

NACEP Research Roundup, January 14, 2026

Buckley, P.R., Pendergast, P., Klopfenstein, K., Poast, K., & Ramsay, L. (2022). Does dual enrollment improve progression through college and earnings and do outcomes differ by sociodemographic characteristics or achievement levels? A quasi-experimental analysis of Colorado students. *The High School Journal* 105(3), 217-242. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2022.0006>.

Summary by [Shari Culver](#)

Purpose

This cohort-based longitudinal study followed 11th-grade students graduating between 2010/11 and 2014/15 to explore the impact of dual enrollment on earnings, most specifically, but also its impact on college persistence and completion. Additionally, the study explores the effects of a student's treatment by income, race, gender, or achievement level.

Methods

To adjust for pre-existing differences between students in schools with varying levels of dual enrollment opportunity, the authors employed a two-stage matching design utilizing a school-level matching and propensity score matching (PSM) at the student-level. The analysis matched students and schools on measurable individual, school, and community factors, such as the school's college-going rate, ninth grade reading scores, free and reduced lunch percentages, underrepresented minority status, and ELL status. The authors compared "ample" DE schools with those who offered "few" DE opportunities based on credits attempted. The study pulled from traditional high schools, including charter and innovation campuses, but early college models were excluded.

Findings & Results

The matched sample included 255,406 students across 292 schools. Dual enrollment students demonstrated substantially stronger postsecondary outcomes than peers, with higher matriculation rates (77% vs. 52%), persistence among those who enrolled (82% vs. 77%), and credential attainment (37% vs. 22%). They were also more likely to complete degrees on time (8% higher) and earned slightly higher wages five years after high school graduation. While dual enrollment improves overall outcomes, it "did not disproportionately improve outcomes for traditionally underrepresented groups."

Future Research & Conclusion

Future research should examine whether and how dual enrollment reduces inequities, further explore its relationship to academic achievement and earnings, assess outcomes for students who delay college matriculation, and analyze how variations in dual enrollment delivery influence results. Overall, the study concludes that Colorado's dual enrollment policy positively increased college progression and earnings across student groups, regardless of race, income, gender, or prior academic achievement.