Jobs for the Future

JUNE 2026

Federal Dual Enrollment Data Collection & Recommended Policy Changes

AT A GLANCE

This resource outlines how federal data systems track dual enrollment, identifies critical information gaps, and offers policymakers options to improve national data collection for better participation, program quality, and outcomes.

AUTHOR

Erica Cuevas, Director, Policy and Advocacy, **JFF**

CONTRIBUTOR

Sarah Jenness, Director, **JFF**

Contents

What is dual enrollment?

Dual enrollment programs—also known as early college high school, concurrent enrollment, and other identifiers—promote partnerships between school districts and institutions of higher education.[1] They enable high school students to participate in intentionally designed, rigorous, and authentic postsecondary experiences that can lead to official acknowledgment on college transcripts and transferable credit toward a recognized postsecondary degree or credential. Dual enrollment programs are evidence-based practices that improve rates of college enrollment, high school and degree completion, and college credit accumulation.

Nationally, 82% of high schools offer dual enrollment, and about one-third of students take at least one dual enrollment course by graduation.[2] Program participation has nearly doubled from 2013 to 2023.[3] However, the national data infrastructure has not kept up to better understand who is participating, what courses are taken, and how dual enrollment impacts education and workforce outcomes.

KEY STATISTICS

82%
of high schools offer dual enrollment

1 in 3
of students take at least one dual enrollment course by graduation. Program participation has nearly doubled from 2013 to 2023.

Why does federal dual enrollment data collection matter?

Robust federal education data collection and reporting are essential for understanding which students are being served and how they fare nationally across programs. When data are comparable across states and disaggregated by key student characteristics, federal systems can surface national patterns in participation and outcomes, highlight gaps, and reveal which policies and practices are working. This information, in turn, gives federal leaders the tools to set clear expectations, design incentives, improve federal policy, and support states in improving quality.

This role is especially critical for dual enrollment; a core part of the nation's education and talent development ecosystem, it sits at the intersection of K-12 and higher education, meaning no single system is fully accountable for tracking participation and outcomes. This makes it difficult to see a coherent national picture.

Without a robust federal data strategy, we cannot answer basic questions about which students are accessing dual enrollment, what kinds of courses they are taking, or how those choices shape their long-term postsecondary and labor market outcomes. Expanding federal dual enrollment data collection and accessibility could improve informed decision-making for students and families, and support a national understanding of strategies to strengthen education-to-career pipelines. Strengthening federal dual enrollment data collection is a necessary step toward transparency and toward more effective policy.

Four key ways the federal government collects dual enrollment data

Civil Rights Data Collection

The Civil Rights Data Collection (CDRC) of the U.S. Department of Education gathers information from public elementary and secondary schools to monitor whether they are meeting their obligations to provide equal educational opportunity. Administered by the Office for Civil Rights, the CDRC collects data on student enrollment, education programs, and services, which can be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, English proficiency, and disability. Public districts and schools receiving federal education funds are required to report and submit data to the CRDC every other year.

Since the 2015-16 school year, the CRDC collects and reports on just one dual enrollment data point which is the number of students (grades 9-12) enrolled in at least one dual enrollment/dual credit program defined as programs that provide "opportunities for high school students to take college-level courses offered by colleges, and to earn concurrent credit toward a high school diploma and a college degree while still in high school."[4] Dual enrollment/dual credit programs do not include Advanced Placement or the International Baccalaureate.

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), IPEDS is the federal government's primary mechanism for collecting data on colleges and postsecondary institutions that participate in the federal financial aid system.[5] IPEDS is comprised of a collection of annually administered surveys that report on institutional-level data on postsecondary enrollment, completion, tuition and student aid, graduation rates, staffing, and more.[6] Completion of all IPEDS surveys is mandatory for these institutions under the Higher Education Act.

Beginning in the 2022-23 collection year, dual enrollment data are now captured within IPEDS through its 12-Month Enrollment survey.[7] IPEDS defines dual enrollment as "students who enroll in college courses offered by an institution of higher education while enrolled in high school or seeking a recognized equivalent. Student performance is recorded on a college transcript, and postsecondary credit is awarded for a passing grade in the course."[8] This definition is intentionally broad to include all credit-bearing postsecondary courses regardless of delivery mode, location, instructor, or whether the student is in a formal state or local program. Like the CRDC, it explicitly excludes credit-by-exam programs in which the student is not enrolled in a college.

State Reporting

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)

Under ESSA, states are required to include at least one School Quality or Student Success (SQSS) indicator in their accountability systems to capture a more holistic picture of school quality, beyond test scores.[9] In high schools, many states meet this requirement through state-defined "college and career readiness" indicators, within which dual enrollment participation or success is often embedded.[10] For example, recent research from Advance CTE and the College in High School Alliance found that, as of 2025, 35 states include dual enrollment as part of their CCR indicator.[11]

Dual enrollment-specific data is collected under ESSA only if a state chooses it as part of their CCR indicator and decides to report on it separately as a sub-CCRC metric, rather than grouping it broadly with other educational experiences. Because ESSA allows states flexibility to define their CCR indicators and associated data elements, there is significant variance in how dual enrollment experiences are captured from one state to the next. This limits the ability to compare dual enrollment models across states and understand which policies and practices yield the strongest outcomes.

Perkins V encourages states to embed dual enrollment opportunities within career and technical education (CTE) programs by allowing states to select "attainment of postsecondary credits" as one of three required

options for their secondary quality indicators.[12] States that choose this indicator are required to measure and report the percentage of CTE concentrators (broadly defined as a secondary student who has completed three or more courses in a CTE pathway or two credits in a single CTE program area recognized by the state or localities[13]) who earn postsecondary credit while in high school, including credits earned through dual enrollment or credit transfer.[14] As of 2025, 12 states have selected "attainment of postsecondary credits" as their secondary program quality indicator.[15] Regardless of indicator selection, all states are required to report their Perkins V performance data to the Department annually using the Consolidated Annual Report (CAR), which captures required performance measures, financial reporting, and narrative descriptions.

Together, ESSA and Perkins V create complementary but non-aligned federal data systems for capturing dual enrollment participation and outcomes. Under ESSA, dual enrollment is most often incorporated into state-defined "college and career readiness" measures used for school-level accountability and public reporting. In contrast, Perkins V treats dual enrollment as one possible mechanism for assessing the quality of secondary-level CTE programs, with reporting centered on CTE concentrators and submitted to the federal government for program monitoring and performance evaluation. As a result, dual enrollment data reported under ESSA and Perkins V frequently draw on distinct definitions, time frames, and student groups, which limits cross-system comparability even when they reference similar student experiences.

Surveys and Studies

Longitudinal surveys

The High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), administered by NCES, is another way the federal government has collected and reported data on dual enrollment. The study is a national, representative, longitudinal study of more than 23,000 students in grade 9 who were followed throughout their secondary, postsecondary, and early workforce years. NCES's "Dual Enrollment Participation and Characteristics" brief, which pulls data directly from HSLS:09, looked at the percentage of students who took postsecondary credits in high school, demographic characteristics such as parents' highest education level and race/ethnicity, and where high school students took courses for postsecondary credit (high school versus college campuses).

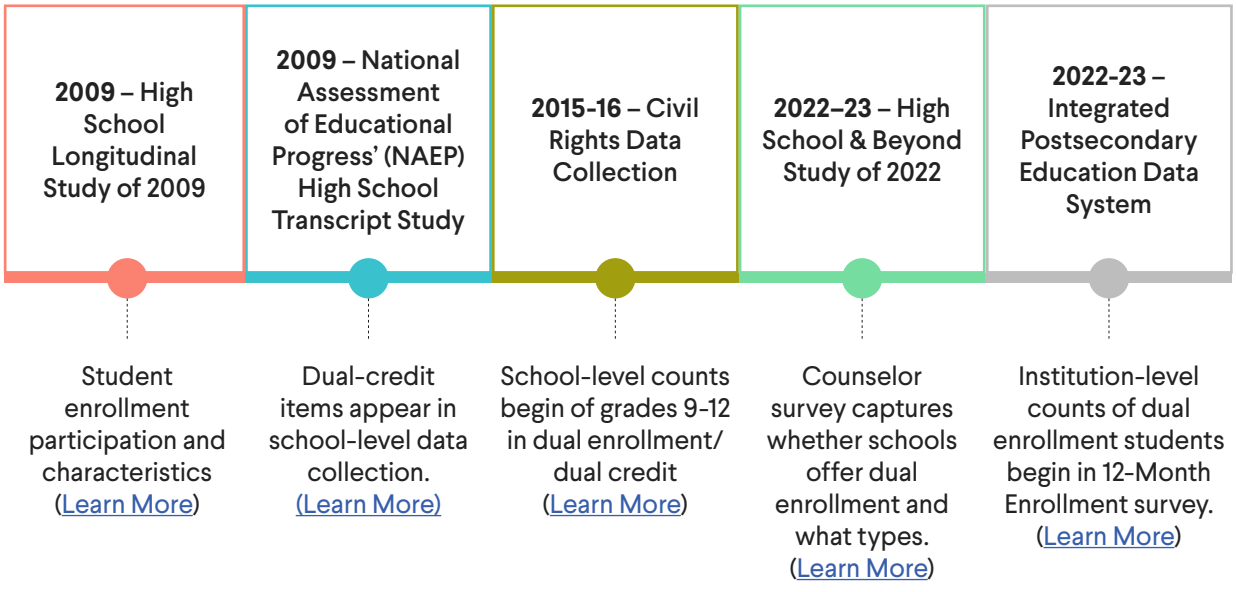
The most recent high school longitudinal study is the High School & Beyond Study of 2022 (HS&B:22), which follows a nationally representative cohort of grade 9 students who were surveyed in 2022-23, and the first follow-up is planned for spring 2026, when most of the students are in grade 12. The files released for the base-year questions do not focus on dual enrollment participation, but the base-year counselor survey component includes questions on whether a school offers dual enrollment and what types (such as academic versus CTE, or whole school models).[16] According to the NCES, these items will allow national estimates of school-level access and models of dual enrollment. However, as of the writing of this brief, no

researcher-generated findings have been released on the counselor survey questions, but they could begin appearing in 2026 and beyond.

Periodic Studies

The National Assessment of Educational Progress' (NAEP) High School Transcript Study (HSTS) is a periodic national study (conducted irregularly, most recently in 2019) that provides detailed information on a snapshot of graduates' high school course-taking patterns and their relationship to student achievement.[17] The HSTS report on course taking in a few core areas, including math and science, STEM, career and technical education, and dual enrollment.[18] The HSTS not only reports on the percentage of high school graduates who took a dual enrollment course, but also includes data on dual enrollment course subjects, providing a rare national glimpse into the most common dual enrollment course subjects disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

When Federal Data Systems Began Collecting Dual Enrollment Data



Summary of Dual Enrollment Data Collected by the Federal Government

Data Collection	Data Respondent	Unit of Analysis	Dual enrollment data collected	Dual enrollment data gaps
CRDC (Civil Rights Data Collection)	K-12 school districts and schools (reported to ED's Office for Civil Rights)	School and district level (aggregated counts of students, offerings, etc.)	School-level counts of **students (grades 9–12) enrolled in at least one dual enrollment course;** disaggregated by: • Race/ethnicity • Sex • English learner status • Disability status	Course delivery methods or student outcomes including: • Location of instruction (high school vs. college) • Instructors (high school teacher vs. college faculty) • Type of credit earned • Number of credits earned or completed • Postsecondary outcomes
IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) 12-Month Enrollment	Postsecondary institutions (Title IV-eligible colleges and universities)	Institutional-level (aggregated across students and programs)	Institution-level **counts of dual enrollment students enrolled at colleges**, disaggregated by: • Race/ethnicity • Gender	• Credits completed • Credits applied to pathway If students later ◦ Enrolled ◦ Persisted ◦ Completed credentials
ESSA (Title I accountability)	State Education Agencies (SEAs) drawing on district/school data	School, district, and state-level (aggregated by student subgroups)	State may report: • Dual enrollment participation • Dual enrollment success	• Data are only collected where states select dual enrollment for their indicators • Definitions, time frames, and student groups differ across states, limiting / comparability

Data Collection	Data Respondent	Unit of Analysis	Dual enrollment data collected	Dual enrollment data gaps
Perkins V (CTE reporting)	State Education Agencies and postsecondary CTE providers	Program and institutional level (aggregated participant and concentrator counts)	State may report: • % of CTE concentrators earning postsecondary credit	• Data only collected from states that choose the "attainment of postsecondary credits" option • Data focuses on CTE concentrators, missing other students • Data may not distinguish dual enrollment from other mechanisms for earning credit; • Definitions, time frames, and student groups differ across states, limiting comparability
HSLS:09 (High School Longitudinal Study)	Students, parents, schools, plus administrative records	Student-level (longitudinal cohort followed over time)	• % of student that earned postsecondary credits in high school • Selected demographic information • Course location	Limited dual enrollment-specific items overall at time of publication
HS&B:22 (High School and Beyond)	Students and schools (student surveys, school administrator questionnaires, and administrative records collected by NCES)	Student-level (longitudinal cohort)	• Whether schools offer dual enrollment • Types of dual enrollment offered	No findings specific to dual enrollment have been published yet.
HSTS (NAEP High School Transcript Study)	High schools (representative sample of public and private high schools providing transcripts for sampled graduates)	Student-level transcript data for high school graduates (graduates, analyzed cross-sectionally)	• % of high school graduates that took a dual enrollment course • Course subjects • Disaggregated by race/ethnicity	Not annual or timely; limited periodic snapshots of graduates' course-taking with the most recent administration in 2019.

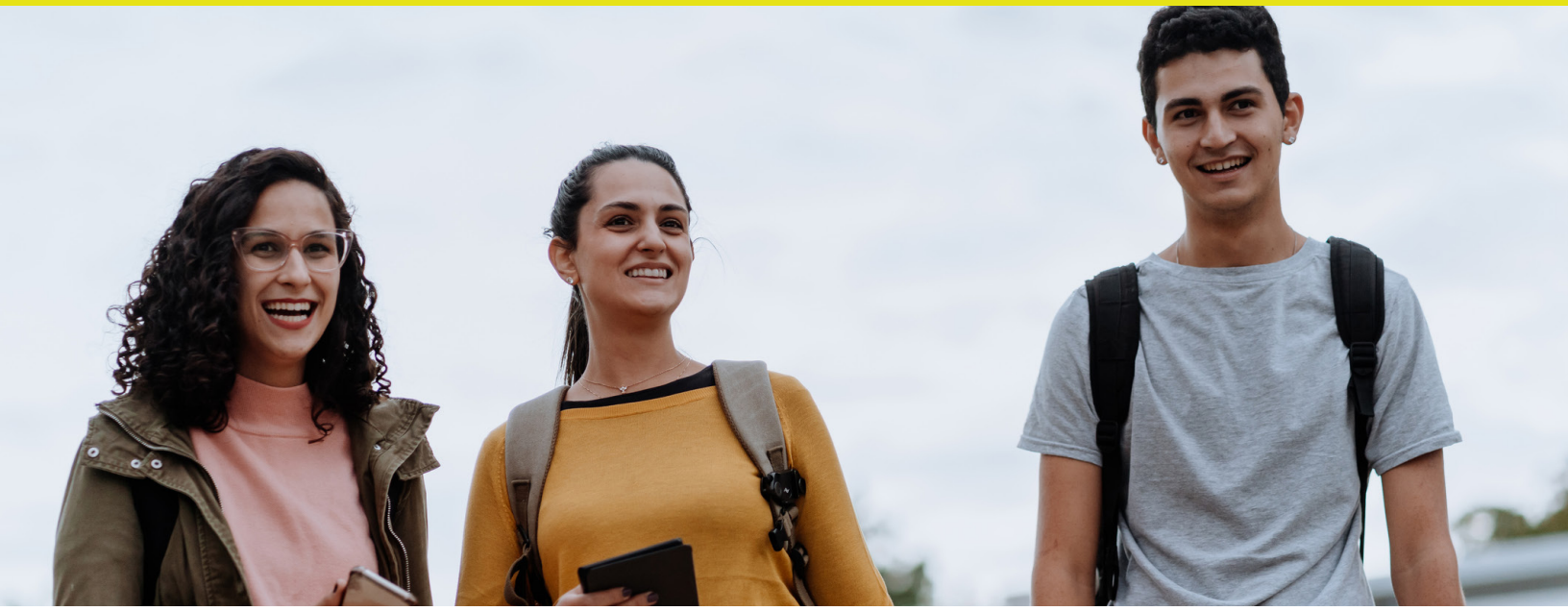
Critical questions left unanswered

Despite existing efforts, federal data systems still can't answer basic questions about dual enrollment access and success, show national trends and state-by-state comparisons, or provide clarity on which students are being served. For example, federal data cannot answer:

- *How and under what conditions do students participate in dual enrollment? Are certain students— like Black, Latine, or rural students—disproportionally limited to certain types of dual enrollment delivery?*
    - Current systems don't capture where and how courses are delivered (college campus, high school, online, or hybrid), who teaches them (high school instructor versus college faculty), program model (whole school model versus one-off courses), or the intensity of participation (credits attempted or earned, number of terms, total credit accumulation).
- *What are the costs of dual enrollment, and who pays?*
    - Existing data don't illuminate the overall cost of courses, including out-of-pocket expenses for students and families, or how tuition, books, fees, and transportation are paid and by whom (state, district, college, student/family, or a mix).
- *What kinds of dual enrollment courses are students taking?*
    - Federal systems don't show the subject matter or field of study, whether courses are a part of a coherent program of study, or whether credits apply to specific credentials, degrees, or transfer pathways.

- *What are the outcomes of dual enrollment participation? And which program structures are associated with higher credit accumulation?*
    - We lack a comprehensive, cross-state picture of key outcomes, such as high school completion, postsecondary matriculation, persistence, or degree or credential attainment, credit applicability and loss, and labor market outcomes linked specifically to dual enrollment participation.

Because current systems do not consistently disaggregate dual enrollment data by race, income, geography, disability status, or other student characteristics, we still lack a clear national picture of who is accessing dual enrollment and who is benefiting from it.



Recommended policy change for dual enrollment data collection

Federal dual enrollment data efforts currently prioritize participation counts but fail to capture key program design features and student outcomes necessary to assess quality, access gaps, and effectiveness. Targeted enhancements to the CRDC and IPEDS—aligned with each system's statutory purpose—could substantially improve federal visibility into how dual enrollment programs operate and who they serve.

Below are key recommendations that the federal government should enact to improve the robustness and quality of dual enrollment data collection.

Recommendation 1: Improve the timeliness of CRDC data releases and provide school districts with guidance on accurate reporting

Although the CRDC is administered every other year, there are often substantial delays between collection and the public release of data. As of this brief's writing, the most recent complete CRDC dataset (school year 2021-22) was released in 2026, with preliminary snapshots released in 2025. These delays limit policymakers, researchers, and practitioners' ability to use CRDC data for timely improvements and accountability. To address this, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) should prioritize accelerating the release timeline for CRDC data to better align with the collection cycle.

Additionally, national research organizations have long suspected that dual enrollment is underreported in the CRCD. For example, the total number of dual enrollment students reported to the CRDC in 2021-22 was 1.8 million, which is smaller than the 2.5 million reported in IPEDS in the 2022-23 school year. [19] The

Community College Research Center notes that this discrepancy may be because" some districts may. Not report on dual enrollment students if the course is offered off-site at a partnering college or during the summer."[20] As a result, OCR should also provide schools and school districts with guidance and support on the quality and accuracy of their data reporting to minimize misalignment across systems and ensure the most accurate reporting possible.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the CRDC's usefulness for understanding dual enrollment access

Because the CDRC's purpose is to examine access to educational opportunities (rather than student outcomes), we recommend that the CDRC include a small set of school-level dual enrollment program design indicators since such elements can directly affect who can participate in dual enrollment (e.g., transportation barriers, scheduling, availability of qualified instructors, and more). Such design elements should include:

- Primary location of instruction
    - High school campus
    - Postsecondary campus
    - Online or remote
- Instructor of record
    - Postsecondary faculty
    - High school instructor approved by college
- Type of credit offered
    - Both high school and college credit
    - College credit only

This change would allow federal policymakers to distinguish between schools that just "offer" dual enrollment and those that provide accessible pathways for students in demographic groups who have not accessed dual enrollment opportunities at proportional rates.

Recommendation 3: Expand IPEDS to capture dual enrollment credit accumulation and early postsecondary outcomes.

Because IPEDS already captures data on credits, enrollment, persistence, and completions of postsecondary students, NCES should build on the new IPEDS dual enrollment category by adding a subset of institution-level reporting on credit completion and early postsecondary outcomes for dual enrollment students. Such sub-metrics may include:

- Total college credits successfully completed (in aggregate)
- Subsequent enrollment at the same institution (enrolled within 12 months of high school completion)
- Credential or degree completion

This change would help create the first baseline for understanding whether dual enrollment students accumulate meaningful college credit and how often dual enrollment participation translates into successful postsecondary continuation and completion. Additionally, extending limited aggregate outcomes reporting to dual enrollment students would be consistent with existing IPEDS practice of requiring institutions to report on enrollment, persistence, and completion outcomes for multiple postsecondary subpopulations, including part-time and distance education students.

Recommendation 4: Issue more frequent federal studies that can shed more light on dual enrollment course-taking—such as what types of courses are being accessed and by whom—and participants' postsecondary and workforce outcomes.

Studies like the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) track students over time and provide valuable insights into students' pathways and outcomes. Cross-sectional studies, such as the NAEP High School Transcript Study (HSTS), analyze data from high school graduates at a single point in time, allowing for national trend comparisons in course-taking and access. Although different in design, both types of studies have helped establish what works for dual enrollment, and each should be issued more frequently to help federal and state policymakers make any needed policy or program design adjustments to ensure students' access and longer-term success with dual enrollment.

Additional Resources

Community College Research Center's Data Dashboard – Postsecondary Enrollment Among Students in High School – IPEDS 12-Month Enrollments, 2022-23

College in High School Alliance State Data Reporting Tracker

College in High School Programs & Data: Reporting and Using Dual Enrollment Data To Improve Equity (States) - College in High School Alliance and Data Quality Campaign (2021)

Endnotes

[1] Other names include dual credit, middle college, and Pathways to Technology Early College High School (PTECH).

[2] Community College Research Center, Understanding Dual Enrollment, policy fact sheet, February 2026.

[3] John Fink, "How Many Community Colleges Fully Recovered Their Enrollments Three Years After the Pandemic? Too Few.", CCRC Blog, January 13, 2025.

[4] Distance Education (DSED) Module, resource document, revised December 17, 2024.

[5] National Center for Education Statistics, "About IPEDS".

[6] National Center for Education Statistics, "About IPEDS".

[7] National Center for Education Statistics, "12-Month Enrollment (E12)", IPEDS Survey Components.

[8] Report and Suggestions from IPEDS Technical Review Panel #63: Capturing and Clarifying Dual Enrollment Data (Part II), 2021.

[9] Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114–95, § 1111, 129 Stat. 1802 (2015).

[10] Council of Chief State School Officers, Identifying a School Quality/Student Success Indicator for ESSA: Requirements and Considerations, January 2017.

[11] Advance CTE & College in High School Alliance, Analyzing State Accountability Systems for Dual Enrollment, 2025.

[12] Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, Pub. L. No. 115–224 (2018).

[13] Advance CTE, Perkins V: Secondary CTE Concentrator Definition Background, 2019.

[14] Association for Career and Technical Education, Career Readiness Accountability, May 2016.

[15] Advance CTE & College in High School Alliance, Analyzing State Accountability Systems for Dual Enrollment, 2025.

[16] National Center for Education Statistics, HSB_BYFS_CounselorSurvey.pdf.

[17] National Center for Education Statistics, "2019 NAEP High School Transcript Study (HSTS) Results".

[18] National Center for Education Statistics, "2019 NAEP High School Transcript Study (HSTS), Closer Look, Dual Enrollment Coursetaking".

[19] John Fink, "Who Has Access to Dual Enrollment and AP Coursework at Your Local Schools?", CCRC Blog, April 14, 2025

[20] John Fink, "Who Has Access to Dual Enrollment and AP Coursework at Your Local Schools?", CCRC Blog, April 14, 2025.

Building a Future
That Works
For Everyone