



Building State Infrastructure for High-Quality Dual Enrollment

A federal grant framework to help states modernize their dual enrollment infrastructure and expand access to high-quality, transferable, and accessible dual enrollment.



Why This Matters

Dual enrollment programs—which may be known by [other names](#)—are evidence-based practices that improve rates of college enrollment, high school and degree completion, and college credit accumulation.¹ Eighty-two percent of high schools nationally offer dual enrollment, but some statewide systems face persistent infrastructure challenges, including fragmented data systems, uneven credit transfer policies, inconsistent educator capacity, and limited coordination across K–12 and higher education.² Local program expansion alone cannot solve these structural barriers.

Why a Federal Role Is Needed

A stronger federal role would help states address these challenges at the systems level. Closing access gaps in dual enrollment requires better data, stronger state policy design, and targeted resources to help states build the infrastructure to expand access and improve program quality and student success. States face competing priorities, and a federal incentive could prioritize dual enrollment infrastructure over other demands.

Although [existing federal laws](#) such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), and the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) can support dual enrollment, those funds are flexible rather than dedicated for dual enrollment and must compete with other state and local demands. A targeted federal infrastructure grant would give states the incentive and capacity to strengthen data systems, improve credit transfer and quality, and build more coherent statewide dual enrollment systems that expand access and success for students.



Our Proposal

Informed by state leaders, experts, and [College in High School Alliance \(CHSA\) Steering Committee members](#), our federal proposal focuses on helping states develop, improve, or modernize statewide infrastructure supporting high-quality dual enrollment and early college high school offerings, increase participation and success for students, and promote the quality, transferability, and applicability of postsecondary credit.³ Key features include:



Competitive, five-year grants to states



Statewide infrastructure focus (systems, policies, cross-agency coordination)



Flexibility and accountability, so states can design solutions aligned with their needs

What States Could Use Funds For

Our proposal supports state efforts such as:



Developing or enhancing data systems and dual enrollment data sharing capacity between K–12 and higher education



Enhancing dual enrollment advising and student supports



Strengthening dual enrollment teacher capacity and credentialing pathways



Strengthening dual enrollment quality and workforce-aligned pathways



Improving dual enrollment credit transfers and transcript systems

Why Now

After reengaging state leaders and field partners, we believe a federal infrastructure investment would strengthen dual enrollment nationwide in a practical and politically viable way. This would give states the incentive and capacity to modernize core systems, improve quality and transparency, expand access to high-quality opportunities, and design solutions that reflect state governance structures, policy environments, and workforce needs. In doing so, it would position dual enrollment as a stronger, more intentional component of state education and workforce strategies and create a clearer foundation for continued federal and state action.

¹ “Glossary: Understanding College in High School Programs,” College in High School Alliance, accessed August 11, 2026, <https://collegeinhighschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/CollegeinHighSchoolProgramsGlossary.pdf>; What Works Clearinghouse, WWC Intervention Report: Dual Enrollment (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Education Sciences, Department of Education, February 28, 2017), https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_dual_enrollment_022817.pdf.

² Community College Research Center, Understanding Dual Enrollment: Policy Fact Sheet (New York, New York: Columbia University Teachers College, February 2026), <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Dual-Enrollment-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

³ “Our Steering Committee,” College in High School Alliance, accessed July 30, 2026, <https://collegeinhighschool.org/who-we-are/our-steering-committee/>.