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Abstract

This study surveys superintendents about Ohio's ambitious statewide dual enrollment policy ("College Credit Plus"), specifically examining its local implications from superintendents' perspectives. In particular, we find that issues of funding related to this policy have become a growing concern, and that districts are frequently struggling to identify teachers who meet the certification requirements to teach dual enrollment courses. Overall, this policy has presented several challenges at local levels, especially for smaller, rural high schools. Nevertheless, most superintendents perceive that this dual enrollment policy has provided benefits to their students. In discussion, we position our findings within the broader literature and the continued calls for expanded dual enrollment programming. As a whole, this highlights the need for researchers to attend to specific dual enrollment policy details and how they affect local school district programming.

Keywords

dual enrollment, college credit in high school, education policy, dual credit

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In the past two decades, dual enrollment programs—educational programs that enable students to earn both high school credit and college credit—have considerably expanded across the United States (Higher Learning Commission, 2013). As of 2016, 47 states have adopted dual enrollment policies (Zinth, 2015). These programs are implemented in myriad ways, but their proliferation underscores that states view dual enrollment as an important education policy. Closely related, a strong federal and state-level policy drive is underway to enhance secondary students’ “college and career readiness” (CCR).

As Malin, Bragg, and Hackmann (2017, p. 23) documented, for instance, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* includes a major shift toward CCR, and with a “particularly prominent” dual enrollment emphasis. Considering dual enrollment and college and career readiness policies’ rapid expansion, and the fact that dual enrollment policies invariably require significantly shifted student programming, it is important to examine how such policies are being implemented “on the ground” from various vantage points.

Accordingly, this study examines the implications of one major, state-level (Ohio) dual enrollment policy at the local (school district) level, especially relative to the perceptions of individual superintendents. To do so, this study surveys Ohio school district superintendents regarding the state’s new dual enrollment policy known as College Credit Plus (CCP). This study addresses how Ohio superintendents perceive this policy to have impacted their local school districts (e.g., in terms of budget/finances, curriculum/programming and planning, and options for students).

In the next section, we broadly review the literature on the subject of dual enrollment, focusing especially on how these programs impact individual schools. We also detail Ohio’s CCP policy, also reviewing some data suggesting the policy has significantly impacted high school programming and impacted many students’ curricular options and school experiences. We then describe the research design of the present study.

Review of Literature

Since the 1980s, dual enrollment policies have expanded in high schools throughout the United States (Higher Learning Commission, 2013). Dual enrollment programs offer multiple ways for students to earn college credits while still enrolled in high school; each state program has different policies and regulations, with varying program titles. These programs have substantially expanded since the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* and as a consequence of an Obama-era educational initiative for such programs to act as pathways to prepare students for college and careers (Arnold, Knight, & Flora, 2017). As of 2016, 47 states had dual enrollment policies governing local practice, while three leave policy to individual school districts (Zinth, 2015).

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) is a recent, high profile example of a national policy that encourages the expansion of college and career readiness in high schools and provides states resources which in some ways can help to expand and

broaden dual enrollment programs (e.g., through Title I, II, III, and IV funds that can be used to pay for costs) (Deeds & Malter, 2016; Malin et al., 2017). This shift appears to reflect a broad mission, manifested in ESSA and other policies, to ensure that students are ready for college or for a career by the time they graduate high school (Malin et al., 2017). This broad mission plays out in different ways, but often apparent are policies and programs (e.g., dual enrollment) designed to bridge educational levels and, ultimately, improve college access and completion.

It is important to consider the research supporting dual enrollment policies/programs, as well as scholarship that has noted challenges and concerns. The remainder of this review of literature is structured accordingly.

Dual Enrollment Research: Benefits

A limited but growing body of research suggests dual enrollment programs, despite substantial challenges (see next section), can augment students' access to and success in college (Harnish & Lynch, 2005; Hofmann, 2012; Karp, 2015). These programs have accordingly been vigorously pursued as major strategies both for increasing college completion, and to enhance equity (e.g., augment historically marginalized students' college access and readiness; Karp, 2015).

Hoffman (2017) provides a thorough review of dual enrollment research. Two important cautions should be noted, however. First, researchers have tended to focus on one or a small number of states' programs (and/or on dual enrollment within specific settings); policy and implementation level details vary widely by state (see Pierce, 2017), so findings from such studies may not generalize to other locations/situations. Second, selection bias (e.g., unobserved characteristics of students who dually enroll versus those who are not) has challenged researchers in this realm (see Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003; Hoffman, 2017). Dual enrollment researchers have often attempted to cope by controlling for observable characteristics (e.g., student SES), but these analyses do not eliminate the potential for misinterpretation related to the efficacy of dual enrollment (Giani, Alexander, & Reyes, 2014).

With those cautions in mind, here we highlight some key patterns and findings: Researchers have reported dually enrolled students to have higher grade point averages (e.g., Karp & Hughes, 2008), greater preparation for and understanding of skills needed to attend college (Kim & Bragg, 2008; Lile, Ottusch, Jones, & Richards, 2018), greater motivation and engagement (An, 2015), improved cognitive and noncognitive performance (An & Taylor, 2015), increased college persistence (Karp & Hughes, 2008) and college completion (Giani et al., 2014), among other positive associations and outcomes. Some research has also focused on benefits of particular dual enrollment coursework/subjects. For instance, Kim and Bragg (2008) and Giani et al. (2014) have reported benefits associated with dual enrollment math coursework in particular. Some research also suggests dual enrollment may have particular benefits for certain populations of students—An (2012, 2013), for example, has reported positive effects of dual enrollment for students experiencing poverty.

Thus, it appears dual enrollment (in some forms) can help to ease/improve students' transitions between high school and postsecondary, and more specifically these programs can be promising in terms of increasing college access and persistence/completion (Karp, 2015; Zinth & Barnett, 2018). Thus, we see research as offering considerable impetus for policymakers who aim to employ dual enrollment as a strategy to enhance CCR as well as to broaden students' access to these options (see Zinth & Barnett, 2018).

Drawbacks and Unanswered Questions

Despite the many real or purported benefits associated with the rise of dual enrollment options for students, some studies have pointed to drawbacks and unanswered questions requiring further examination. To a large extent, we suspect these concerns closely relate to particular policy details that vary widely by state (e.g., dimensions related to who can access dual enrollment, who can teach these courses and where, how costs are paid; see Pierce, 2017). The costs of dual enrollment for states and local schools, concerns about student readiness, and issues with teacher certification have all posed issues that states and local educators are needing to address.

Costs. One major challenge facing policymakers and practitioners relates to the costs associated with dual enrollment programs (Pierce, 2017; Taylor & Pretlow, 2015; Zinth, 2015). Presently, states take widely varying approaches to financing dual enrollment programs. Only 10 states require public universities and public high schools to enroll any student that wants to participate, while other states have the option to partner with local colleges and universities and decide how cost may work and arrange various agreements. Twelve states require notification to parents that dual enrollment policies exist and are available to their children (Zinth, 2015). With regard to funding, some states require individual school districts to pay for dual enrollment programs out of their budgets, while others are paid for through state funds or by individual parents, and some with mixed approaches (Zinth, 2015). Ohio is one of four states (others include Florida, Iowa, and Wyoming) that requires students' school districts to pay tuition costs (Pierce, 2017).

Howley, Howley, Howley, and Duncan (2013) studied one Midwestern state that left funding dual enrollment up to the local district and found that tensions existed between the local high schools and colleges and that they did not communicate effectively with one another. Funding dual enrollment programs can be expensive, and when students choose to leave a district it can cause other courses at local high schools to be reduced in size and even canceled. Another concern is that students could possibly lose out on credit if they attend a college that is out of their state despite earning in-state credit through a dual enrollment program.

One way that local school districts attempt to rectify district financial hardships is by using local faculty to teach college courses (Zinth, 2015). Howley et al. (2013) found that "border crossers," which are teachers who are certified to teach dual

enrollment courses, administrators, or college faculty that straddle the college/high school border, are an important aspect of college and high school relationships. Border crossers help establish relationships with colleges and high schools and can live in both cultural worlds of high school and college. Additionally, teachers who meet criteria to teach college level courses can save the school district money and make having a college teaching credential more desirable for high school teachers for purposes of employment (Howley et al., 2013; Zinth, 2015).

Textbook and transportation costs are other important financial concerns associated with dual enrollment programs nationwide (Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013). In many states, textbooks are paid for by individual students and families which can leave some students restricted from college courses due to costs. In Ohio, textbook costs are paid for by the local school district as prescribed by statute. Transportation is another concern for students who might not have transportation to and fro college campuses. This issue has been found to be a restrictive complication, but some states have grant programs to help reimburse students (Thomas, Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013).

Student Readiness and Eligibility Concerns. Another area that begs questions in the growing dual enrollment arena is whether or not participating students truly benefit in other social or cognitive areas (e.g., beyond measures of college readiness or likelihood of college graduation; Hansen, Jackson, McInnelly, & Eggett, 2015). Dual enrollment might require students to leave their peers and begin to take classes geared toward students whose ages are different and who are from different communities, which some argue raises questions about maturity level and developmental appropriateness. Dual enrollment rules vary by state with regard to grade level and/or age level requirements, with some states requiring course prerequisites for students to dually enroll, and others simply requiring parental consent for students to take college-level courses (Hansen et al., 2015).

One study compared the writing of students in a college freshman level political science class. The students were divided by those who had earned their entry year writing course through dual enrollment credit and those who had not yet earned this credit. The study found there to be no significant difference between those who had earned dual credit writing credit and those who did not (Hansen et al., 2015). The authors of the study speculate that cognitive ability and maturation play a larger role than perhaps just earning college credits earlier in life.

Howley et al. (2013) also noted concerns regarding students' maturity and readiness for college curricula, suggesting dual enrollment programs are asking students to mature more quickly, which might inadvertently cause students to miss out on key adolescent social, cultural, and age-appropriate experiences. Additionally, some states require that students pay tuition costs if they do not receive a passing grade for the course (Zinth, 2015). Stipulations like these are concerning because local districts cannot restrict students from enrolling in college courses, even if their academic past indicates that they might not be ready for college courses. Especially if such students are

experiencing poverty, being required to pay tuition costs under such circumstances can be debilitating.

Moreover, the Higher Learning Commission (2013) conducted a 50-state study to gain broad knowledge into existing dual enrollment state programs. This study surveyed stakeholders in each state and found that the issues of finance were the major concern with dual enrollment programs, but also found quality assurance to be a major concern to respondents. One issue with regard to quality assurance of dual enrollment programs related to student eligibility. As previously mentioned, this issue questions student maturity levels and whether students are adequately prepared for college level curriculum, rigor, and if college courses that are offered on high school campuses are comparable in terms of college level rigor (Higher Learning Commission, 2013).

Fifteen states have specific grade-level requirements for enrolling in a dual enrollment program, but some have none, which can even enable students in middle schools to enroll in college courses if they meet the admissions criteria from the institution of higher learning (Zinth, 2015). Nine states allow ninth graders to enroll, and two allow tenth graders (Hansen et al., 2015).

Howley et al. (2013) also found that offering college course on high school campuses to be a concern to high school and college level stakeholders as well as replacing courses that were offered at the high school level for courses that are perceived to be less rigorous and for a shorter period of time. As well, questions of replacing high school course offerings with online courses are issues that were posed in studies, which could lead to the replacement of high school faculty and staff due to the reduced need of courses to be taught at the high school level; this creates a competitive nature between high school course offerings and college courses—a student choice model with the potential to limit some options for students who wish not to enroll in dual enrollment programs (Howley et al., 2013).

Zinth and Barnett (2018) argued that dual enrollment options should be expanded, especially to allow those who may be considered “middle achievers” to dually enroll. In states where eligibility for dual enrollment participation is reserved for students enrolled in advanced coursework or placed on a college preparatory track, there could be other ways to identify students who might find success in college courses, including test scores, grade point average, attendance, and other measures (Zinth & Barnett, 2018). There are other ways that could be used to help prepare students at younger ages to enroll in college courses, including summer programs, curriculum that helps students more college ready taken in earlier grades, and more experiences on college campuses. Zinth and Barnett argue that this effort is important because of growing consensus that dual enrollment leads to better graduation rates and college completion rates for all students.

Teacher Certification. Another emerging issue as dual enrollment programs become more pervasive is teacher certification (Borden, Taylor, Park, & Seiler, 2013). Are high school teachers adequately trained to teach with the appropriate rigor and depth required for college curriculum? Each state has different teacher requirements for

teaching in dual enrollment programs, and these requirements vary in many ways, with some states requiring master's degrees in content areas and observations from college faculty, or some just require an agreement with a local college (Zinth, 2015). Ultimately, it is up to the individual college, university, or institution of higher education to ensure that state policy is carried out with regard to rigor and quality, but this remains an area of concern (Borden et al., 2013). This issue can become particularly tricky because most states allow a wide range of institutions of higher learning to participate in dual enrollment offerings, including 2-year colleges, 4-year colleges, technical colleges, tribal colleges, and junior colleges (Zinth, 2015).

Each individual college or university has differing credentialing processes for faculty, which can lead to questions of consistency for teachers who teach in dual enrollment programs. As well, Kanny (2015) studied the individual experiences of students enrolled in community college courses and found that some college instructors expressed open disdain of teaching high school students. Hughes (2010) argues that it is critical that instructors are chosen who have interest in teaching high school students and that the right fit is made between classroom dynamic.

International Context

Dual enrollment in an international context exists in many different forms but is more pervasive in the United States for a couple of major reasons. First, secondary education in other nations differ in many ways from the U.S. comprehensive high school model. Second, it is important to make a distinction between dual enrollment or concurrent enrollment programs and early college programs. Graduating from secondary school early and then attending college, often what early college means, is much different than a program that is designed to provide both secondary education credits as well as college credits.

In the United States, dual enrollment programs offer students some oversight by a college/university and high school, and some courses can be taken at a high school campus taught by high school teachers. Attending college early is different than concurrent enrollment, which often means that high school credits have been fulfilled and can apply to myriad of policies and options that exist. Early college exists in many colleges around the globe, and some have dual enrollment policies. This section briefly examines the policies that resemble dual enrollment broadly in Europe, China, and Canada.

In much of Europe, secondary school ends at the end of the tenth-grade year and students then have the option to continue on to additional options such as vocational schooling, other certificate programs, apprenticeships, or potentially some college courses, though this is not typical (European Union, 2018). Secondary schools in Europe are much more focused on a specific subject track that students choose, which differs from the United States where students generally spend their first 2 years of college and most of high school studying a general curriculum of the liberal arts (West, Stokes, & Edge, 1999).

When students in Europe apply for college, they are asked to declare a major, which is much different from colleges and universities in the United States. This makes it much more complicated when thinking about dual enrollment programs. Dual enrollment is used for students to take courses at both their high school and at the college level where students can receive credit from both institutions. In Europe, by the time a student begins university, they have a very narrow focus on what they will be studying, rather than taking general education credits (West et al., 1999).

The Canadian model of secondary schooling is very similar to that of the United States. In Canada, dual enrollment is controlled by each provincial government. In Ontario, for example, students can enroll in college courses that count for college and secondary school credit, but there is not a general policy that determines who can participate (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Each student is reviewed on a case-by-case basis for attending college courses and receiving credit. The primary purpose for dual credit in Ontario is to meet the needs of students who “face significant challenges in completing the requirements for graduation but have the potential to succeed” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 5).

The public school system in China is complex, but simply put, it is possible for students to earn college credit while in secondary school (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016). Secondary school in China is separated into junior secondary school from ages 12 to 14 and senior secondary from ages 15 to 17. Students in China are legally required to attend junior secondary school but not senior secondary. In order to attend college in China, students must take the Gaoko exam, which is the national exam used for college entrance. Students then matriculate into a college or university. Gaoko exam requirements make it difficult to use a dual credit program, though some exemptions do exist. One such exemption is in an early college program called, the Special Class for Gifted Young (SCGY), which is a rigorous program that allows a fraction of the top students in China to matriculate into college after their eleventh grade year (Dai & Steenbergen-Hu, 2015).

Despite being a program that allows students to enter college early, those eligible for SCGY must still take the Gaoko exam, and also must go through a rigorous screening process where they attend a week of courses taught by professors that help determine admittance (Dai & Steenbergen-Hu, 2015). While China has moved toward a western model of a liberal arts curriculum, the higher education system in China is still dominated by a system of tracking where students are admitted based on exam scores and program admission, rather than general admission such as in the United States.

Few studies have been conducted and published studying early college matriculation in China, Europe, or Canada. The United States appears to be leading the way on the shift to college credit while in secondary school. Australia, New Zealand, and many other countries globally have early college programs, but early college is different from dual enrollment. Dual enrollment programs are unique in that students receive the support of their local high school and they allow students to test the water of higher education, often with the intention of giving students who might not find success in

college the experience needed to help them go to college. It remains to be seen if dual enrollment policies like those in the United States and Canada will spread elsewhere.

Case Context: Ohio

Ohio is a state that requires all public schools, private schools, and public universities to allow students to participate in dual enrollment courses. Ohio's program, CCP, replaces all post-secondary enrollment programs that exist for public school students in the state. CCP has ushered in a dramatic expansion of student dual enrollment in Ohio: from 13,233 students in 2013 to 64,482 in 2016 (Ohio Department of Higher Education, nd).

Ohio's CCP program is also noteworthy for several specific features which may also largely explain the dramatic enrollment increases. On the funding side, Ohio's CCP program requires that individual public school districts pay the tuition costs and textbook costs for each student who enrolls in college courses while still in high school. As noted previously, Ohio is just one of four states requiring local school districts to pay tuition costs. These features and others (e.g., liberal eligibility requirements, course weighting requirements; described below) combine to make Ohio an important context in which to examine superintendents' perceptions about how this program is impacting individual school districts.

In 2014, the Ohio State Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 59, thereby creating CCP. When recommending the expansion of dual enrollment options for students in Ohio, the Chancellor of the Board of Regents, the governing body for higher education in Ohio, John Carey, wrote:

Ohio is failing to take full advantage of a highly effective educational strategy for bolstering college readiness, increasing postsecondary persistence and completion, lowering out-of-pocket higher education costs for students, diversifying the college going population, and developing more career focus. Multiple national research studies have shown that effective dual credit programs have significant positive impact in all of these areas. (Ohio Board of Regents, 2014, p. 6)

Chancellor Carey went on to recommend sweeping changes to the existing policy in Ohio, which were codified in 2014. Ohio's CCP program is mandatory for both public school districts and public institutions of higher learning. Students who attend private schools are also eligible and can apply for funding directly from the Ohio Department of Education (Ohio Revised Code, 2014). Individual public school districts are required to pay for costs associated with CCP for individual students, and all students are eligible to apply. If a student does not pass a dual enrollment course, s/he is required to repay the tuition that had been covered by the local school district. Each institution of higher education is able to determine admissions requirements for students. Schools that give additional grade point average weight for AP courses are also

required to do so for CCP courses. Schools are required to offer professional development for high school teachers that teach CCP courses (Ohio Revised Code, 2014).

Each local school board is required to pay for students that enroll in CCP Courses. State statute sets a ceiling and a floor for how much colleges can charge for tuition in the states, which is calculated based on “foundation funds” which are allocated to each district by the state (Ohio Revised Code, 2014). Each district receives varying amounts of foundation funds that are allocated per pupil that is enrolled in each district. The ceiling for CCP is 83% of the per pupil funds, which is meant to mitigate problems that could occur if a student elected to use more funds than were provided by the states.

Boards are able to negotiate tuition costs with colleges, but it cannot be above the ceiling, or below the floor (defined as 25% of the ceiling; Ohio Revised Code, 2014). If the district and institution of higher learning do not negotiate, tuition will default to the ceiling if it is on the college campus, and 50% of the ceiling if the course is taught by a high school instructor at the local school. State law prohibits public school students from paying for public college tuition or being charged for books (Ohio Revised Code, 2014). Private colleges and universities can charge more than the statutory ceiling if districts elect to engage in agreements with private institutions.

Ohio’s CCP law indicates Ohio secondary students should be on a pathway toward earning college credit, with the goal of 15 credits earned by the time students graduate (Ohio Revised Code, 2014). It also requires that each district use “aggressive communication” to communicate to parents and students how the program works and who is eligible (Ohio Board of Regents, 2014, p. 16). Overall, students are eligible starting in grade seven, and each district is required to offer and advertise CCP options for all of their student population.

Purpose of Study: Ohio Superintendents’ Survey Regarding Perceived Impact of CCP

Considering the broad proliferation of dual enrollment programs nationwide, it is clear that school district administrators and educators in nearly all states now must navigate educational policy related to their state’s respective programs. Ohio is a state that has a robust dual enrollment program, known as College Credit Plus (CCP). CCP, a program that is mandated by state law, is available to all students regardless of age, and every local school district is required to participate. The cost of the program is paid for primarily by local school monies (Zinth, 2015).

We suggest Ohio is a prime state to study because its dual enrollment policy, while more aggressive than most, is in keeping in some ways with recent research and advocacy (e.g., see Zinth & Barnett, 2018) and therefore may be a forerunner of what is to come in other states. Local school board superintendents are the chief executives for school districts in Ohio, and policy changes that are directed by school boards are carried out by superintendents.

Superintendents act as an intermediary between school districts and political mandates that come from many directions, and often work with others to see how

mandatory educational policy can be integrated appropriately for their individual communities (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Some school districts in Ohio are very small, with under 1,000 students, while the largest district in Ohio is Columbus City Schools with enrollment over 50,000 students (Ohio Department of Education, 2017). In all cases, superintendents are directly responsible to elected boards of education and must act as stewards for their districts as a whole, which makes them key agents of knowledge for retrieving information about how the CCP program in Ohio is impacting public school districts.

Methodology

To assess the perceptions of superintendents about the state-mandated CCP program in Ohio, descriptive research methodology was used (Kothari, 2004). The researchers developed and administered an electronic survey in an effort to gain insight into superintendent perceptions about how Ohio's CCP Plus program is impacting local school districts. This 11-item electronic questionnaire was developed using the Qualtrics survey program and emailed to the superintendents for all 612 traditional public school districts (excluding charter schools, virtual schools, private schools, and vocational schools).

The survey questions were developed from our extensive review of key features and issues/concerns related to dual enrollment policy. Survey items addressed features and challenges related to policy implementation, finances, teacher certification and the identification and retention of dual enrollment teachers, student benefits, curricular offerings, and on other aspects of the program AP/IB/Honors program. There were 11 total questions, eight of which were closed ended and utilized a Likert format. Two questions were open ended in nature, and one was an identifying question.

This survey did not request personal information from respondents, but did ask them to list the school district for which they were employed as superintendent. As with all surveys, there is potential threat to validity, and in this study one such threat noticed by the researchers was that several superintendents did not provide their local school district identifying information. However, the survey instrument was sent directly to the email of superintendents from a list of information provided by the Ohio Department of Education, and the Qualtrics program can identify duplicate survey responses.

A total of 209 surveys were returned for a response rate of 34.2%. Of those that listed their school district, 39% were rural districts, 31% were small town school districts, 19% of school districts were suburban, and 11% were considered urban. Our responses compared closely with demographics of actual state districts of 37% rural, 32% small town, 20% suburban, and 9% urban (Ohio Department of Education, 2017). We used the definitions provided by the Ohio Department of Education for district classification (Ohio Department of Education, 2017).

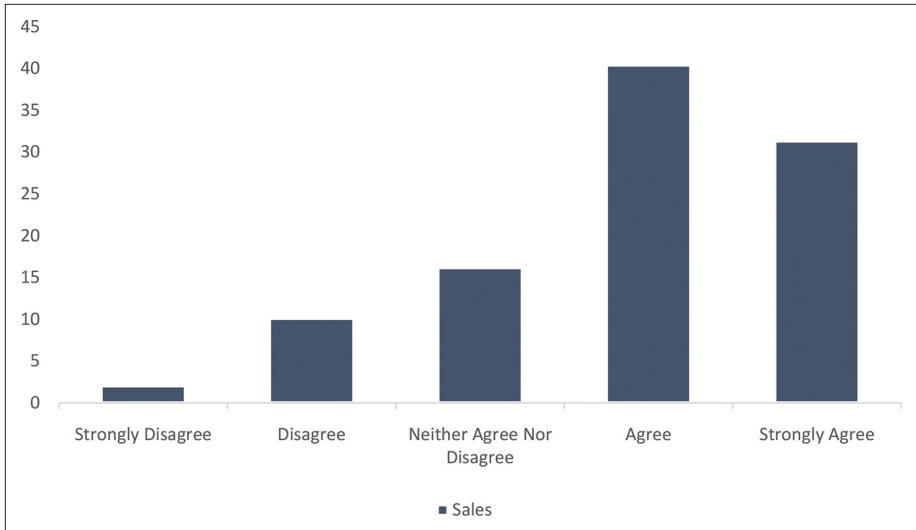


Figure 1. “My school district loses a significant amount of money due to CCP...”

Results

Survey results are presented in two main subsections. First, we present quantitative, closed-ended results. Second, we present qualitative, open-ended findings.

Quantitative Survey Results

Two survey items concerned district finances/budget in relationship to CCP. The first of these asked superintendents whether they believed their district loses a significant amount of money due to the CCP program (5-point scale, from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* with a *neither agree nor disagree* option; see Figure 1). Nearly 72% of respondents agreed (40.4%) or strongly agreed (31.3%) that significant financial losses are occurring amount of money to CCP. However, some superintendents did not agree or chose the neutral option. A separate but related item asked superintendents the extent to which they agreed/disagreed that it would be helpful to receive additional funding from the state, using the same 5-item Likert scale. To this question, nearly 95% agreed (23.6%) or strongly agreed (71.4%).

One item was designed to appraise the ease with which district teachers could be identified who could teach CCP courses: Nearly 75% agreed (44.4%) or strongly agreed (30.3) that “Few members of [their] faculty meet the requirements to teach CCP.” A separate/related item asked superintendents the extent to which CCP has “reduced the need for faculty members as a result of fewer students taking courses at

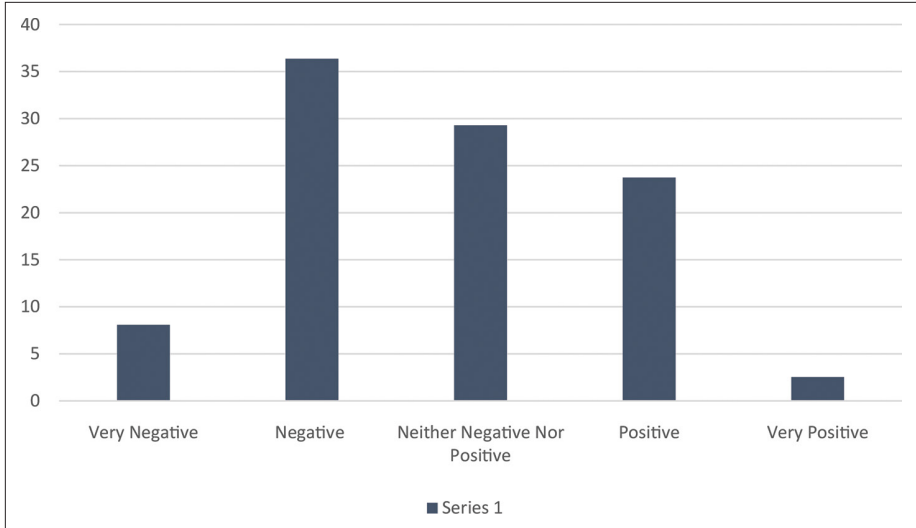


Figure 2. “Overall, the impact of the state-mandated CCP requirements on my district have been...”

the district level.” On this item, a majority of respondents disagreed (42.9%) or strongly disagreed (21.7%).

Superintendents were also asked to globally appraise the degree of student benefit from CCP (Figure 2). Specifically, nearly three-fourths of superintendents agreed (49.3%) or strongly agreed (23.6%) that “The students in our district have benefited from the CCP program.”

Advanced classes were the topic of one question on the survey, and asked if local Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Honors courses were negatively or positively impacted by the CCP policy. For this question, 55.33% of superintendents that responded indicated that CCP had neither positively nor negatively impacted their AP/IB/Honors courses; 9.14% of respondents indicated that CCP had a very negative impact, and 33.5% responded that the impact was negative; 2.03% responded that CCP had a positive impact on their AP/IB/Honors courses. When broken down by school type, small town and rural district superintendents reported more negative results in this category than suburban and urban district superintendents. Specifically, 49% of rural superintendents and 52% of small town superintendents reported either very negative or negative impacts on AP/IB, as compared to compared to 17% of suburban and 29% of urban districts.

Two closed-ended items (positioned first and last, respectively) requested global appraisals of the CCP program on districts, in relation to implementation and impact. We asked superintendents to globally appraised the degree of difficulty of CCP implementation (5-point Likert scale: *not at all difficult, not difficult, neutral, a little*

difficult, very difficult). Responses demonstrate a majority of superintendents perceived implementation as difficult (47.4% difficult, 9.6% very difficult); however, there was some variability on this item: A sizeable proportion viewed implementation as neutral (24.24%) or not difficult or not at all difficult (18.6% combined). The final closed-ended item asked superintendents to rate the overall impact that CCP requirements had on their district. Here, 8.1% of superintendents viewed the overall impact as very negative, 36.4% as negative, 2.53% as very positive, and 23.7% as positive, with 29.3% selecting neither negative nor positive.

Qualitative Survey Results

The final two questions of the survey were designed to elicit more open insights from superintendents about how, if at all, the curriculum and finances have been affected by the implementation of Ohio's CCP policy. For these items, superintendent respondents were asked to "answer each question with as much information that you can provide."

Impact of CCP on local curriculum offerings. The first written response question asked "How have CCP mandates impacted your local curriculum offerings?" The responses to this question were coded into several general categories (presented below). For each category, we exemplify superintendents' perceptions.

CCP has created competition with traditional curricular offerings. Fifteen superintendents expressed concern that CCP was requiring local districts to create new courses to compete with CCP courses so that students stay in their local school. Described one, "The CCP mandates have forced us to add new courses to try to compete with the offerings the students can get at the colleges in the area. This has been positive in the sense that it has made us create and offer the new courses, but challenging at the same time as we have limited staff and still need to meet the required courses for graduation." Another wrote, "CCP mandates have challenged us to find opportunities to provide college courses in-house to keep kids on campus. We've made a concerted effort to balance CCP with AP courses. We believe students can benefit from both."

Curriculum has not changed in any substantial way. Thirty-seven superintendents expressed that their offerings had not changed as a result of CCP, and that more students were taking AP or IB courses, which also offer ways to obtain college credit if a minimum score is earned on a comprehensive exam. One superintendent wrote, "CCP has not significantly impacted our local curriculum offerings at [our] High School. We offer a limited number of CCP courses within our building because of our student population. Most of our students are still accessing AP and IB courses over CCP courses." Another response was, "It has had little impact because our students tend to attend college outside of Ohio," which suggests that CCP credits are not being

perceived as beneficial by students if they are planning to attending an out of state college, where their dually earned credits will not be honored, a problem noted by Zinth (2015).

CCP has opened new curricular opportunities to students. Seven superintendents responded that CCP has provided new curricular offerings for their students and that these would not have been possible without CCP. One comment in support of CCP was:

In our rural blue-collar community, AP never got off the ground. [By contrast], CCP makes sense to our families. Fortunately, because of grant funding, we have seven teachers credentialed to teach CCP course in our high school of 450 students. So how has it impacted our curriculum? We are now offering more advanced programming than ever before. Also, it has led to offering AP Calculus in lieu of general calculus, but we cover the cost of the exam if the student earns a three or higher.

This comment provided further suggestion that the benefits of CCP may vary by district type (e.g., perhaps it is more likely to benefit rural districts). Another comment to reinforce this included, “We are a small, rural school and cannot afford advanced/CP courses. The CCP has allowed our students educational experiences that they would never have had, otherwise.”

The survey question asking superintendents to rate the overall impact of CCP on their districts, rural and small town superintendents were more likely to rate it impact negatively: 43% of rural superintendents and 54% of small town superintendents rated the impact as either very negative or negative, while 37% of suburban and 35% of urban superintendents did the same. Also, 28% of rural and 13% of small town superintendents rated the overall impact as positive, while 43% of suburban and 41% of urban did the same. Perhaps this pattern of responses is due to the smaller schools having smaller budgets and related financial hardships. It is also likely that unmeasured variables (e.g., proximity to community college, access to teachers who can teach CCP courses, etc.) are exerting an influence.

Students take CCP courses at local colleges or online to avoid more difficult courses offered by the local high school. Twelve superintendents wrote about concerns over students bypassing curriculum that is offered by the high school by taking a course online or at a local institution that is looked at as less difficult by superintendents. One superintendent wrote, “Students are leaving the rigors of AP for the ease of CCP.” Another responded, “Students are taking easier English courses in the summer and avoiding more rigorous courses taught by our staff.” One other concern was, “For one of these local colleges, the coursework that we offer at our school is more rigorous that they offer and students are going there. Not all college courses are equal but we have to treat them like they are.”

Courses that were once offered by the local district have been cancelled and discontinued. With 37 superintendent responses, this was one of the most prominent responses indicated by survey respondents. Many of these concerns centered around AP courses being canceled, while others were related to general courses that have been canceled. One wrote “CCP has had the most impact on our ability to offer a wide range of higher level courses to students due to the drain on the number of students left on campus to take the courses.” Another superintendent wrote, “Changed offerings from AP to CCP. (Fewer AP classes). Must look for post-secondary education institutes that will accept the qualifications that our teachers have to be able to teach the class.” Another noted, “Two of our faculty members are accredited for CCP which has allowed us to offer two in-house CCP courses. However, CCP has negatively affected enrollment in our AP courses.” In total, 37 comments were related to this category.

Students have less time with guidance counselors because of increased CCP demands. There were only two responses in this category, but it was not one that was encountered in the literature. One superintendent responded, “CCP mandates have provided additional opportunities for our students, but the challenge has been dividing the work with our counselors who are busy trying to meet social and emotional needs of children.” This comment is regarding the role of guidance counselors, and the impact the additional work that the law required of them. They are often the staff members that are required to schedule courses for students, and by having additional duties related to this policy, it may impact the emotional counseling function of their job, which could impact student needs.

District would like to offer CCP courses, but they have a hard time finding and keeping certified teachers. Seven superintendents had responses related to this category, with the concern that teachers who have been certified might not stay in the district, or that it is difficult for school districts to find certified teachers for CCP, which goes beyond k-12 teacher certification. One superintendent noted, “Added CCP English, but have lost two consecutive teachers that were CCP accredited, now have none.” Another indicated, “We cannot offer programming in-house due to licensure of our staff but we are also geographically isolated from opportunities.” One other concern was, “We would like to offer CCP classes in house, but our teachers cannot meet the extensive requirements.” One response indicated that their only way to offer CCP was online, but at the same time this respondent was concerned about the ease and quality of such courses.

Students fail CCP courses and then have to try and make up credit in other courses offered by the local district. This category centered around concerns related to student readiness for CCP. Only one superintendent wrote for this category:

It has increased rigor. However, improvements need to be made in the requirements of students that are eligible to enroll. For example, against our advice a student enrolled in CCP that failed several courses at the high school. Not unexpected she failed courses at

our local university, this has set her on a path of non-graduation. Also, I question students that are in middle school having the maturity to thrive in a college environment...

This demonstrates concern with the eligibility of students who enroll in CCP classes. In Ohio, there is no age requirement for CCP, which means that students in middle school can enroll in CCP courses.

CCP has created an imbalance in class sizes: CCP classes are small and make other courses larger. The final category reveals concern about class sizes as a result of CCP, with one superintendent responding. The concern is related to CCP courses requiring additional resources that makes other general courses larger, which is seen as creating inequities. One response was, "Master schedule at high school has been greatly affected and creates more singletons. Class rosters are becoming extreme some real small and some very large." Another respondent wrote, "we have more offerings than in the past, but it has increased class size in other courses because few qualify to take these classes, but there is political pressure to have classes on site."

Impact of CCP on school district funding. The second written response question asked, "How have CCP mandates from the state impacted funding for your school district?" The responses to this question were coded into several general categories. For each category, we also exemplify concerns raised by superintendents.

Money is not paid back to the district when students fail courses. Seven superintendents expressed their concerns about students who fail CCP courses and do not pay the local district. The policy requires that the local district pay tuition costs for CCP, but if they fail they are required to pay the local district back the money (Zinth, 2015). One superintendent wrote, "Families aren't able to pay for classes failed or not completed." Another wrote, "State Funding doesn't come close to covering the costs (tuition & books). Also, recovering costs from students who fail a class is impossible."

Textbook cost is a burden. Twenty-one superintendents responded that textbook costs are very expensive for their districts. Moreover, some noted that each semester they had to purchase new books because book requirements would change from course, and/or with yearly book version updates. One response was, "Textbooks have been a huge cost. It does not appear that our university partners are willing to assist in this area." Noted another, "The book costs are significant and the district has no input on book selection, we just pay all the bills." One other superintendent responded:

The biggest impact has come from the cost of textbooks which the universities have passed onto the public schools. Where we would normally replace textbooks on a five to ten year cycle the CCP books are replaced yearly thus increasing the costs associated with the program. Textbook costs for CCP can add an extra \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year to our budget.

There were 21 responses about textbook cost to the question asked about school finances, which was one of the most pervasive concerns for this question.

CCP law has taken away the ability for individual districts to negotiate tuition cost with colleges and universities. Some superintendents wrote about the differences of CCP and the prior policy of Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO), which CCP replaced. Under PSEO, local schools could negotiate tuition costs with local institutions of higher education, but CCP requires that a minimum tuition cost is incurred. One superintendent explained:

The arbitrary floor and ceiling suggestions have done away with our ability to negotiate with our higher ed. partner. The cost of “one time use” textbooks will deplete our resources quickly, and there is no solution available to us. We fear that higher ed. sees CCP as a “cash cow” that they can milk for all its worth. Very disappointing leadership decisions in Columbus.

Another superintendent responded, “The law has prohibited our district and many other districts from negotiating tuition under the per credit hour floor.”

CCP has had a significant negative financial impact on schools. This was a diverse category, but was centered around the idea that CCP has been a financial burden on district budgets. There were 79 responses placed in this category. One way that superintendents addressed this program was as an “unfunded mandate.” Below are examples of superintendent responses:

They obviously hurt local districts. While the objective of allowing students to attend college during high school and for free is a good one, it is easy for the state to make decisions when they are spending someone else's funds.

CCP costs a lot of money with no additional funding. It is yet another mandate that stretches an already thin budget.

The tuition and the extraordinary cost of books is devastating to the overall budget

Hard to prepare a budget for the unknown costs of books and students take a variety of courses that the district must fund that are not part of the general education requirements. for college.

We have much more money going out for costs of books and it also impacts our scheduling at the HS level. We have students who take classes in our HS, and some have to leave to take additional classes on college courses.

Our district is disproportionately impacted - very few students 10–15 take CCP class off our campus, however their cost is \$200,000 plus books. The education that they receive

at the CC compared to our HS is also less advanced, lower quality, and does not prepare them for a four year IHE.

The funding is the most troublesome part for local school districts. Obviously, it impacts our budget in a negative manner. The impact cannot be offset with staffing reductions. If the state would offer additional funds to cover CCP, I think you would see more cooperation and promotion from local school districts.

The three main ways that CCP has impacted our funding are: 1. Loss of state foundation money that follows the student to the college/university. 2. The ridiculous cost of the textbooks that we incur for the students college courses (it is better this year but it is still a huge cost). 3. We are paying the full tuition reimbursement for staff who are willing to become qualified to teach CCP classes. We chose to do this to try to keep students at our HS.

The district has lost a significant amount of money to pay for students' college. It is not free as the advertisements suggest, but rather we are forced to pass levies, and we tell seniors where the money is going and that it was a state level decision to pass this cost to the local taxpayer.

These quotations were chosen as representations of the other respondents. Many concerns were raised about funding. Several superintendents included how much the program costs in dollars, which is tough to place in context without specifically identifying the local school district.

In order for districts to keep students at their local school, they pay for teacher certification, which impacts budget. Teacher certification was also a way that funding has been impacted according to the superintendent responses. One shared, "We have encouraged our staff to get the proper credentials so they can teach CCP courses on our campus. As an incentive to do this we are giving 100% tuition reimbursement for coursework leading to CCP credentialing classes as opposed to the 60% we normally give." More than one response indicated that it costs the district less money if students stay at their local campus, which makes having teachers with certification a financial incentive for their district.

Money has been diverted from other educational programming. There was some indication, four responses total, that CCP has required money to be pulled from other areas in school districts to pay for CCP associated costs. One respondent wrote, "it costs us money that we would spend in other areas." Another wrote, "We are a capped district as well as lost TPP reimbursement dollars...the additional dollars CCP has resulted in more money deducted from state funds that was limited in the first place".

Taxpayers have not given their consent for their money to be spent on college courses. There was concern by five respondents that CCP programs were not approved by their local community, and that they are not representative of community objectives. One

response said, "We have to pay for the tuition and the books, which we think is wrong. Our taxpayers never gave permission for their tax dollars to be used to pay for college tuition and books and supplies, they voted to fund K-12." Another similar respondent wrote, "Over the last 2 years we have lost between \$25 - \$50,000 to cover the expense of CCP courses. When our local dollars pays 62% of our funding needs it becomes a very hard topic to defend in a community of conservative republican voters who don't accept or approve of entitlement programs."

Small districts and districts with financial difficulty are unable to afford the costs associated with CCP. The final category listed is related to district size and districts with fiscal problems. Four superintendents responded to this category; one superintendent responded, "In a small school system that has minimal state assistance to begin with, the impact is significant." Another response was, "Without additional state funding, it has contributed to our current state of deficit spending that must be addressed through cuts." Finally, one respondent wrote, "As a district in fiscal emergency, any financial drain is significant. We work hard to contain all costs, yet we have no means of containing the costs of CCP. As the program becomes more popular, we see more money siphoned away from our students in the district." A question that is raised is whether or not more burden is being placed on smaller school districts.

Discussion

The answer to our research question about how Ohio's dual enrollment program, called College Credit Plus, impacts local school districts is generally threefold. First, we see a trend from superintendent responses indicating that local school district curricular offerings are changing as the result of CCP. Second, it is apparent that most superintendent respondents view the local funding requirement as having a substantial impact on local district finances. Third, we see that school districts are responding by trying to assure that teachers employed by their local school district can become certified to teach CCP courses on campus.

According to many superintendents, CCP courses are replacing some other courses that had previously been offered. This shift was viewed by some as a positive, and by others as a negative. Some superintendents, for instance, viewed CCP courses as a way for students to skirt more difficult courses that are offered on their campus, and others viewed the additional courses as offering great opportunities for their students that would not otherwise have been available. CCP allows certain required state courses to be replaced by taking a college level alternative in a much shorter and sometimes compacted period of time. One example of this is the U.S. government.

This course is required to be taken for graduation in high school and meets every day of the week, often for an entire year. However, a student could potentially take a government course at a local community college and avoid taking the government class all together. Another example could be an eleventh or twelfth grade language arts course. A student could avoid a year-long language arts class by taking an online

composition course at their local community college. Is it possible to obviate statewide required courses and contract these through local colleges? Could CCP lead to the replacement of full-time faculty with adjunct faculty from outside institutions? Does CCP just replace courses that used to be offered at the high school level and label them as college-level courses?

The implications of local curricula as a result of dual enrollment policy leave many unanswered questions. While the literature does not seem to take the issue of curricular replacement head-on, it does address the topic of student readiness for college courses (Howley et al., 2013; Hansen et al., 2015). Some wonder the impact on school culture and adolescence as a result of the expanding option of dual enrollment, and the responses by superintendents indicate that more research is warranted to study the impact on local public high schools.

The results of this survey also reveal that many superintendents believe there is benefit in having credentialed faculty that are employed by their district, with some covering the costs, rather than paying for student tuition to travel to an outside institution of higher learning. Some shared that it was desirable for funding purposes, and others because it was good for the school culture to keep students on campus with their peers. Still, some respondents expressed concern that it is very difficult to find faculty who possess CCP credentials and that their students have no local institution to access CCP. This issue potentially raises questions of equity and access, and reveals what seems to be a competition between local schools and colleges. Further, if this is a desirable credential for teachers, it raises important questions about how CCP certification be integrated into a teacher preparation program at colleges or universities.

The literature reveals that there is no consistent credential for teachers to teach dual enrollment courses in states (Borden et al., 2013; Hughes, 2010; Kanny, 2015). The literature also reveals how some teachers regret needing to teach high school students at the college level (Kanny, 2015). Questions as to how a teacher should be credentialed for dual enrollment programs should be studied further, and comparisons should be made between high school trained teachers and college trained teachers and their efficacy in the classroom.

Funding textbooks and tuition costs are at the center of financial concerns for many superintendents who responded to this survey. Relying on local school boards to use funds out of their budgets has strained their resources, and it appears smaller districts have been impacted more substantially. Finding staff with CCP credentials seems to be the best strategy to mitigate many of the financial issues that have come with CCP, but this strategy raises additional questions. The issue of textbooks is one specific area that preoccupied superintendents, which relates in part to the difference in textbook requirements at the high school level versus the collegiate level.

Various superintendents called CCP an “unfunded mandate” or argued that the policy in essence transferred money from local K–12 school districts to colleges and universities. Textbook costs have been addressed previously in the dual enrollment literature, though the focus has tended to be upon the cost of textbooks for individual

students (Borden et al., 2013; Marken et al., 2013; Thomas et al., 2013) rather than for school districts.

The Ohio law, which orders local school boards to cover both the costs of tuition and textbooks for students, clearly impacts public school program and budgets but at the same time may benefit dually enrolled students who would otherwise struggle to cover these costs. Ohio's policy can be seen as heeding/aligning with those calls (Zinth & Barnett, 2018) for expanding students' *access* to dual enrollment, a compelling aspiration but one that can have significant and perhaps unforeseen implications if cost burdens are placed entirely on school districts with no new state-level funding supports. Invariably, we must assume district monies are being redistributed from one program to cover another, which might then negatively impact those students electing not to dually enroll. We view this as an important area needing further study.

More broadly, state policies differ considerably and policy details (e.g., textbook costs, certification requirements, enrollment requirements) have real effects at local levels (see also Pierce, 2017). Our study adds nuance to these points and suggests policy impacts also are not evenly distributed across the state; some districts may not be markedly affected by dual enrollment policy changes, whereas others will be taxed considerably, and/or will experience it as fostering new and positive opportunities for their students.

Dual enrollment programs aim to offer students pathways to college and career readiness while still enrolled in high school. Many superintendents who responded to this study expressed that students in their districts are benefiting from Ohio's CCP program, but at the same time noted issues, describing how their local school districts are being financially strained and/or how their curricula have changed. Such concerns are ripe for further investigation, discussion, and study so that policies can be adjusted and students can achieve maximum benefits. Especially in light of the rapid expansion of dual enrollment policies and their widely varying features, we concur with Thomson (2017) that more research is needed to better understand who is benefiting from these programs and which features characterize more versus less successful programs.

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