



DUAL ENROLLMENT: GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Issue Overview

Dual enrollment allows high school students to take college-level courses and earn high school and college credit concurrently. Through dual enrollment coursework, students graduate high school already on a higher education path.

Today's dual enrollment program was established in 2015 through Senate Bill (SB) 132's Move On When Ready Act and surged in popularity in the last few years. The program's explosive growth raises several questions. First, why is the program growing so much? What are the trends? How is Georgia financing Dual Enrollment, and what is our return on investment? Finally, as the program grows, what implications should be considered?

Significance for Georgia

Georgia's Dual Enrollment program is open to all high school students. Through the program, students can complete an unlimited number of courses at post-secondary institutions prior to high school graduation. Students become eligible for the coursework by meeting specific admissions requirements, which vary by institution and course. Most classes are delivered at post-secondary institutions (74%), while a few are delivered at high school campuses (17%) or online (9%).

Dual Enrollment program participation has significantly increased over the last five years. Total attempted credit hours rose 258% between FY 2013 and FY 2017. This includes both increases in the number of students participating in the program (212%) as well as an increase in the number of credit hours attempted per student (15%).

Associated with increased usage is increased costs. Georgia is one of five states where the state is responsible for paying a student's dual enrollment tuition. Dual Enrollment appropriations have increased by 325% in five years, from \$18.5 million in FY 2014 to \$78.8 million in 2018.

Despite its growth, all students are not accessing the program equally. Of potential concern is the distribution of Dual Enrollment participants by race and income. White students are overrepresented in the current Dual Enrollment program compared to their presence in public schools. African American student participation, on the other hand, has been on the decline in comparison with this group's presence in public schools. Hispanic students are also underrepresented in the Dual Enrollment program; participation is increasing but is not keeping pace with the growth of the Hispanic student population. Finally, low-income student participation has been historically low in the program, despite such students being a majority of the K-12 student population.

Action Steps

Georgia's Dual Enrollment program is increasingly opening higher education doors to students statewide while providing vital cost-savings for families. As both participation and costs grow, we need to consider our long-term sustainability. How do we further define the program to contribute to our state's workforce goals? How do we target the right students aligned with the goals of the program to make sure all our children have the same opportunities regardless of their location and background? And how do we grow and monitor the program as smartly as possible to make sure every state dollar counts? These critical questions must be addressed to ensure the program will ultimately meet the needs of the state, our students, and our families.