



# Addressing a Major Barrier to Dual Enrollment: Strategies to Staff Up and Scale Up

## AT A GLANCE

A shortage of qualified instructors threatens to derail dual enrollment. Creating a long-term pipeline of faculty who can teach college in high school requires systemic solutions that align complex interests.

## AUTHOR

**Sarah Hooker**

Senior Program Manager  
JFF

MARCH 2019

## Acknowledgements

JFF is grateful to the numerous district, college, university, and system-level administrators and leaders in Colorado and Minnesota who contributed their expertise to inform this analysis. In particular, we would like to extend special thanks to our close partners at Denver Public Schools, Community College of Denver, Mounds View Public Schools, Anoka-Ramsey Community College, and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, who allowed us to learn from and contribute to their innovative efforts. Many thanks also to the JFF team members who played invaluable roles in this project as well as the development of this publication: Joel Vargas, Caesar Mickens, and Carol Gerwin.

This work was made possible with support from the ECMC Foundation.

## About JFF

JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For 35 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. Join us as we build a future that works.

[www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)

**“In our state, some districts are shifting away from dual enrollment altogether because the challenge of finding enough [qualified] teachers is simply too daunting.”**

– Minnesota college administrator

## Introduction

An acute shortage of qualified instructors threatens to derail dual enrollment, an effective and popular college transition strategy, just as the movement is picking up steam.<sup>1</sup> Financial incentives have helped some school districts increase the number of high school teachers who are credentialed to teach college-level courses to their students. But, to date, such efforts have led only to incremental progress.

In order to fulfill the potential of dual enrollment to improve high school completion, postsecondary success, and career readiness—particularly for underserved young people—it is essential to develop systemic solutions to the staffing crisis. Only through new approaches that merge the K-12, undergraduate, and graduate education systems can we address the host of logistical, political, and cultural challenges that have long stymied individual districts and colleges.

This brief is intended for policymakers, education system leaders, and dual enrollment advocates who are considering what it will take to build long-term strategies that significantly expand the supply of instructors qualified to teach college in high school. Our recommendations are rooted in JFF’s recent partnership with two very different sites—Denver Public Schools (Colorado) and Mounds View Public Schools (Minnesota)—that shared the aim of increasing this pool of educators (*see box on JFF’s work*).

### Teaching College in High School Requires Skills that Bridge Two Worlds

Dual and concurrent enrollment instructors are a unique set of educators. They require the content expertise of any other college faculty member. But they also need the skills and training to teach adolescent learners, most often on a high school campus. Instructors work at a rare intersection of K-12 and postsecondary education, two distinct systems that each operate under different sets of requirements, expectations, and guiding assumptions about quality teaching. It is not surprising that few individuals meet these criteria and dual enrollment programs have been struggling to keep up with growing demand.

Rising interest in the opportunity for teenagers to start accumulating college credit early—often for free—is prompting local and state leaders to attempt a range of solutions. Most of these efforts involve training current high school teachers to serve essentially as college adjunct faculty by completing additional graduate coursework. The standard qualifications for high school faculty include a bachelor’s degree and a teaching license. Concurrent enrollment instructors, however, are typically required to have a master’s degree in the content area they want to teach, or a master’s in another field plus 18 graduate credits in their desired content area.

States have tried a variety of policy strategies to address the shortage of teachers meeting these advanced criteria. Among the most common are providing tuition assistance for relevant graduate courses taken and allowing districts to implement salary incentives for teachers who meet dual enrollment credentialing requirements.<sup>2</sup>

### Organization of this Brief

Following an overview of JFF’s work that addresses the dual enrollment staffing shortage, this brief is organized into four sections:

- **Section I** describes the innovative efforts of Denver and Mounds View to upskill current teachers to serve as college adjuncts.
- **Section II** analyzes the competing stakeholder interests that must be taken into account when developing solutions for a problem that crosses the secondary-postsecondary divide.
- **Section III** provides short-term recommendations for increasing state-level coordination and forging solutions at scale.
- **Section IV** recommends longer-term, systemic approaches that could build and sustain a teaching force for college in high school.

## JFF's Work to Help School Districts Build their Dual Enrollment Teaching Corps

JFF first witnessed the challenge of an insufficient supply of qualified dual and concurrent enrollment instructors through our work with three school districts in Texas and Colorado that took on the challenge of scaling early college designs across comprehensive high schools. As these districts scaled college course offerings and enrollment, they needed to develop new solutions to maximize their limited supply of dual credit instructors and support more teachers to pursue the required credentials. JFF examined their approaches and lessons, analyzing the costs of each option. (For details, see our 2017 report *Solving the Dual Enrollment Staffing Puzzle: Strategies from the Early College Expansion Partnership*.<sup>3</sup>)

District-led strategies are an important part of the equation. However, it became clear to JFF that dramatically scaling the dual enrollment teaching force would need to involve a broader range of stakeholder perspectives, including institutional and educator interests from K-12 schools, undergraduate colleges, and graduate universities.

To better understand this ecosystem and learn more about the benefits and tradeoffs for different parties, JFF launched a new 18-month initiative, Growing the Dual Credit Teaching Force. Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, JFF joined forces with Denver and Mounds View, intending to help them pilot a range of technical solutions to build dual enrollment teacher quantity and quality. We facilitated strategic planning, conducted staffing assessments, analyzed the costs and benefits of various solutions, and provided professional development focused on the unique challenge of teaching college in high school.

Each district made important strides, as described below. Nonetheless, JFF learned that the issues involved are more complex and more political than meets the eye. Mobilizing a fragmented field toward a common goal requires action from leaders and intermediaries that can work across systems. Any effort to grow the dual credit teaching force must appreciate and acknowledge each partner institution's incentives, cultures, and strategies for shifting them toward this collaborative goal.



## I. Two Districts Tackle the Problem in Different Ways

Denver and Mounds View each has a history of offering dual enrollment, and each independently launched innovative efforts to build a supply of teachers with the necessary credentials. Their different approaches represent the different factors at play in each community.

Denver is a large, highly diverse urban district with over 35 high schools. Mounds View is very small in comparison, a relatively affluent suburban district with just two high schools. However, like many districts nationwide, Mounds View serves a region that has experienced rapid demographic change and widening socioeconomic gaps.

### Denver

Denver has a longstanding dual enrollment program, and interest has been growing, driven in part by new graduation standards that require students to demonstrate college readiness. The district faces the challenge of expanding dual enrollment offerings—particularly in its six state-designated early college high schools—through cost-effective strategies in a constrained budget environment.

The district relies on a mix of dual enrollment delivery models. Most courses are taught at high schools by teachers qualified as college adjuncts or by college professors who travel to the secondary schools. Some students take courses on the college campus.

Finding qualified instructors is a challenge for both the district and its partner community colleges, who report increasing difficulty finding professors who are willing to teach on a high school campus. The most cost-effective and sustainable long-term option for the district is to train more high school teachers to become college adjuncts, according to JFF's analysis of financial tradeoffs.

## Local Innovations

### *Alternative graduate program design*

Denver counts on an innovative partnership with Colorado State University's Global Campus. The online program enables cohorts of English and math teachers to earn 18 content-area graduate credits at a discounted rate. Designed for high school teachers who already have a master's degree in education or another field, this "mini master's" program compresses all credentialing requirements into a 12-month period. Denver's first cohort of 21 teachers finished the program in June 2018, and a second cohort began the same month.

### *Tuition funding*

During the first year of the mini master's, the district used grant funds to offset tuition costs. These funds were not available in the second year, however, and recruitment was lower. Some principals elected to pay the tuition out of their school-based budgets. Teachers can also tap into the tuition reimbursement funds included in the district's compensation system, though these funds are capped at \$1,000 per teacher annually.

## Mounds View

Mounds View has developed a robust dual enrollment program through its partnership with Anoka-Ramsey Community College. All of the courses are delivered by high school teachers with support from college faculty. Each teacher is assigned a faculty liaison who teaches the same course at ARCC and the pairs meet at least three times per term to review curricula and grading procedures.

Like other districts in Minnesota, Mounds View's main concern is sustaining its dual enrollment program in the face of newly enforced credentialing requirements. Minnesota colleges and universities have received an extension until 2022 to comply with the minimum faculty qualifications required by their accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission.<sup>4</sup> A 2016

systemwide survey found that only a quarter of the dual enrollment instructors in Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (Minnesota State) system met this requirement. In Mounds View, the scope of the problem was similar.<sup>5</sup> Nearly all dual enrollment instructors had a master's degree—most in education—but many lacked the required 18 graduate credits in their content area.

## **Local Innovations**

Facing the challenge of ensuring that all of its dual enrollment teachers meet the 2022 credentialing requirements, the district developed a detailed plan. Designed in partnership with the local teachers' union, the new set of policies aimed to reduce the financial burden on teachers and incentivize them to teach college courses.

### *Tuition reimbursement and incentive agreement*

Teachers are eligible for graduate tuition reimbursement amounts based on their experience and education. Reimbursement rates range from 30 percent to 90 percent, with the highest reserved for the most experienced teachers. The rationale is that teachers have fewer monetary incentives for continuing their education if they are already at the upper limit of the district's pay scale, but greater tuition assistance might motivate them to pursue credentialing. Teachers who start with less experience or education stand to benefit from salary increases as they advance, based on the existing salary schedule. The plan also includes annual salary enhancements for those who teach college courses, based on the number of college course sections delivered.

### *Individualized transcript assessment and credentialing plans*

Mounds View and ARCC's joint approach to credentialing has been tailored for each teacher. ARCC conducted a detailed transcript analysis of all dual enrollment teachers and determined how many of their prior graduate courses could count toward the 18 required credits. The district then conducted one-on-one meetings with each teacher to review the steps needed to fulfill the credentialing requirement and collect information on individual plans.

Through this process, the district learned of a few teachers who are not planning to pursue credentialing or who expect to retire before 2022. With these data, Mounds View and JFF developed a needs assessment to identify critical subject areas without enough dual enrollment instructors, and calculate the approximate cost of providing graduate courses to fill the gap.

## **Relevant State Policy**

After Mounds View developed the tuition reimbursement plan, new state-funded opportunities emerged to cover all or a portion of graduate tuition costs for teachers pursuing credentialing.



The Minnesota Legislature allocated \$3 million to the Northwest Regional Partnership in 2015 to develop and implement tuition-free, online graduate courses for dual enrollment teachers through Minnesota State University at Moorhead. Priority enrollment is given to teachers in the state’s rural northwest region, though teachers from other districts, including Mounds View, can take advantage of these free courses as space permits. Certain subjects remain oversubscribed, however; math courses tend to fill up within hours and have long waiting lists.

In 2017, the legislature provided additional funding to another program, which assists teachers from all districts. The “Statewide Partnership” provides partial tuition scholarships at four additional universities.

The development of appropriate course offerings is an ongoing challenge, as many university departments are creating online graduate courses for the first time. Ramping up graduate-level offerings for a vast pool of high school teachers—within a compressed time period—requires creative approaches. Funding is only one piece of this puzzle.



## II. Competing Stakeholder Interests Complicate the Search for Shared Solutions

Creating a strong pipeline of instructors who can teach college courses in high schools requires involvement from education leaders from preschool through graduate school (known as the “P-20” spectrum). Brokering such partnerships is more complicated than we had initially presumed. Because solving this issue requires agreement from so many stakeholders, it opens up broader debates involving competing perspectives on dual enrollment writ large.

This section delves deeper into what JFF has learned about the range of stakeholder interests, incentives, and concerns at play for actors in K-12 districts, undergraduate colleges, and graduate universities, based on interviews with a range of institutional leaders in each site. We discuss the interests of institutions and systems as well as frontline educators.

### K-12 Districts

#### Institutions

The K-12 district perspective is the most readily apparent. As in Denver and Mounds View, school districts use dual enrollment as a tool for increasing college readiness and improving equity. In some cases, dual enrollment participation assists students in meeting graduation requirements that incorporate a demonstration of college readiness. The majority of states (37)

now also reward districts for dual enrollment, as a college and career-readiness indicator in state accountability systems.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, district goals for expanding dual enrollment are often vague. Decisions about which courses to offer are often driven, at least in part, by the availability of qualified instructors in certain subjects, rather than an overarching plan that builds student momentum toward postsecondary degrees or certificates. Without a clear vision of program quality, it can be difficult to develop a strategic approach to staffing.

District and school leaders do have a general interest in improving the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, particularly in light of broader teacher shortages. Reducing costs and maximizing return on investment is in their best interest, though long-term financial planning is challenging in light of fluctuating resources and high turnover. A common concern is the potential to lose teachers to other districts after funding their graduate education. For this reason, Denver developed a tuition payment agreement with a retention clause. Principals who pay for the mini-master's program out of their school-based budget can require teachers to stay at their school and teach college courses for at least two years. Those who leave early must repay the tuition at a prorated amount.

## **Educators**

For high school teachers, delivering college courses can provide a welcome professional challenge and the satisfaction of providing a high-value opportunity for students. However, most teachers still need financial support to help cover the cost of pursuing a new credential, as well as incentives to motivate them to take on the challenge.

Creating incentives that are strong enough to affect teacher decision making is particularly tough. In Mounds View, the tuition reimbursement structure was designed to incentivize teachers who are already near the top of the salary schedule. However, this group may yet prove difficult to motivate, as many are approaching retirement.

Educator unions, from their perspective, have an interest in ensuring that incentives are distributed fairly. The Mounds View Education Association was willing to support the district's reimbursement plan because it protected the interests of long-term teachers. In some union contexts, however, the topic of incentives can be divisive.

Arguably the most valuable currency for teachers is time. Teachers need graduate education opportunities that are easy to access, aligned with their schedules, relevant to their jobs, and which clearly lead to dual enrollment credentialing. Online programs designed for full-time

teachers are the most popular strategy. Other potential solutions include intensive summer programs or science lab sections offered at a school district site.

## Undergraduate Colleges

### Institutions

Undergraduate institutions have an inherent stake in the issue of dual enrollment staffing. The courses being delivered are their courses, and they are responsible for the quality of the credits being conferred.<sup>7</sup>

When asked why they are interested in dual enrollment, community college leaders frequently mentioned its alignment with their missions as public-serving institutions. They also noted its potential to build a pipeline of students for future matriculation at their colleges. As expressed by leaders from the Community College of Denver, the college hopes that dual enrollment experiences will cause more students to recognize the value of attending two-year institutions, which will eventually lead to an increase in degree completers. The Colorado Community College System shares this goal and has increased its efforts to attract former dual enrollees upon high school graduation. A 2018 report estimated that 27 percent of the system's former dual enrollees eventually matriculated at the same community college that provided their college courses in high school.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in Mounds View, the number of graduates attending ARCC after high school has increased in recent years, which both college and district leaders attribute to the growth of their dual enrollment program.

The immediate financial incentives for institutions are not as straightforward as they may seem, however. While colleges in both Colorado and Minnesota receive extra per-pupil state funding for dual enrollees, these students typically do not pay out-of-pocket tuition like traditional students, though districts may have to cover their students' tuition at a reduced rate.

Some community college administrators believe their institutions are losing money by offering courses to high school students. Overall, JFF found that the return-on-investment to colleges is poorly understood. In Colorado, the financial implications are under exploration as part of a study funded by the federal Institute of Education Sciences on the effectiveness of the state's dual enrollment model.<sup>9</sup>

Community colleges often have difficulty finding enough qualified faculty to teach on-campus courses for traditional college students, let alone for dual enrollees. The challenge is particularly acute in fields such as math and science, where compensation does not keep pace with other career options. College leaders often agree that the most viable solution is to use high school adjuncts to deliver some or all of their dual enrollment courses. Given this reality, they have an

interest in supporting teacher credentialing efforts and ensuring that the graduate courses meet the minimum faculty qualifications required by accreditors. These institutions need to be represented in the planning process with K-12 districts and graduate universities that are building a talent pool to teach dual enrollment courses.

## **Educators**

Any effort to prepare high school teachers to deliver college courses touches on longstanding debates about who should have purview over these courses, and may spark fears about job security for college educators. Faculty often express concerns about the qualifications of high school teachers and a desire for greater authority over their departments' course offerings. This can lead to a reluctance to approve high school teachers as adjuncts and inconsistent processes governing dual enrollment teaching within and across institutions. In some states, two-year college faculty unions actively oppose the expansion of dual enrollment using high school teachers.

Even in such polarized contexts, individual faculty members are often supportive of dual enrollment and speak to the value of the collaborative relationships they have developed with high school teachers. They also may find that the high-engagement instructional practices that are encouraged in many high schools prove beneficial for their own students.

In JFF's partnerships with both Mounds View and Denver, college faculty had the opportunity to participate in the same type of professional development as the high school teachers. Though voluntary for college faculty, this training, which emphasized active learning strategies, was often met with enthusiasm.

## **Graduate Colleges**

### **Institutions**

The role of graduate universities in solving the dual enrollment staffing challenge cannot be underestimated. As demonstrated in Mounds View and Denver, funding for tuition reimbursement is only part of the solution; universities need to be committed to changing their program offerings. The implications extend beyond graduate schools of education to university departments ranging from math and English to political science and chemistry, as teachers scramble to accumulate 18 credits in their content areas. In many cases, these graduate schools are being asked to alter their traditional delivery models for the first time, bringing courses online and offering courses outside of existing degree programs. This can be a long, laborious, and potentially financially risky process.

When asked about their institutional interests in playing this role, graduate university representatives spoke about their missions as public-serving institutions. As one Minnesota dean noted, “One of our strategic anchors is to be indispensable to the region we serve.” Leaders also mentioned their goal of building a pipeline of well-prepared high school graduates for future enrollment at their institutions.

University leaders noted their desire to ensure that high school dual enrollment teachers have the strongest possible preparation in their content areas and express confidence in their own academic departments. Notably, mobilizing support to create new graduate courses seems easier at universities that offer dual enrollment through their undergraduate colleges, as the dual enrollment staffing problem directly affects their institutional interests.

University leaders’ most commonly expressed concern was the financial risk involved in developing course offerings for the purpose of dual enrollment credentialing. Institutions want to ensure that there will be sufficient demand for any new programs created, and fear losing money on developing courses that do not have sufficient enrollment. Faculty also need compensation for the time it takes to create new courses. At Minnesota State University at Moorhead, for instance, faculty are paid for 18 “duty days” for each new course developed.

The financial risk is reduced for institutions that already have existing online graduate courses as part of their regular degree programs, as there are minimal start-up costs involved in extending these courses to teachers interested in pursuing single courses for the purpose of credentialing. However, such offerings were very limited in Minnesota prior to the state’s attention to and investment in dual enrollment teacher credentialing. Building new offerings has had significant implications for institutional planning and infrastructure—and

### Innovation in Graduate Education: Credit for Prior Learning

Southwest Minnesota State University has developed a unique, partial solution to the dual enrollment credentialing challenge. The university has created a Credit for Prior Learning process to allow teachers to earn transcribed graduate credit in their content area if they can prove that their professional experience satisfies the learning outcomes of a graduate course. This new model, which will officially begin later in 2019, has required the development of courses in certain subjects. University department faculty will maintain oversight of the credits awarded. The innovative program has the potential to accelerate credentialing for some teachers. However, they will only be able to earn a total of 6 credits through this method, out of the 18 required to qualify to teach dual enrollment.

success depends on administrator and faculty willingness to adapt to a new way of doing business, in response to the evolving needs of the field.

## **Educators**

Graduate program faculty play a critical part in developing and delivering courses. For them, offering online graduate courses outside of traditional degree programs may represent a significant shift in their teaching practice, which is challenging at best. Some faculty express concerns about the rigor and value of online courses, compared to their regular on-campus offerings. Others may not understand the rationale for the change, as they rarely interact with the K-12 system.

Faculty usually have considerable autonomy within their universities. As one college administrator noted, “I can’t make any faculty participate in this, so I have to rely on good will. Efforts begin as a coalition of the willing.” Universities often start by expanding offerings in the departments with supportive faculty, hoping that others will follow suit. Influential champions help faculty and leadership wade through the murky waters of change.



### III. How to Make Short-Term Progress: Leverage State-Level Coordination and Leadership

The above analysis demonstrates that solving the dual enrollment staffing challenge requires deepening partnerships between institutions and educators that do not always see a clear self-interest in doing so. Because dual enrollment bridges both K-12 and postsecondary education but arguably belongs to neither, it can be difficult to generate the commitment needed to strengthen the field.

State funding for tuition reimbursement and program development can go a long way toward reducing obstacles but remains insufficient with so many competing interests at play. State-level leaders and intermediary organizations can play an important role in addressing this issue at scale by developing the vision and creating the infrastructure needed to grow the ranks of dual enrollment teachers as efficiently as possible in the near term.

Recommendations for making progress in the short term include:

#### 1. Create a Vision, Convene the Field, and Disseminate Key Information

Leaders in Colorado recently formed a state task force on concurrent enrollment, with representation from the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Department of Higher Education, the Colorado Community College system, and local districts and



institutions. One of its top priorities is addressing the need for more credentialed dual enrollment teachers.

Similarly, the Minnesota State system also recently convened a systemwide work group on this topic, which is composed of institutional representatives ranging from college presidents to mid-level managers, as well as system administrators. The group aims to develop a shared vision and goals for dual enrollment, and to tackle key issues such as teacher credentialing.

Minnesota State also hosted a statewide concurrent enrollment summit in fall 2018, bringing together concurrent enrollment directors and other institutional leaders from the K-12 and postsecondary levels. The event included a strong focus on efforts to address the state's concurrent enrollment teacher credentialing challenge. Sessions included policy updates, information on state funding for tuition support, and spotlights on innovative graduate course offerings, as well as opportunities for institutional representatives to network and learn from peers.

## 2. Collect Data to Size the Problem

Minnesota State has conducted several systemwide surveys on the scope of the dual enrollment credentialing gap, by institution and by subject area, and provided disaggregated reports for the field. These data have given graduate universities a clearer picture of the demand for courses in particular subjects, which helps alleviate institutions' fears of developing courses that will not generate sufficient enrollment.

## 3. Provide Coordination and Oversight

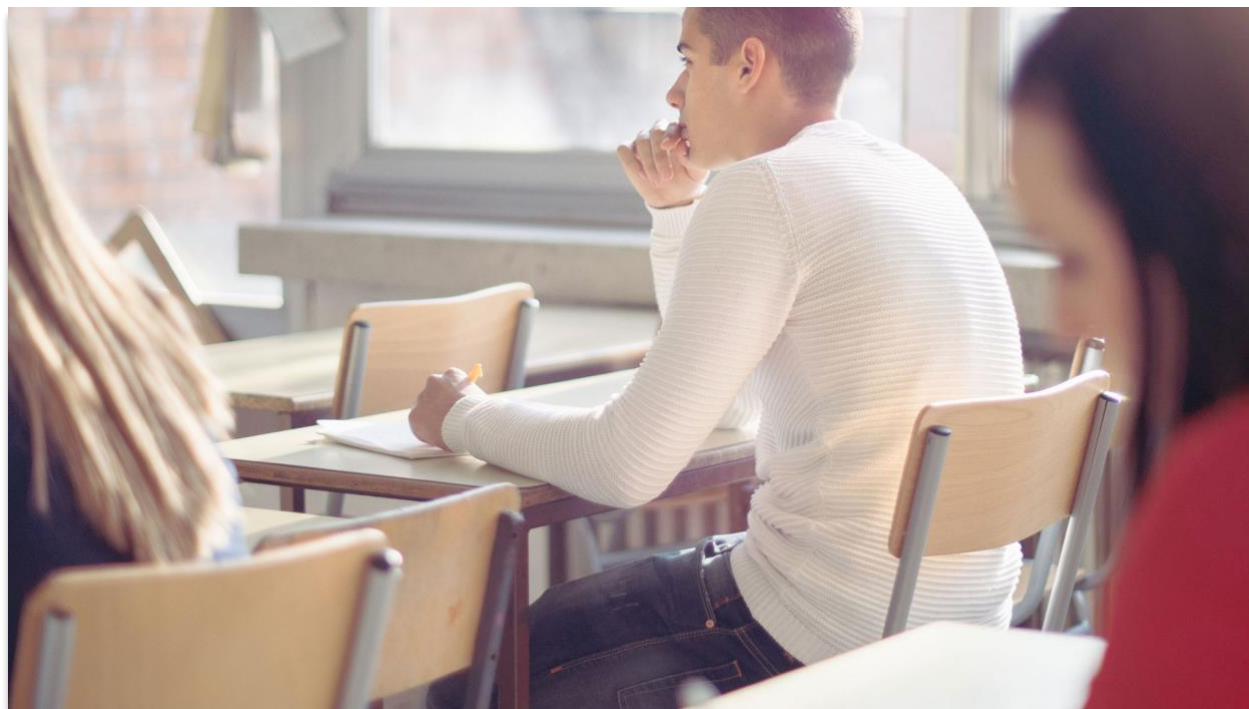
Metro ECSU, a nonprofit educational cooperative serving the Twin Cities area, provides critical intermediary support in Minnesota. Most notably, it is the coordinating body and fiscal agent for the statewide partnership funding for partial tuition scholarships at approved institutions. The organization oversees the development of K-12 district participation agreements and distributes funds to teachers who successfully complete approved courses.

Minnesota State is also playing a role in graduate course oversight and pre-approval, to ensure that the offered courses will meet the requirements for teaching in two-year colleges. Both Minnesota State and Metro ECSU play a role in keeping school districts up to date about available graduate course opportunities for teachers pursuing credentialing, helping to connect supply with demand.

#### 4. Measure Progress toward Goals

Through the efforts of Minnesota State, Metro ECSU, and the state's districts, colleges, and universities, Minnesota has made measurable gains toward addressing its dual enrollment teacher credentialing gap over the past few years. Between fiscal years 2016 and 2018, the state saw a nearly 10-percent improvement in the number of dual enrollment teachers who meet credentialing standards.<sup>10</sup> Still, 65 percent of dual enrollment teachers do not have the required credentials, and the 2022 deadline is looming. As these statistics indicate, state-level leadership is influential, but the pace of change is slow.

The efforts described above are focused on the near-term goal of upskilling the current pool of dual enrollment teachers. This pool, while important, will be diminished in the not-too-distant future due to retirement and turnover, requiring different approaches to sustainability.



## IV. How to Build Long-Term Solutions: Rethink Educator Career Ladders

As policymakers and advocates continue to champion the value of dual enrollment as a strategy to solve problems ranging from low college-readiness rates and uneven degree completion outcomes to an ill-prepared talent pool for employers, the field will need to contend with the long-term challenge of building a teaching force at the intersection of high school and college. Dramatically increasing the number of instructors eligible to teach both high school and college courses will require rethinking governance, incentives, and career ladders in the field of education. Leaders should be willing to explore a range of cross-sector solutions, all of which involve their own technical and political challenges and will require strategic efforts to shift mindsets and build buy-in from stakeholders.

Recommendations for policymakers, advocates, and education leaders include:

### 1. Re-Envision Degree Pathways for K-12 Educators

Producing a larger supply of instructors with the qualifications to teach both high school and college depends on reaching educators earlier in their career trajectories. Traditionally, the most common route to advancement for high school teachers has been completion of a master's degree in education. Many teachers even earn a master's before or concurrent with their first teaching position. While this degree holds currency in the K-12 arena—and allows

individuals to develop invaluable expertise in pedagogy—it does not satisfy requirements for teaching at the postsecondary level.

Some graduate schools of education are beginning to address this issue by adding the option for students to complete a “specialization” of 18 credits in an academic content area as part of their master’s degree in education. This option is specifically aimed at candidates who might want to teach dual enrollment courses at some point in their careers. Creating this type of program requires extensive intra-university collaboration between graduate departments, which can be stalled by institutional politics as well as bureaucratic barriers. Nonetheless, this solution represents an important adaptation to meet the needs of the field.

State agencies, policymakers, and funders could incentivize the development, scaling, and marketing of such “education plus content-area specialization” master’s degree programs. Universities launching these new programs should also engage colleges and districts early in their design process, giving all stakeholders an opportunity to validate their quality and usefulness for the field.

Taking this approach mainstream would require a broader messaging campaign that reaches prospective teachers at the undergraduate level, helping them to understand their potential roles as uniquely prepared educators who can bridge the high school-college divide. Finally, interested school districts would need to send a stronger signal that teachers who are qualified to teach dual enrollment courses will receive priority in hiring.

## 2. Adapt Licensure to Reward Qualified Dual Enrollment Teachers

States with a strong commitment to dual enrollment may have opportunities to reflect this priority through the teacher licensure and renewal process. For example, those who complete the requirements for teaching at the college level, in addition to the requirements for maintaining their K-12 licensure, could receive special recognition.

Already, 22 states offer the opportunity for teachers to earn an advanced license by completing extra requirements, above those associated with the standard multiyear license. These licenses typically confer extra distinction and compensation, and potentially bring additional responsibilities.<sup>11</sup>

States should add an avenue for earning this advanced licensure through the completion of dual enrollment credentialing requirements and/or teaching college courses in high school. This could pave the way for more districts to provide financial incentives for teachers who take on this additional challenge. Such a shift would involve the mobilization and alignment

of priorities of professional standards boards, state education agencies, undergraduate colleges, and unions.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Align Expectations of High School and Community College Teaching Professions

Given policymakers' interest in better aligning academic expectations for students in high school and college, it follows that the professionals teaching in these institutions should have comparable preparation, expertise, and opportunities for lifelong learning. Students in the so-called "transition zone"—the last few years of high school and the first two years of college—arguably have similar developmental needs. Therefore, they require the same kinds of support for their content mastery, development of critical thinking, and attainment of other college and life skills.

Just as high school teachers are asked to complete graduate courses to demonstrate expertise in their content area, two-year college faculty should also complete high-quality professional development focused on pedagogy. These expectations should be incentivized for both groups.

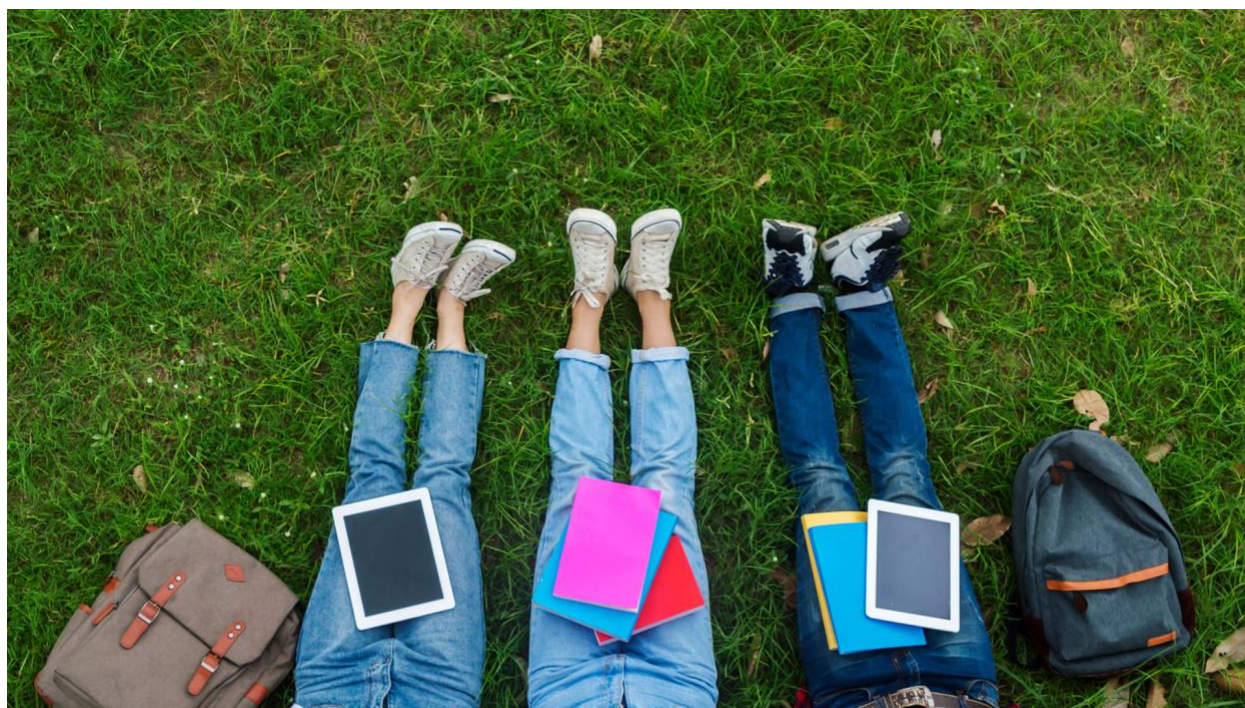
Further in the future, it is not inconceivable that the requirements of the two professions would merge, creating a stronger and more flexible pool of educators who can teach on either side of the current secondary-postsecondary divide.

## Conclusion

Increasing the ranks of high school teachers who can teach college courses is a worthwhile goal that requires coordinated action and commitment to accelerate the incremental pace of change from current efforts. It is a systems change problem, which requires cross-sector solutions and new ways of doing business.

Building the political will to tackle an issue that can be seen as a threat to the traditional autonomy of educators within the silos of high schools, community colleges, and universities will require shifting mindsets beyond adult self-interests, and toward the common interest in the potential benefits for students. In both Minnesota and Colorado, institutional leaders and educators who have stepped up their efforts to solve this problem report that they are doing so, in large part, because they believe in the value of dual enrollment and the opportunities that it presents.

If this commitment is coupled with the right set of supportive policies, vision, coordination, and incentives, it could go a long way toward building the profession that sits at the critical intersection of high school and college.



## Endnotes

---

- <sup>1</sup> Districts and states alternately use the terms “dual enrollment,” “dual credit,” “concurrent enrollment,” and “postsecondary enrollment options.” While there are nuances that differentiate these terms in many states, this brief primarily uses the term “dual enrollment” to refer to college courses taken by high school students, even when delivered on the high school campus.
- <sup>2</sup> A 2018 review of relevant state policies conducted by the Midwest Higher Education Compact and Education Commission of the States found seven types of state-level strategies that have been pursued to increase the supply of qualified high school teachers for college courses: general program support, providing financial aid for graduate credits, incentivizing professional development through teacher bonuses, increasing awareness of graduate program options, requiring state reporting of teachers attending training and support programs, employing tested experience models, and utilizing alternative course delivery models to facilitate the completion of graduate credits. Aaron S. Horn, Jennifer L. Parks, Jennifer Dounay Zinth, and Lauren Sisneros, *Increasing the Supply of Qualified High School Teachers for Dual Enrollment Programs: An Overview of State and Regional Accreditor Policies. Policy Report* (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 2018), <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Increasing-the-Supply-of-Qualified-High-School-Teachers-for-Dual-Enrollment-Programs.pdf>.
- <sup>3</sup> Sarah Hooker, *Solving the Dual Enrollment Staffing Puzzle: Strategies from the Early College Expansion Partnership* (Boston: JFF, 2017).
- <sup>4</sup> Colorado’s colleges are also accredited by the Higher Learning Commission but, unlike in Minnesota, the institutions in the Denver metropolitan area did not receive an extension to implement the minimum faculty qualifications. They already require dual enrollment teachers to have a master’s in their content area, or a master’s in another field plus 18 credits in the subject being taught.
- <sup>5</sup> Greg Rathert, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, memo to college and university chief academic officers, chief student affairs officers, chief human resources officers, concurrent enrollment directors, college and university deans, “High School Instructor Credentials Report—2018,” October 2, 2018.
- <sup>6</sup> *ESSA: State-by-State Analysis: Strategies for Incorporating College in High School Programs into the Every Student Succeeds Act* (Washington, DC: College in High School Alliance, 2018), <https://knowledgeworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/chsa-essa-states-analysis.pdf>.
- <sup>7</sup> We focused on community colleges in this project, though four-year colleges also provide dual enrollment in many contexts and face similar imperatives.

- 
- <sup>8</sup> *Academic Year 2016-17: High School Students Attending CCCS Colleges (Concurrent, ASCENT, and Other Dual Enrollment Programs)* (Denver: Colorado Community College System, 2018).
- <sup>9</sup> “The Outcomes and Return on Investment of Concurrent Enrollment in Colorado: A Researcher-Practitioner Partnership to Improve Postsecondary Access and Success,” Institute of Education Sciences, accessed February 14, 2019, <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=1936>.
- <sup>10</sup> Rathert, memo, 2018.
- <sup>11</sup> Melissa Tooley and Taylor White, *Rethinking Relicensure: Promoting Professional Learning Through Teacher Licensure Renewal Policies* (Washington, DC: New America, 2018), [https://s3.amazonaws.com/newamericadotorg/documents/Rethinking\\_Relicensure\\_v10.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/newamericadotorg/documents/Rethinking_Relicensure_v10.pdf).
- <sup>12</sup> At the time of this writing, a related policy proposal has been introduced in the Minnesota Legislature. HF 1848 would require the Professional Educators Licensing and Standards Board to issue an endorsement for dual enrollment instruction as part of a teacher’s license after the teacher successfully completes an approved “one-year district preparation program in providing dual enrollment instruction in the teacher’s licensure field.” The details of the proposed approval process are still to be determined; “HF 1848,” Office of the Revisor of Statutes, Minnesota Legislature, last modified February 28, 2019, [https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=HF1848&type=bill&version=0&session=s91&session\\_year=2019&session\\_number=0](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=HF1848&type=bill&version=0&session=s91&session_year=2019&session_number=0).