

2018-19 Evaluation of the Postsecondary Success: Student Support and Quality Assurance Initiatives

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At-a-Glance

A top priority for Dallas Independent School District (ISD) is to expand dual credit opportunities for its students. Through a partnership with the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD), high school students can earn college credits before graduating. As of Fall 2018, 35 out of 44 Dallas ISD high schools offered dual credit opportunities, including 23 early college high schools.

To ensure students receive equitable access to dual credit learning opportunities, Dallas ISD established the Higher Education Partnership (HEP) division within the Postsecondary Partnerships and Programs department during the 2018-19 school year. Following the hiring process of the HEP director and two coordinators, the division began operations in November 2018. HEP was supported by \$445,000 from Title IV funding.

During the shortened 2018-19 school year, HEP members coordinated dual credit efforts between high school campuses, Teaching and Learning (Dallas ISD department), and higher education partners; and developed and managed systems to ensure quality assurance measures were being met and adhered to.

Purpose and Methods of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to describe the work undertaken by the HEP division during the 2018-19 school year and to examine implementation during the first year. Data in the report were based on a review of district funding documents, HEP program deliverables, Dallas ISD publications, attendance information provided by HEP, and survey results. The survey, designed and administered by the evaluator, was open between May 21 and June 5, 2019. Student enrollment, demographic and academic information was gathered using the district 2018-19 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) file dated October 26, 2018.

What were the program components of the Higher Education Partnership (HEP) division in 2018-19?

During the 2018-19 school year, HEP personnel concentrated their efforts on:

- 1) Articulating Dallas ISD dual credit opportunities to students, parents and staff by developing student and parent degree advising guides and curriculum maps and offering dual credit workshops and

training sessions to Dallas ISD staff. As part of these activities, HEP oversaw higher education initiatives such as Dallas County Promise, Parent Promise, and dual credit summer opportunities.

- 2) Coordinating and monitoring the implementation of dual credit programs with higher education partner, DCCCD. Tasks included managing dual credit teacher credentialing and interlocal agreements with higher education partners, maintaining curriculum maps and degree plans, and monitoring the transfer of student data between Dallas ISD and higher education partners via the Dual Credit Dashboard.

How was the initiative implemented?

Dual Credit Trainings

HEP personnel conducted five trainings during the 2018-19 school year, including dual credit leadership team trainings and Pathways to Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) counselor meetings. The P-TECH program is a Dallas ISD strategic initiative in which high school students can choose a career pathway and take courses that provide the academic, technical, and workplace skills that are attractive to employers. Eight P-TECHs were opened in 2016-17 and 10 more opened in 2017-18. Two more are expected to be opened by 2020.

Dual credit leadership team trainings were offered to counselors, campus leadership, coordinators and teachers on December 6, 2018 and April 18, 2019. Forty employees participated, and training sessions covered topics on dual credit policies, enrollment and student course eligibility, the monitoring tool, teacher credentialing, and the dual credit dashboard.

HEP personnel attended two P-TECH counselor meetings on December 3, 2018 and April 2, 2019 and presented on dual credit policies, timelines, and the use of the dual credit dashboard. HEP personnel also attended the P-TECH and Early College High School (ECHS) spring kickoff event on January 15, 2019 at Southern Methodist University (SMU) where they manned an information table and answered questions regarding dual credit programs.

Dual Credit Collaboration Meetings

Dual Credit Collaboration meetings offered the opportunity for campus leadership and dual credit

coordinators to meet with their DCCCD dual credit coordinators to discuss and plan dual credit course offerings for the 2019-20 school year. HEP also arranged for Teaching and Learning department content coordinators to participate, which allowed campus staff to get feedback and district approval for chosen dual credit courses. It allowed campuses to finalize their course offerings in one meeting.

Dual Credit Collaboration meetings were held on January 28 and February 4, 2019. Eighty-eight Dallas ISD staff attended, including 77 campus staff and 11 personnel from Teaching and Learning. DCCCD was represented by 34 dual credit program coordinators.

Campus Process Monitoring Meetings

During the 2018-19 school year, 48 programs at 35 Dallas ISD schools offered dual credit opportunities. HEP staff members visited 47 campuses (98%) between February 6 and May 10, 2019¹.

The purpose of monitoring meetings was to evaluate the effectiveness of the dual credit program's implementation, to provide support services to ensure campuses were adhering to program standards, and to prepare them for future program audits. Programs were rated by HEP personnel on a scale from unsatisfactory to exemplary based on ten criteria (course offerings, monitoring and evaluation of staff, student eligibility, student enrollment, student course completion, dual credit monitoring, collaboration with DCCCD partners, communication with campus staff, communication with parents, and communication with community members). Overall², five programs (11%) were rated unsatisfactory, 19 programs (41%) as progressing, 20 programs (43%) as proficient, and two programs (4%) were rated as exemplary. HEP personnel also visited eight comprehensive campuses that did not offer dual credit opportunities to advise campus leadership about the logistics of offering dual credit opportunities and to answer questions.

Dual Credit Teacher Credentialing

In 2018-19, HEP personnel oversaw the establishment and implementation of the dual credit teacher credentialing program aimed at supporting the expansion of dual credit opportunities.

In cooperation with DCCCD, HEP offered current high school career and technical education (CTE) instructors who met the minimum educational and work experience requirements to be dually credentialed via DCCCD. Twenty-three teachers attended the interest meeting on

April 10, 2019. HEP did not receive any information from DCCCD on the number of teachers who met the criteria and ultimately received dual credit credentials.

HEP also provided and paid for teachers who held a master's degree to earn dual credit credentials after completing eighteen credit hours of coursework through Texas A&M University Commerce. The initial cohort began in the spring of 2019 and nine teachers are expected to be credentialed at the end of the 2019 fall semester. Cohort II started in the summer of 2019 and the seven participating teachers are expected to be credentialed at the end of the spring 2020 semester. Cohort I participants were able to be credentialed in English, political science, and psychology while Cohort II participants will be able to be credentialed in English. HEP personnel organized and managed the dual credit teacher credentialing program, and the training portion was paid from Title II funds.

Dallas County Promise and Parent Promise

Dallas County Promise provides "last-dollar scholarships³" to students who graduate from one of 31 Dallas ISD Promise high schools to pursue an associate degree at DCCCD. Parents of students who completed the Dallas County Promise pledge at eight Dallas ISD high schools were eligible for the Parent Promise, which allows one parent or guardian per senior who meets certain income requirements to receive a last-dollar scholarship to any Dallas County Community College.

HEP personnel, in cooperation with the Dallas ISD Information Technology (IT) department, supported data exchange needs between DCCCD and the Dallas ISD to complete the application process. HEP personnel participated in monthly Dallas County Promise meetings and visited schools to help students and parents with the application process. HEP was also supported by the Postsecondary Partnerships and Programs departments' College Access Program (CAP) coordinator who utilized the program's CAP advisors to help students complete the application process.

Program Deliverables

In 2018-19, HEP personnel created advising guides for associate degrees and certificates, curriculum maps, and crosswalks. These tools were used by counselors to track current student requirements and to better advise students on dual credit offerings.

In 2018-19, HEP personnel created student advising guides for the Associate of Arts and Associate of

¹ The dual credit coordinator of one campus did not respond to meeting requests.

² Monitoring scores were not available for two of the 48 programs.

³ Per Dallas County Promise website, "last-dollar scholarships cover the gap between need-based financial aid and cost of tuition for up to a time limit or the completion of a degree per institution". Source: dallascountypromise.org/students

Science degrees, and 37 Level I certificates⁴. They listed graduation requirements for each degree or certificate and gave counselors a better way to discuss dual credit opportunities with students. A review of dual credit completion by HEP personnel indicated that students were completing Level I dual credit courses based on interest but were often one to three courses short of receiving a certificate. Fifteen comprehensive campuses offered between two and five Level I certificates.

HEP personnel maintained 58 articulated curriculum maps and degree plans with higher education partners to ensure that early college high school students could earn 60 college credit hours within a 4- or 5-year graduation plan while students in comprehensive high schools with dual credit programs could earn up to 42 credit hours. In addition, HEP personnel maintained the district's crosswalk, which maps DCCCD course names and numbers to Dallas ISD courses.

What did the audit of P-TECH Grade 11 students (juniors) reveal?

Student Audits

The 2019-20 school year will be the first to award an associate degree to students in P-TECH programs. Upon learning dual credit high school counselors did not have a way to track student progress towards degree completion, HEP personnel requested a list of juniors by pathway (program of study) from P-TECH campuses⁵, and corresponding degree plan audits from DCCCD. Paper audit files were received by HEP personnel on January 9, 2019 following the posting of Fall 2018 grades. Files were sorted and given to each Dallas ISD P-TECH campus. A spreadsheet was created to track student academic achievement and dates of academic conferences. School Leadership scheduled 90-minute meetings with the eight P-TECH campuses for January 31, 2019 to discuss the status of juniors. HEP personnel reviewed student degree plans with campus counselors.

HEP audit files (accessed June 21, 2019) for the 2018 fall semester indicated there were 708 student degree audits of which nine juniors withdrew. Of the remaining, 681 juniors had a valid GPA record. The average GPA of juniors enrolled in Cohort I P-TECH campuses was 2.9; the GPA range was 0.5 to 4.0.

Academic Conferences

Of the 681 juniors who took a dual credit course, 70 (10%) failed to earn a 2.0 GPA and were at risk of being placed on academic probation or suspension.

⁴ Level I dual credit courses are available to students who do not meet *Texas Success Initiative (TSI)* guidelines.

Counselors conducted academic conferences with these students and updated the spreadsheet with the date of the conference. HEP audit files indicated 47 academic conferences were held (67%). However, 21 of the 47 conferences were held prior to the January 31, 2019 School Leadership meeting, indicating some campuses were aware of the academic performance of their students.

What were stakeholders' perception of the Initiative?

Seventy-one out of 147 Dallas ISD employees who participated in HEP personnel-led dual credit activities responded to the survey soliciting their feedback (48 percent response rate). The three largest groups of respondents were counselors ($n=34$, 48%), campus leadership ($n=21$, 30%) and coordinators ($n=12$, 17%). Seventy-two percent of respondents indicated they had less than five years of experience with the dual credit program. Forty-eight percent assessed their knowledge of Dallas ISD policies and procedures regarding the dual credit program as intermediate, 30 percent as advanced, 21 percent as basic, and one percent indicated that they had no prior knowledge. Thirty-four respondents (61%) indicated they contacted the HEP department in 2018-19. Ninety-four percent agreed or strongly agreed that HEP personnel answered emails and voicemails in a timely manner (within 48 hours). Overall, respondents were happy with the support they received in 2018-19 (91%). Forty-one respondents (58%) indicated they visited the dual credit website and the majority found the website easy to navigate (53%) and indicated they found most of the resources they were looking for (93%).

Dual Credit Trainings

Fifty-two respondents (73%) indicated they participated in dual credit trainings provided by HEP. Across all training topics, 71 percent of respondents agreed the training topics were very useful. Ninety-eight percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed training sessions were well organized, 96 percent agreed or strongly agreed trainers were knowledgeable about the subject matter, and 94 percent agreed or strongly agreed trainings were relevant to their work. Eighty-eight percent agreed or strongly agreed that their participation in training sessions raised their knowledge of Dallas ISD policies and procedures regarding dual credit offerings. Overall, 94 percent agreed or strongly agreed they were satisfied with dual credit trainings, and 89 percent indicated they shared training materials and information with staff at their campus. Forty-five percent indicated they preferred to be trained in small groups (i.e., 15 less), 29 percent

⁵Students needed to select a pathway by grade 11. In 2018-19, the eight P-Tech programs which opened in 2016-17 had grade 11 students.

preferred to receive training via online modules, 18 percent preferred via large groups (16 or more), and eight percent preferred via webinars.

Campus Monitoring Meeting

Forty-four respondents (62%) indicated they participated in the campus monitoring meetings. All agreed or strongly agreed the HEP personnel conducting the campus visit interacted in a professional manner. Ninety-four percent agreed or strongly agreed they received actionable suggestions to improve the implementation of the dual credit program, and 85 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the dual credit monitoring tool will help them better prepare for future visits or audits. Overall, 89 percent of respondents agreed the dual credit monitoring visits were beneficial for their campus. Examination of open-ended questions revealed that some survey participants would like to receive academic achievement data during the semester to be able to contact parents and provide support in a more proactive manner.

Establishing Dual Credit Courses

Forty-five respondents (63%) indicated they worked with HEP personnel to plan for dual credit courses, pathways, or a sequence of courses in 2019-20. Ninety-five percent agreed or strongly agreed HEP coordinators provided direction on the process of establishing dual credit courses. Ninety-two percent agreed or strongly agreed dual credit suggestions they received were based on their campus needs, and 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed HEP personnel provided opportunities to collaborate with college partners. Eighty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed HEP personnel helped them present new dual credit course suggestions to campus leadership or provided tools to communicate dual credit offerings to students (83%). Overall, 90 percent were satisfied with the support they received from HEP personnel regarding the establishment of dual credit courses.

Dual Credit Dashboard

Forty-eight respondents (68%) indicated they utilized the dual credit dashboard in 2018-19. Of those, 73 percent utilized it for student advising, while 58 percent used it to make decisions about dual credit course offerings. Seventy-one percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the dashboard was easy to navigate. Eighty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed HEP personnel helped them to update student information on the dual credit dashboard, and 78 percent agreed or strongly agreed HEP personnel provided them with actionable suggestions to solve their data issue(s). Overall, 82 percent agreed or strongly agreed the automatic generation of grades from the dual credit dashboard to PowerSchool has been beneficial.

Recommendations

Despite the shortened implementation year, HEP personnel managed to provide training, establish processes, facilitate coordination among key stakeholders, and provide direct support to counselors. The following recommendations are intended to build on these efforts.

- **Provide counselors access to students' grades during the semester.** HEP personnel, in cooperation with higher education partners, should continue to formulate procedures to better track student progress towards degree completion during the semester. Dual credit counselors should have access, in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), to students' grades via Blackboard or receive periodic academic updates from the higher education partners.
- **Continue conducting student audits.** HEP personnel proactively developed an internal tracking process for dual credit juniors. As additional students from P-TECH programs enter grade 11, HEP personnel should continue to help counselors identify students at risk of not completing the degree and provide necessary support to ensure student success.
- **Follow up with counselors regarding academic conferences.** HEP personnel should work with counselors to assess why some students who failed to receive a 2.0 GPA did not receive an academic conference.
- **Consider offering training via online modules.** Whereas 45 percent of survey respondents indicated a preference for training to be conducted through small groups of 15 or fewer, 29 percent indicated a preference for online modules, likely indicating a need for greater convenience and minimized travel time for some.
- **Continue to build dual credit dashboard functionalities.** HEP personnel, in cooperation with the Dallas ISD IT department, should continue to improve the dual credit dashboard. As an example, the dashboard would be more beneficial to counselors if they could view all available student information on one page rather than having to shift between tabs.

An electronic version of this report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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