

# DUAL ENROLLMENT

an opportunity to increase higher education access and success for low-income, first-generation college-goers

Dual enrollment, or when a high school student takes college-level courses for college credit and often high school credit, is correlated with higher rates of college completion<sup>1</sup>. Dual enrollment has been identified as an Early Postsecondary Opportunity (EPSO) by the Tennessee Department of Education.

Students can access dual enrollment opportunities by taking classes on the campus of a postsecondary institution, by having college-level courses taught in the high school building, or accessing the course online. Many rural districts in Tennessee use dual enrollment as an option to provide advanced coursework to students when the school or district size may make offering courses like Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) cost ineffective. Even in schools where AP or IB are offered, anecdotes suggest that students may experience a confidence boost in completing college-level courses for credit that affects their later college success.

Unlike K-12 offerings which are free to the student, dual enrollment courses include costs such as fees and other costs associated with the college admissions process, since a student taking dual enrollment must be admitted as a student at the institution offering the course; tuition and fee costs for the course itself; and indirect costs such as transportation costs if the student must travel to the college campus, textbook costs, and in some cases, costs for extra supplies particular to the course the student is taking. The Tennessee Dual Enrollment Grant, a Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship, defrays some of these costs but only covers tuition and fee expenses up to \$500 per course. Additional costs may be a factor limiting the number of students who are able to access dual enrollment opportunities.

## Why this Matters in Tennessee

Dual enrollment is a proven strategy to increase student success and allow students to begin accumulating college credit as a high school student. Credit accumulation is critical to students being able to complete their postsecondary program on time, allowing them to move into the workforce and reduce time and money spent on college. However, the way the Tennessee Dual Enrollment Grant is currently structured, tuition and fees for students' first two courses are covered but subsequent courses are not covered at the same level; if a student completed four dual enrollment courses as a high school student, they would be faced with a gap of \$800 between the cost of tuition and fees and what is covered by the state grant.<sup>3</sup> Tennessee's current dual enrollment funding for high school students does not cover additional admissions costs or indirect costs the student may incur; these costs likely prevent low-income students from accessing dual enrollment opportunities.

## Questions to Consider

- How can dual enrollment be expanded to serve more students?
- What opportunities exist to assist low-income students in covering the costs involved with accessing dual enrollment opportunities?
- Would fully funding tuition and fee expenses for up to four courses (instead of the current two courses) help students accumulate more college credit while still in high school?

Even though EPSOs like dual enrollment are available in 92% of high schools, only 41% of Tennessee students complete these opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tennessee Department of Education <https://www.tn.gov/education/early-postsecondary.html>

<sup>2</sup> Tennessee Department of Education EPSO Implementation Guide (2017)

<sup>3</sup> Tennessee Department of Education Dual Enrollment Myths and Facts (2017)