



# The Path to Dual Credit Equity

Dual credit programs are integral for future opportunities for students— young people who engage in dual credit are more likely to graduate, go to college, and earn a degree. Despite this, thousands of students are excluded from dual credit opportunities each year, disproportionately impacting BIPOC students and students from low-income backgrounds.

**In 2019, Washington State became the first state in the country to pass a policy that requires all districts to automatically advance any qualified student to the next most rigorous course.** Adopting and implementing policies around equitable enrollment drives shifts in student access, opportunity, and achievement.

**Stand for Children Washington has synthesized research, district experience, and statewide convening data to identify the most impactful drivers of success, and to chart a path to successful implementation of an academic acceleration policy.**

Districts in any phase of their journey to implement an academic acceleration policy can follow this path of best practices to set their schools up for equitable and sustained success.

## MAP KEY

Each action is accompanied by a symbol(s) from the following key to indicate where support or change is needed to implement the best practices along this path.

- ▲ **Supporting students**  
Opportunities to support students include providing them with necessary information about dual credit programs, removing barriers to dual coursework, building their confidence, and creating inclusive learning environments.
- **Increasing staff capacity**  
Best practices to increase staff capacity include ways to advise and identify students for dual credit coursework as well as increase access to culturally relevant curriculum and teaching practices.
- 🏠 **Shifting district or school procedures**  
Opportunities to shift district or school procedures that will support academic acceleration including using data to inform goals and action plans to increase equitable enrollment, changing enrollment policies and practices, and investing in educator diversity.

For more information about adopting and implementing an academic acceleration policy, please visit our [website](#) or email [wainfo@stand.org](mailto:wainfo@stand.org)



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## ADOPTION

### Formally adopt and publish an academic acceleration policy that:

- Automatically enrolls students who meet any single eligibility metric.
- Permits self-selection even if other metrics are not met.
- Reinforces the responsibility of school staff to proactively identify students.
- Reinforces the responsibility of the school to engage and inform families about the academic acceleration policy, advanced coursework options, and benefits.
- Acknowledges and aims to close equity gaps in advanced course enrollment.



### Automatically enroll students using more expansive readiness metrics

- Automatically enroll students in the next rigorous course if they meet any metric. Metrics could include:
  - Self-selection
  - Identification based on interests
  - Meeting state standards on exams
  - Strong school attendance
  - School leadership
  - Other non-traditional metrics

*On average, students identified by expanded metrics do just as well if not better than students identified by GPA or test scores alone.*



### Provide training for staff to identify barriers and create asset-based expectations for students

- Ask students about their trusted staff and leverage existing relationships.
- Conduct individual meetings with every student to plan coursework that aligns with their strengths, interests, and aspirations.
- Increase counseling capacity among all staff and build trust with students.
- Provide professional development for staff on how to use multiple metrics to proactively identify underrepresented students for advanced courses.
- Invest in teacher and counselor diversity.

## CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT

### Evaluate progress and incorporate learnings to continue improving equitable access

- Collect, use, and report on data around enrollment to create accountability and drive continuous improvement.
- Survey students, families, and staff on dual credit experiences and school climate to identify necessary training and resources for improving access and inclusivity.
- Set cadence to review and possibly amend policy to incorporate learnings that will increase access and enrollment.



### Address barriers and capacity needs that exclude students from dual credit opportunities

- End teacher contracts, pre-requisite requirements, 'approval' of student lists, tests or essays for entry into courses, or other practices that inhibit open access.
- Reduce financial barriers for students and families such as fee waivers, transportation subsidies, access to free or low cost materials, etc.
- Implement retention policies that allow for comfortable risk taking (trial periods, course auditing, pass/fail options to limit GPA impact).
- Require meetings between the student and trusted adult to determine what supports can be offered before opting out of an advanced course.



### Empower students and families with access to information about dual credit

- Require schools to inform families of the policy, dual credit options, benefits, and financial supports available.
- Leverage or create forums for students to learn about dual credit course opportunities from their peers.
- Engage families starting in middle school in multiple, asset-based, and culturally responsive ways about dual credit (info sessions, advising hours, webinar, newsletter, email, etc).



### Create dual credit classrooms designed for student belonging

- Create a classroom community where students feel comfortable asking their peers and teachers for help.
- Conduct culturally responsive outreach to 9th grade classrooms to help shape student perceptions about themselves, dual credit, and a college-going mindset.
- Use culturally responsive curriculum and create inclusive classroom environment.
- Provide teachers with frequent, growth-oriented feedback and coaching.

*Students are more likely to opt out of advanced courses when they don't see their identities reflected in the curriculum, classroom culture, and/or those teaching the courses.*



### Use data to inform decisions about how to increase access and enrollment

- Make data around enrollment public, transparent, and current.
- Use data disaggregated by race and income to create a shared action plan among schools to target support to those historically excluded from dual credit opportunities.
- Share data and train staff on student aspirations, equity, and the power of adult expectations on student academic success.
- Set ambitious and measurable goals for improving access and publicly report district and school progress.
- Use student survey data to identify trusted staff.

## IMPLEMENTATION