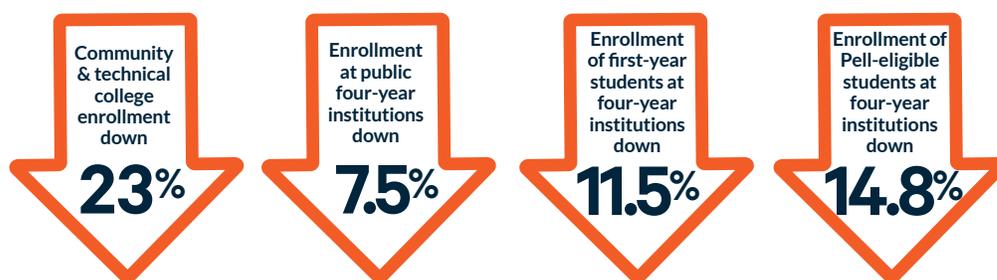


## INCREASING POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT AMONG WASHINGTON STUDENTS **CASE STUDY: THE BENEFITS OF DUAL CREDIT**

Washington is home to a diverse economy with a broad range of anchor industries. It is expected that Washington employers will create 373,000 new jobs in our state by 2026, with the anticipated annual growth rate in job creation set to outpace the nation. Seventy percent of these jobs are expected to require or be filled by workers with a postsecondary credential—such as a degree, apprenticeship, or certificate. But our state is facing a crisis in credential attainment.

Our young people, particularly young people of color and those from low-income backgrounds, have not been able to enroll in college and career pathways as planned.

### **FURTHER, THE PANDEMIC HAS DRIVEN ALARMING DROPS IN POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT:**



### **WE MUST DO BETTER FOR WASHINGTON STUDENTS.**

Strategies already underway, and unprecedented commitments from our state's postsecondary institutions to increase enrollment and completion, can make up half the distance needed to get from 43% to 70% credential attainment. Getting the rest of the way will require new thinking, transformed systems, and an unrelenting effort to meet the needs and aspirations of Washington students, particularly Black, Hispanic, Latino/a, and Native American students and students from low-income backgrounds.

### **OUR GOAL:**

By the high school class of 2030, 70% of Washington students—overall and within each racial and ethnic group—will complete a postsecondary credential by age 26. Based on estimates for the high school class of 2019, less than half—just 43%—of Washington high school students will hit that benchmark. That number could erode for those high school cohorts affected by the pandemic.

Throughout 2022, this case study series will profile a range of opportunities that should be considered as stakeholders across Washington—educators, institutions, policymakers, employers, and families alike—work together to remove barriers and encourage students on their best-fit pathway to a credential.



## PROMISING STRATEGY: EARNING COLLEGE CREDIT WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL

National research indicates that students who earn college credit during their high school experience are more likely to graduate high school, persist into a second year of post-high school education, and complete a bachelor's degree within four years.

Washington state high school students can take advantage of several dual credit opportunities, including Advanced Placement, Cambridge International Program, Career & Technical Education Dual Credit, College in the High School, International Baccalaureate, and Running Start.<sup>1</sup> In 2015, 76% of Running Start students who graduated from high school directly enrolled into a two- or four-year college, compared with 55% of students who did not participate in Running Start. Succeeding in dual credit courses exposes students to the rigor of college-level work and helps them build their skills and confidence to succeed in post-high school education.<sup>2</sup>

### CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS WITH RACIAL AND INCOME INEQUITY

Dual credit programs are highly correlated with future credential completion. However, dual credit opportunities and participation are exceedingly uneven among student demographic groups. In 2020, Washington's education system supported nearly 54% of students from low-income backgrounds to complete a dual credit course, compared with 67.5% of students from middle- and high-income backgrounds. Research points to systemic factors such as access, cost, and difficulty of transferring credits as reasons for the gap.<sup>3</sup> These systemic factors also have led to underrepresentation of Black (60.8%), Hispanic/Latino (55.6%), and Native American (41.8%) students in completing dual credit opportunities, compared with white (62.1%) students.<sup>4</sup>

#### REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION CAN IMPROVE WASHINGTON'S ABILITY TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN EARNING COLLEGE CREDIT WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL:

- Cost:** Eliminating costs—such as exam fees, book expenses, and transportation—can enable more students from low-income backgrounds to successfully participate in dual credit courses.
- Quality:** Ensuring courses align with college-level rigor can help prepare students for success in postsecondary education.
- Use:** Enabling students to easily transfer credits to a credential pathway makes their experience more useful and streamlined.

1. Dual Credit Task Force report

3. <https://www.ecs.org/dual-concurrent-enrollment-policies/>

2. [WA Stem Dual Credit Tool Kit](#)

4. [Washington State Report Card](#)

## SPOTLIGHTING SUCCESS: **HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS IN THE WENATCHEE VALLEY**

Wenatchee Valley College (WVC) has worked for years with high schools across its 10,000-square-mile range to expand dual credit opportunities. WVC dual credit enrollment held even in Fall 2020 and went up 1% in Fall 2021, despite the disruption of the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, 198 students in the high school class of 2021 across the 18 school districts across the region earned a WVC associate's degree alongside their high school diploma.

WVC has forged a particularly successful partnership with Bridgeport High School (BHS) over the last 15 years using the College in the High School model. At BHS, 95% of students identify as Hispanic or Latino/a and 94% of students are from low-income backgrounds. In the previous two school years, 80% of BHS juniors and seniors completed dual credit compared to the statewide completion rate of 61%. Ease of access is likely a major factor for BHS students, as the school is 90 minutes from the closest postsecondary option, WVC. By offering dual credit courses at BHS, students do not have to commute to earn college credit.

### SIX ELEMENTS MAKE THE PARTNERSHIP FLOURISH FOR STUDENTS:

- #1 CLOSE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE:** Counselors from both WVC and Bridgeport work closely together to recruit students and encourage dual credit participation. Staff communicate regularly via phone and email, including about individual student progress, and hold annual meetings to ensure ongoing alignment. WVC also trains high school teachers to teach college-level courses on the high school campus.
- #2 SIMPLE APPLICATIONS:** Advising time is integrated into the school day, enabling students to plan their course of study and learn about dual credit options. This eliminates students having to carve out time outside the school day to explore opportunities on their own, without advisor or teacher guidance.
- #3 COST-FREE FOR FAMILIES:** Students take courses for free as a result of a cost-share agreement between WVC and BHS.
- #4 PEER MENTORS:** Older students mentor their younger counterparts, helping set and meet the school-wide expectation that every student take at least one college course while in high school.
- #5 EQUITABLE SUPPORT:** Bridgeport has small class sizes so teachers have time and opportunity to provide extra support to students who need it most.
- #6 DIRECTLY APPLICABLE TO A COLLEGE PATHWAY:** WVC aligns College in the High School courses to pathways at WVC and ensures rigor equals that of campus courses.

**“Dual credit programs help communicate to students that they can do college-level work—that’s the enrollment part. Providing programs that align with students’ values, location, and job opportunities close to home is the completion part.”**

— Dr. Jim Richardson,  
WVC president

### RESULTS THUS FAR:

A laser-like focus on improving equity and outcomes is working in the Wenatchee Valley. There is no longer a gap between dual credit participation for white students and students of color. **Additionally, 85% of Hispanic and Latino/a students in the district graduate high school, outpacing the statewide graduation rate of 78% for the same population.**