientation activities. Coordinators should come from the ranks of the high school or college and be familiar with the idiosyncrasies of the participating institutions and the backgrounds of the students involved. Collecting and sharing college-enrollment and student-achievement data will be a critical component of the position, because

these data can be used in grant applications or when making the case for why the Dual-Enrollment program should be expanded or sustained.

- Consider cross-institutional professional development opportunities that will bring together high school and college teachers to share expectations and help codesign the program. In most situations, teacher buy-in and support will be essential to the success of a Dual-Enrollment program, because resistance from teachers can undermine a program from within. And if high school and college educators are given opportunities to codevelop and even co-teach courses, college readiness will be further integrated into the high school culture, collegiate expectations will be demystified, and traditional curricular or cultural barriers will begin to dissolve.

The above strategies help build a network of partners among high school, college, and community leaders focused on common, mutually beneficial goals. Such a shared vision is a powerful force for shifting the culture of a school or community.

Finally, higher education institutions should view Dual-Enrollment programs as "enlightened self-interest," because students are far more likely to attend a local college they are familiar with after graduation, particularly if they have made social connections, established strong relationships with faculty, or discovered an academic or career interest. And because program administration costs are minimal and high school students can be placed in underenrolled courses, Dual Enrollment can be seen as a wise long-term investment strategy.

Aligning Secondary and Postsecondary Policies

Most 2- and 4-year college institutions require either entrance exams or placement tests to determine readiness for college-level courses. Yet poor performance on these exams often results in remedial courses becoming a student's first exposure to higher education. Although necessary for student placement in core college courses such as English or mathematics, requiring passing scores on such exams for elective courses is often an unnecessary barrier in a Dual-Enrollment context—particularly because poor performance on these tests can erode confidence and affirm negative self-images, thereby erasing the motivation that higher expectations, greater autonomy, and a taste of collegiate success can instill. This is but one of the many potential examples of adjustments that both high schools and colleges will need to embrace if a Dual-Enrollment program is to be successful.

To support an effective partnership, high schools and colleges should consider the following policy alignments:

- Eliminate any required placement exams that might restrict and bar student access to the rich array of high-interest, elective courses offered by the college. Although adequate preparation for some courses absolutely needs to be a consideration, less formal options—such as teacher recommendations or student interviews—are often better suited to the aspirations-building objective of Dual-Enrollment programs. Colleges need to recognize that although accepting high school students presents a risk, the risk is far outweighed by the potential benefits.

- Address issues that may arise with the high school faculty before they become a problem. In some cases, teachers may feel that Dual-Enrollment programs elevate job insecurity (because students will choose college courses instead of high school courses) or reflect poorly on their performance (because they were unable to motivate students who subsequently succeeded in college courses). Also, school policies will need to be reviewed, given that credit deficits, for example, could be politically charged if teachers feel demoralized or devalued because students are allowed to "make up" failed high school courses by taking college-level courses. School leaders need to emphasize the benefits of Dual-Enrollment programs and develop strategies to ensure that high school teachers are well informed about and involved in the program.

- Be clear about how college credits will be integrated into the high school system. Which college courses will be counted as electives and which will be allowed to satisfy high school graduation requirements? Or will all Dual-Enrollment courses be viewed as electives, so that students complete their core requirements at the high school? High school faculty need to be involved in these discussions, particularly if college courses are going to be allowed to satisfy core-course requirements.

- Implement the program gradually, build on successful strategies, and expand to more students over time. Begin with a smaller number of students and increase opportunities as the program becomes more established and operations run more smoothly. College-student mentors can help Dual-Enrollment students select courses that are more likely to provide a positive experience. Consider allowing students to take one course during the first semester, for example, and expand the option to two or more courses only in the second semester if the students are successful. These simple strategies, once identified and implemented, can mean the difference between a successful and unsuccessful program.

- Solicit and secure financial support from diverse sources. Colleges should provide on-campus support, waive fees, and steeply discount tuition rates for Dual-Enrollment students, but they should not be asked to subsidize the program's entire cost. In some cases, students can be asked to pay for textbooks and supplies (but not those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) or, for families with means, partial tuition costs. Program coordinators should apply for grants, solicit contributions from local business (by creating a "Sponsor a Student" program, for example), and find other innovative means to support the program. Schools and

districts should also contribute funding by establishing a Dual-Enrollment line item in the annual budget and gradually increasing allocations over time.

- Decide early on who the target students will be and build the necessary outreach, programmatic, and support systems they will need to succeed. If the program is open to all students, what resources will be allocated to engage and recruit students from disadvantaged backgrounds or less educated households? If higher performing students are participating, how will the program ensure that a sufficient number of slots remain available to students who have lower aspirations or GPAs? If the program is funded by a grant, which students are eligible under its terms?

Integrating College-Planning Support

On-campus collegiate learning experiences provide a strong foundation for longer term college and career planning. Lower performing, first-generation students, however, will likely need more structure and support to make effective use of these opportunities. Some students may have the ability to excel in college-level coursework, for example, but they may not have the confidence to negotiate the complexities of the college application, admissions, and financial-aid process.

In additional to the usual college-counseling process, schools and communities should consider taking the following steps to build a robust support system as an extension of the Dual-Enrollment program:

- Coordinate and schedule multiple visits to campuses that vary in size, selectivity, and location (urban and rural, in state, and out of state). Visiting students should always be immersed (to the greatest degree possible) in campus activities because these experiences will help them determine whether a particular school is a good fit. Some examples of effective approaches include beginning the college-planning process in the elementary or middle grades (e.g., college-savings plans for higher poverty families), reaching out to parents in their workplace (in Maine, for example, one program included the guidance director meeting with parents at a local factory to discuss Dual Enrollment during their lunch break), and providing age-appropriate social opportunities in which high school students mix with recent graduates to discuss the college experience. High school advisory programs can also be used as a vehicle for facilitating college and career planning for all students.

- Establish community-based organizations or programs founded on an inspirational “believe-you-can-succeed” or “college-is-possible” vision that will help finance higher education and reach the target population. Dual-Enrollment students can be remarkably effective ambassadors when it comes to convincing parents, local

policymakers, and community members that college planning, Dual-Enrollment experiences, and strong academic preparation can transform lives.

- Ensure that high school faculty not only understand collegiate learning expectations and the skills required for college readiness and success, but are integrating these expectations and skills into every course. A high school diploma does not necessarily certify college preparedness, and the school needs to take an affirmative stand on college-ready standards and expectations.
- Use the senior year to address learning deficiencies, particularly in mathematics, research, writing, and other high-priority skills that are required in college courses. Dual-Enrollment students may be successful in their college courses yet still be deficient in their overall readiness when they become full-time college students. Students may also gain confidence in a supportive Dual-Enrollment program but then fail later on in more demanding courses when they do not have the same level of support. One strategy for identifying deficiencies is to allow students to take college-placement exams at the end of their junior year.

The above list illustrates the need for guidance counselors, Dual-Enrollment coordinators, and teachers to partner with families in the college-planning process, and for schools to take a proactive role in building aspirations. First, a school community needs to embrace—and communicate—the belief that all students can learn and achieve at a high level. School programs need to reinforce these messages by, for example, eliminating unnecessary tracking or grouping practices that restrict access to rigorous courses, erode self-confidence, and perpetuate non-college-going traditions among disadvantaged or first-generation student populations. Even in the best-taught heterogeneous classrooms, however, some students will struggle to emerge from the shadow of their cultural and familial backgrounds, and building confidence to attend college will require both conscious effort and proactive strategies. Educators play an essential role in encouraging students to believe in their innate capacity to exceed expectations and achieve the seemingly impossible.

Summary

Many students and families assume that, somehow, they will one day achieve the American dream. But if aspirations are not connected to a concrete plan of action, the American dream will never materialize for far too many students. Although a postsecondary plan can be a huge asset to high school students, educators cannot ignore the myriad cultural, familial, and experiential factors that erode collegiate aspirations and stand in the way of higher education. Less tangible personal attributes—such as motivation, confidence, or desire—can determine success or failure in college, and yet these attributes are much harder to teach and measure. When it comes to enrolling in and completing a postsecondary-degree program, plans that are backed up

by explicit college-going messages, firsthand collegiate experiences, and practical support and guidance can prove to be the difference between a college trajectory that ends with *planning* and one that culminates in *graduating*.

As one of many available strategies for promoting higher aspirations, stronger postsecondary preparation, and more equitable outcomes in public high schools, Dual-Enrollment programs can become a lever for promoting more systemic changes in a school or district. Like cultural expectations and values, the educational standards and foundational principles of a school community can influence student perspectives, self-images, and life choices. If an underperforming student with low aspirations enrolls and succeeds in a college-level course—a common occurrence in many Dual-Enrollment programs (Barnett and Stamm, 2010)—it shows that student performance stems not from intrinsic ability alone, but from the structure, quality, and expectations of the learning experience. Using Dual Enrollment to bridge the historical divide between high school and college is perhaps an emerging sign of what our education system will look like in the coming years of the 21st century (Pennington, 2004).

This paper proposes several practical strategies for integrating Dual-Enrollment programs into the high school learning experience—programs that attend to the academic, personal, and social development of disadvantaged youth. Creating such programs requires a network of partners from the participating high schools, colleges, and communities, but above all it requires leaders, advocates, and champions who are willing to look beyond the traditional structure of the comprehensive high school and build a bridge to the American dream for every student.

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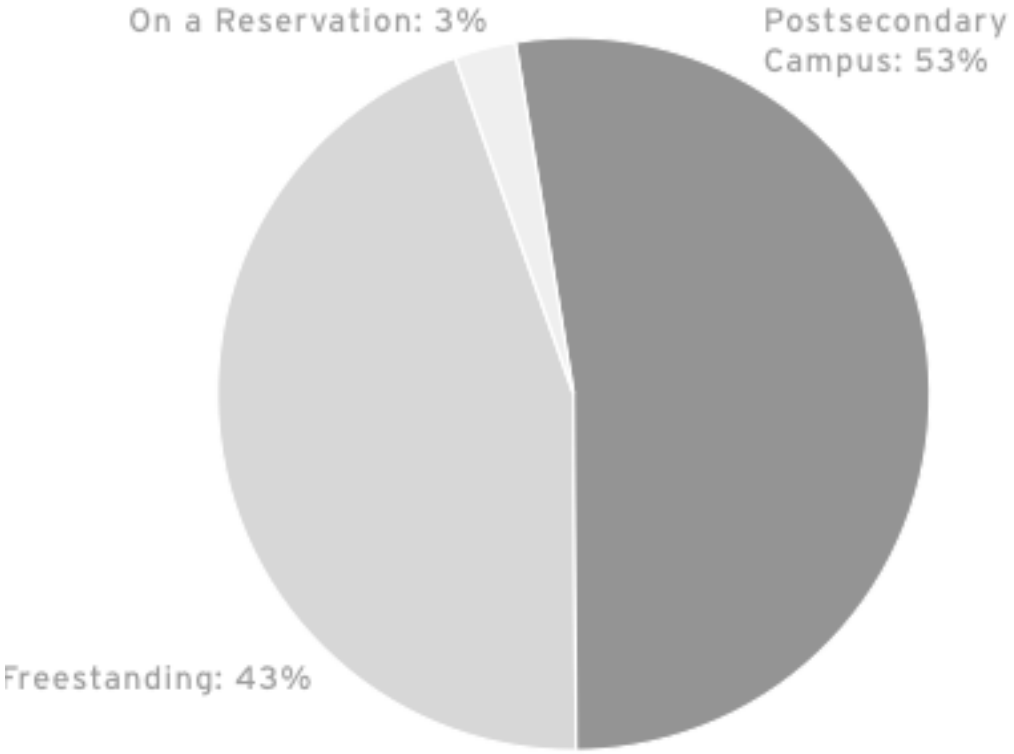
Appendix 1: Snapshot of Dual Enrollment for Increasing Postsecondary Success for Underrepresented Students

	STUDENTS IN CREDIT COURSES	CREDITS/ COURSES	INCREASE IN PARTICIPATION	MINORITY PARTICIPATION	OTHER COMMENTS
CASE STUDY STATES					
Florida	34,762	90,756 courses 11,347 FTE	2% increase from 2002–2003 to 2003–2004; 20% increase from 1998–1999 to 2002–2003	9% Black 10% Hispanic 4% Asian >1% Native American 1998–2003 increase: 34%, Black; 58%, Latino	Several Dual Enrollment high schools give A.A. degree
Utah	23,384	153,727 credits 5,000+ courses	6.8% increase from 2002–2003 to 2003–2004; 100% since 1995	Not available	Since 2000, 270 students have earned an A.A. in high school and New Century Scholarships
City University of New York (CUNY)	14,170	54,492 credits 19,520 enrollments	10% increase 2003–2004 over students in college-credit courses in 2002–2003	22.2% Black 20.2% White 18.8% Hispanic 20.0% Asian 5.4% Other 13.3% Unknown	32.4% of New York City public high school students who entered CUNY in fall 2003 had College Now experience
SELECTED OTHER STATES					
Washington	15,610 Running Start 13,690 Tech Prep	9,533 FTE 86,189 credits	6% increase from 2002–2003	17% students of color	10% of juniors and seniors; 788 A.A. degrees
Illinois	20,405	28,994 credits	625% 1990–2001 35% 2002–2003	7% Black 6.4% Hispanic 4.6% Asian/Pacific 1.9% Native American	9% of all high school students participated
Virginia	13,915	Not available	4.4% increase from 2002–2003	Increase: 2.8% Asian 15.4% Hispanic 200% Unspecified Decrease: 10.9% Black 14.3% Hawaiian 85.9% American Indian	Piloting Governor's Initiative: "Senior Year Plus"; under previous plan, districts could ask students to pay

Source: U.S. Department of Education. (2007). Dual Enrollment: Accelerating the Transition to College. (Contract No. ED–99–CO–0163). *Issue Papers: The High School Leadership Summit.* Washington, DC.

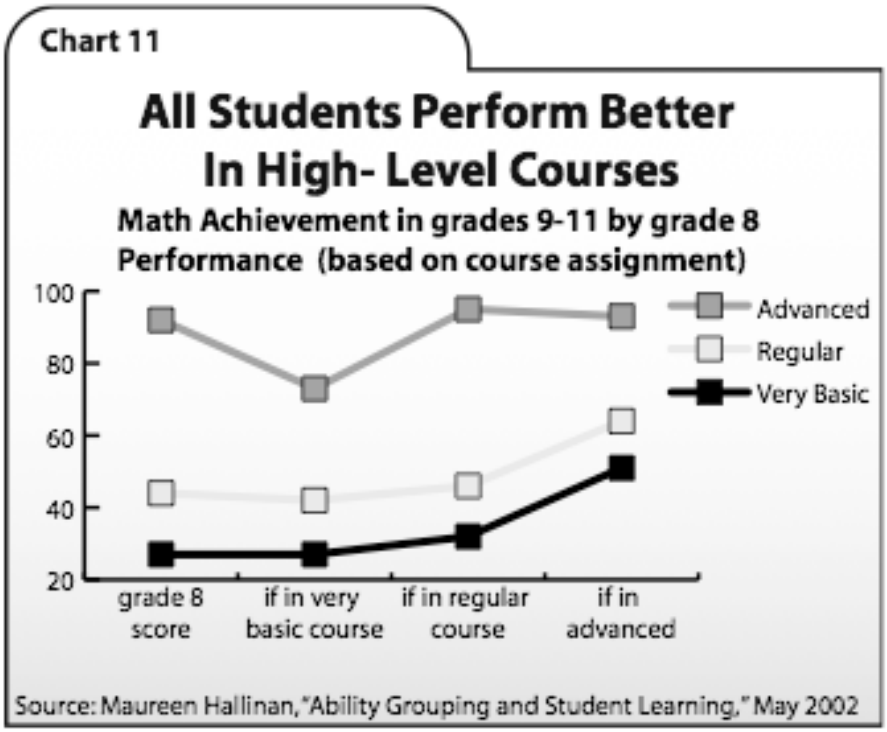
Appendix 2: Location of Early College Schools, 2008–2009



NOTE: Data include 197 schools.

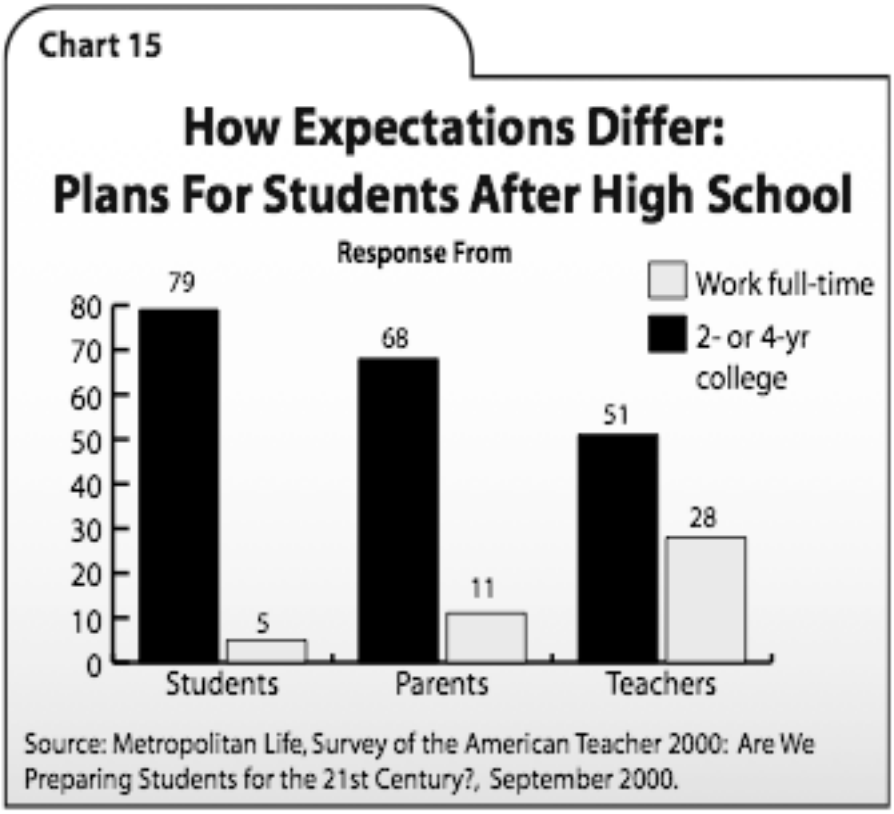
Source: Nodine, T. (2009). Innovations in College Readiness: How Early College High Schools are Preparing Students Underrepresented in Higher Education for College Success. Boston: Jobs for the Future. Figure 5, p.11. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix 3: Math Achievement in Grades 9–11 based on Grade 8 Performance



Source: The Education Trust. (2003). A New Core Curriculum for All: Aiming High For Other People's Children. *Thinking K–16,* 7(1): p. 18. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix 4: How Expectations Differ: Plans for Students After High School



Source: The Education Trust. (2003). A New Core Curriculum for All: Aiming High for Other People's Children. *Thinking K–16,* 7(1): p. 21. Reprinted with permission.