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## The Social-Psychological Development of Dual-Enrollment Students

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**The Social-Psychological Development of Dual Enrollment Students**

by

Paulie Robinson-Stevens

July 2023

Master's Project

Submitted to the College of Education  
and Community Innovation

At Grand Valley State University

In partial fulfillment of the  
Degree of Master of Education



The signature of the individual below indicates that the individual has read and approved the project of Paulie Robinson-Stevens in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of M.Ed. in Higher Education, College Student Affairs Leadership.

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Paulie Robinson-Stevens

## Abstract

Dual enrollment is a college acceleration program that allows high school students to take college classes while still in high school. This program as it exists today prepares students for the academic rigors of college, but it does not adequately develop the social or psychological skills they need to succeed in a college environment. Dual enrollment programs also do not include information about transfer credits, financial aid, or support services, all of which are necessary for students to transition from high school to a higher education institution. This project proposes a nine-week seminar to complement the academic preparation dual enrollment students receive. The seminar will provide guidance on how to navigate a college environment as well as how to develop the necessary social-psychological skills for success. Improved preparation and support for dual enrollment students will benefit them, their families, and their schools.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Problem Statement**

Dual enrollment is a college acceleration program that allows high school students to earn college credit while still in high school. It can be offered in a variety of subjects, including math, English, science, or the humanities; for example, a student who takes a calculus class for their twelfth grade math credit can earn college credit simultaneously if taken through a dual enrollment program. Dual enrollment is associated with positive outcomes like high school graduation and college enrollment (Lee et al., 2022), but students who participate in dual enrollment still face a variety of interwoven barriers, some of which include insufficient social-psychological preparation (Karp, 2012). Academic preparation alone does not adequately prepare students for the new environment they will face at a higher education institution (HEI). College readiness requires attention to social-psychological factors as well as academic performance, and students need a solid grasp of non-academic skills and higher education norms and expected behaviors to achieve success in college (Karp, 2012). HEIs attend to overall student preparedness to maintain and improve high levels of enrollment and persistence. Strong partnerships between HEIs and high schools can support dual enrollment students in their transition to college by helping students understand the non-academic expectations they will face.

### **Importance and Rationale**

Academic success in high school is not an automatic predictor of academic success in the higher education environment (Jones, 2017). Strategies students used during their K-12 education may not translate to college coursework. Additionally, the social context and new increasing responsibilities in college can add layers of stress that students may not be equipped



to manage. Students' expectations of their own performance and professional and personal aspirations can have a significant impact on their college success, both positively and negatively (Giani et al., 2023). Students can use social-psychological skills to navigate a new environment and new stressors; however, traditional high school education does not emphasize this development as much as academic preparation (Karp, 2012). Dual enrollment students are exposed to a college environment and expectations earlier than first time in any college (FTIAC) students, and this early exposure should be structured to help them develop social-psychological skills they can use to navigate college. Social skills in the United States include communication, emotional and behavioral regulation, and coping with personal difficulties (American Psychological Association, n.d.), and psychological skills include time management, goal-setting, and motivation (Karp, 2012). Dual enrollment students can also benefit from information about the college environment, like financial aid, support services, and transfer credits.

Most undergraduate degrees require four years of study; since a degree is a long-term commitment, HEIs want students to have a successful first year so they feel capable of completing the remainder of their degree. In 2021, persistence in higher education institutions in the United States was at 75.0% for students in-between their first and second year (Gardner, 2022). Adequate academic and social-psychological preparation can contribute to early success in college which can strengthen students' self-efficacy and may improve persistence from year one to year two (Bettinger et al., 2022). High schools and HEIs want students to be successful, and for them to be successful, the students need strong academic and non-academic skills. A lack of attention to the development of non-academic skills, like goal-setting and the development of a growth mindset, could negatively impact students' college success, which

could subsequently impact motivation, self-efficacy, and retention. Student affairs professionals, especially those focused on enrollment and retention, should consider how they can contribute to improving support for dual enrollment students so that they are better prepared to enter a HEI.

### **Background**

The first dual enrollment classes were offered in the 1950s as an option for high-performing high school students. Many dual enrollment (DE) programs today continue to focus on high-performing students (Faught et al., 2022; Jones, 2017). Eighty-eight percent of high schools in the United States today offer dual enrollment opportunities with numerous two and four-year HEIs across the country (Rhine, 2022). Dual enrollment courses exist in a different context than K-12 education and require a different strategy and approach from the students.

Dual enrollment is a unique opportunity offered by HEIs because students have obligations at two institutions with different support services and occasionally competing expectations. As such, administrators should understand how the differences between the institutions may impact the student experience. One of the biggest differences is parental involvement; within the K-12 environment, parents and families may be actively engaged in their students' education, but students enrolled in college must advocate for themselves. One policy that reveals this difference is the Federal Educational Rights & Privacy Act of 1973 (FERPA), which prevents college personnel from sharing student academic information without prior consent from the student (Miller & Sorochty, 2015). This differs drastically from K-12 education where parents are encouraged to be involved with their student's academics and have access to more academic records. Another difference is that HEIs may have a more robust and/or specialized set of support services compared to a high school, like tutoring centers and

library databases. Students enrolled at an HEI are expected to seek out support services for themselves and must have an understanding of what options are available.

While K-12 schools and HEIs partner to offer DE programs, they do not always view these programs in the same way. Numerous studies provide evidence that DE is beneficial because it improves access to higher education (Buckley et al., 2022), can save students money (Gaille, 2018; Lee et al., 2022; Partridge et al., 2021), increases their likelihood of attending a HEI (Adkins & Garcia, 2023; Gaille, 2018; Jagesic et al., 2021) and also increases the likelihood of the student obtaining a bachelor's degree (Adkins & Garcia, 2023). K-12 and HEI administrators agree that access to college courses, expanded curriculum, and increased affordability make dual enrollment valuable for students. However, they disagreed on the most significant barriers to dual enrollment for students. HEI administrators felt that institutional culture and the cost of dual enrollment to the institution were among the most significant, along with other concerns like a lack of adequate preparation for the high school students, insufficient staff to administer the programs, and misalignment with institutional mission. The concern of the cost to the institution is likely more pronounced for institutions who absorb the cost of the DE classes rather than having students cover their tuition costs (Kelley & Rowland Woods, 2019). K-12 personnel, in comparison, found the lack of credentialed instructors for DE classes, the cost to the students' families, and the cost to the school district to be the top concerns for DE programs (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017).

HEI administrators and K-12 personnel also disagreed on dual enrollment as an indicator of college readiness; 76% of HEI administrators agreed that successful completion of a dual enrollment course indicated readiness, while only 52% of K-12 personnel agreed (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017). College readiness is typically determined using academic standards; for

example, a student is college-ready if they score a 21 on the ACT standardized test. However, colleges do not always share a common definition and may measure college readiness using different criteria. This statistic may indicate that K-12 administrators consider college readiness to involve more than just academic success. College readiness may be better understood as a combination of academic preparation and additional scaffolded support to help students transition to the new academic and social environment that higher education offers.

Dual enrollment agreements require K-12 and HEI administrators to consider how those programs should or do impact the day-to-day operations of their educational missions and the students' educational experiences. Communication, cooperation, and frequent reevaluation of the program efficacy are necessary to ensure successful implementation of DE opportunities.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to intentionally develop dual enrollment students' social-psychological skills and knowledge of the college environment before they enroll in a HEI post-high school. This project will analyze the experiences of dual enrollment students in the United States through the lens of dual enrollment as a liminal space (Hofmann & Voloch, 2012), and will then propose a solution to address the lack of attention currently paid to social-psychological skill development in K-12 environments. The current purpose of dual enrollment is to offer a college-level course to high school students with the intent to challenge the students academically. DE is solely focused on the course itself and generally does not include attention to the development of non-academic skills. The proposed intervention is meant to expand current DE programs by providing a complement to the students' education to establish a more holistic college preparatory experience. This solution will address the social-psychological development of dual enrollment students in particular and will be structured to fit the needs of

Joliet Junior College in Joliet, Illinois. Joliet Junior College (JJC) is the oldest public community college in the United States and is located in northern Illinois. It has six campuses and serves around 27,000 students in total each year (Joliet Junior College, 2021).

### **Objectives**

The objective of this project is to implement an intervention that will help dual enrollment students strengthen their social-psychological skills and general knowledge of the college environment. This intervention will be an after-school program led by a student affairs professional and it will engage the students and their parent-supporters. Both students and their families experience a transition when students go to college, so they would all benefit from preparation this intervention would provide (Harper et al., 2020). The dual enrollment course itself prepares students academically and the after-school program will develop the students' non-academic skills. The program will include nine weeks of content, including various guest speakers to give students a better understanding of the expectations of a college-level education.

This program will require an effective relationship between the high school and the student affairs professional. Efficacy of the program will be determined by qualitative pre- and post-surveys of the students and their supporters. If students do not indicate a sense of self-improvement by the end of the program then the high school and HEI staff will need to evaluate the program to determine where it can be strengthened for future participants. The ultimate objective is to develop a more holistic understanding of college readiness expectations for dual enrollment students as they prepare for college post-graduation.

### **Definition of Terms**

Definitions of key terms and acronyms are listed below:

- *College acceleration programs*: a broad label for a variety of programs that allow high school students to earn college credit before they officially begin college. Examples include dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate programs.
- *Dual enrollment*: a type of college acceleration program that allows students to take classes for college credit while still in high school. Dual enrollment varies significantly across the United States in terms of modality and eligibility criteria (Kelley & Rowland Woods, 2019). The most common modality is for students to take their dual enrollment course at their high school (“Dual enrollment,” 2019).
- *K-12*: refers to childhood education in the United States that includes kindergarten through twelfth grade, or senior year of high school.
- *HEI*: higher education institution; refers to a variety of postsecondary institutions including four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, and technical colleges.
- *Social-psychological skills*: non-academic skills that are important for educational success. Social skills in the United States include communication, emotional and behavioral regulation, and coping with personal difficulties (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Psychological skills include time management, goal-setting, and motivation (Karp, 2012).
- *College readiness*: a student is traditionally understood to be “college-ready” if they are academically prepared to be successful in a postsecondary environment. College readiness is typically determined by high school GPA and standardized test scores, but colleges do not have a common definition and may measure college readiness using different criteria.

### **Scope of the Project**

The intervention will address the needs of high school students in a dual enrollment agreement with Joliet Junior College (JJC). This intervention is specific to a high school and a Midwestern community college and may not be appropriate for a similar agreement between a high school and a four-year institution, or schools in a different region of the United States. This proposed 9-week, after-school program will focus on developing social and psychological skills like time management and goal setting to complement the academic preparation the students receive in the classroom; it will also share relevant information with students related to college financial aid and transferring credits that will be useful to them in the college application process. The program will engage the students' parents and supporters so that the entire family can be involved in the students' transition and will gather qualitative data from the participants to improve the intervention year-to-year.

This after-school program was initially structured for JJC, but other HEI and high school partnerships could benefit from similar programs. This program is not automatically transferable to other high school contexts because the success of the program is also dependent on the intentionality of the chosen activities. Program administrators will have to consider the specific demographics of their area's high school students to determine what their needs are and how the program should be structured to best support them. This program does not inherently need more than one student affairs administrator to implement, but staffing may be a concern depending on the size of a college's district or the number of high schools involved in the program.

The efficacy of this program is dependent on buy-in from the students, high school staff, and HEI staff. Students who choose to enroll in dual enrollment presumably will have a baseline interest in their own success in college. However, since the proposed intervention is a

supplement to the dual enrollment course the students sign up for, high school staff will need to communicate the benefits of the additional time and energy students will spend on this program clearly and effectively. If students are not convinced of the benefits they may not engage fully, which will limit the benefits they will receive. High school staff and HEI administrators will need to have consistent messaging to stress the long-term importance of college acceleration programs like DE.



## Chapter Two: Literature Review

Academic success for students in higher education requires an array of skills and supports, both academic and non-academic (Karp, 2012; Taylor, 2015). The first year of college can be critical for students as they become accustomed to a new environment, new peers, and new expectations. As such, higher education institutions (HEIs) are responsible for providing resources to meet student's physiological, psychological, and social needs to ease the transition from high school to college. HEIs are typically structured to support FTIAC, traditional students, or those ages 18-23 who pursue college immediately after high school. The needs of traditional students may include safe housing, dining options, academic advising, and other academic and social support services (Caldwell et al., 2017). Dual enrollment students have different experiences than traditional students and thus different needs, especially related to psycho-social development. They likely do not need services like campus housing, but they may need additional academic support while they balance a high school curriculum and college course(s) simultaneously. The available supports for DE students should be similar but distinct from the supports available to FTIAC students. The following literature review and proposed intervention are built on the theoretical framework of dual enrollment (DE) as a liminal space (Hofmann & Voloch, 2012). This foundation is supported by the theories of anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal (Karp, 2012) as well as Schlossberg's transition theory (Patton et al., 2016). The literature review will examine college readiness and transition, the intersection of the K-12 environment and higher education, dual enrollment policies and critiques, and the impact of dual enrollment on the student experience.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

Administrators should consider dual enrollment as a liminal space to better understand the experiences of dual-enrolled students and to identify how DE programs may be improved. That is to say that these programs exist between high school and college wherein the students are not fully one type of student or the other. Hofmann and Voloch (2012) proposed that DE “inhabits a space where larger questions about higher education—the cultural practices, norms, institutional relationships and interactions, and the overall ‘business’ of learning—are grappled with on a daily basis” (pp. 101). Both the high school and HEI should agree on what determines readiness and college-level work, expectations often set apart from the normal operation of each individual institution. The ongoing tensions of DE include that each school must stay committed to its own mission while cooperating with the other to determine the appropriate curriculum, support services, and expectations for their students. These considerations influence decisions on which DE courses to offer, which instructors should lead the courses, how student learning is assessed, and how credit should be awarded. Each agreement should identify the goals of the particular DE program, their particular students’ needs, and design a program that best serves their unique student population.

After identifying dual enrollment programs as a liminal space, one should also consider how dual enrollment is a venue for anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal (Merton, 1957, as cited in Karp, 2012). Anticipatory socialization allows students to learn about the behaviors, attitudes, and values of those in a role they would like to have. As such, dual enrollment students have the opportunity to learn expectations and habits associated with a college education. For example, the curriculum for college courses is often reduced to a semester as opposed to a full year, so the content is accelerated and condensed. Students may not be used to

the amount of work that is expected outside of the classroom, or the fact that their course work for the DE course does not align with their high school schedule. This could lead to conflicts during busy or vacation times like school dances or spring break. The existence of office hours, absence policies, and withdrawal periods could be similarly disorienting for current high school students. The anticipatory socialization of DE connects to role rehearsal, wherein people practice the behaviors observed through this socialization; internships are an example of role rehearsal for full-time careers in a certain field. DE students can practice handling a different workload and learn how to interact with their college professors. They will also need to learn how to advocate for themselves if they need additional support. Ideally, the combination of anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal would allow dual enrollment students to both feel more comfortable in a college setting and save them time in their first college semester since they would already be partially acclimated to the demands of higher education.

Relatedly, the lens of Schlossberg's transition theory can help administrators understand students' experiences with transition. Schlossberg (1981, as cited in Patton et al., 2016) said that four primary factors influence a student's ability to cope with transition: the context of a situation, the student's personal characteristics and psychological state, their social support, and their coping strategies. Situational context, including the timing, the degree of control a student has over the situation, role change, concurrent stress, and whether a student has previous experience with a similar situation is the most relevant factor for DE administrators. High school and HEI staff can support students in understanding their new role as a college student; once they understand their role they can participate in role rehearsal through DE. Further, participation in dual enrollment allows students to slowly expose themselves to new behaviors and expectations. Once they actually transition to college full-time they will have previous experience with

college-level courses through their dual enrollment experience. An initial exposure to college expectations in a familiar environment combined with the opportunity to observe and practice these expectations through anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal can ease the stress of dual enrollment as a liminal space for dual enrollment students.

## **Research & Evaluation**

### **College Readiness and the Transition to College**

One of the tensions of dual enrollment programs is how to determine college readiness, so administrators should understand how college readiness is understood broadly outside of these programs (Hofmann & Voloch, 2012). In general, college readiness is understood as a combination of ability to manage academic rigor, executive functioning, and financial resources (Caldwell et al., 2021). Students enter college with certain attributes, such as their social demographics, their academic ability, and their learning style, that influence their interactions within the college environment (Astin, 1993, as cited in Renn & Reason, 2021). The inputs and the college environment in tandem impact their eventual outcomes, including graduation and post-graduation plans. Traditional input factors that are associated with college readiness include ACT or SAT standardized test scores and high school GPA (Saunders et al, 2018), though criteria for college readiness can vary considerably between schools (Harrington & Rogalski, 2020).

An understanding of college readiness would benefit from increased emphasis on non-traditional factors such as emotional intelligence (Caldwell et al., 2021), a sense of perseverance towards long-term goals (Saunders-Scott et al., 2018), and motivation (Norvilitis et al., 2022). Standardized test scores and GPA are poor predictors of retention, while factors like motivation are positively related to GPA, college match, *and* healthy adjustment to college (Saunders-Scott

et al., 2018). A more holistic understanding of how students prepare to transition will help administrators support them in that process. If students are adequately supported in dual enrollment programs they are more likely to persist and complete a degree, so DE program administrators should understand what other factors impact college success and incorporate that into the structure of DE opportunities (Buckley et al., 2022).

### **Demographics of Dual Enrollment Students**

Dual enrollment programs are one of the most common college acceleration opportunities for high school students, with 1.4 million dual enrollment high school students in the United States in 2019 (Fink, 2021). The demographics of dual enrollment students vary by racial and ethnic identity and socioeconomic status. A higher percentage of White and Asian students (38%) participate in DE opportunities compared to Black or Hispanic students across the United States (27% and 30%, respectively) (Adkins & Garcia, 2023; “Dual enrollment,” 2019; Fink, 2021). In terms of socioeconomic status, students were more likely to participate in DE if their parents had earned at least a bachelor’s degree versus students whose parents’ highest level of education was high school (42% versus 33%) (“Dual enrollment,” 2019). Male students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and those with unstable housing participate in DE at lower rates compared to their peers (Adkins & Garcia, 2023). The demographics of a high school’s student population should impact how administrators structure and implement DE programs because student identities may impact academic and social needs in an educational setting.

### **Modality and Eligibility Requirements**

The implementation of dual enrollment programs can vary dramatically based on factors such as location, criteria, and financial responsibility. In terms of geographic location, courses

can be offered face-to-face on the high school campus or the HEI's campus, online, or in a hybrid version (Kelley & Rowland, 2019; Fink, 2021). DE completed at a student's high school is the most common modality at 80%, followed by 17% on a college campus and 8% taken online ("Dual enrollment," 2019). Location is a critical component because it can impact academic success for dual enrollment students. For example, face-to-face instruction on a high school campus or online instruction may result in higher final grades for students compared to face-to-face on a college campus (Arnold et al., 2017). However, administrators should consider potential causality for the differences in those final grades; better performance could be because taking DE courses at the high school is a more effective learning environment, or it may be because the rigor is less compared to the DE course taught on a college campus by the college instructor (Arnold et al., 2017; Buckley et al., 2022; Jones, 2017). Administrators need to evaluate their DE programs to strive for consistency across modality, and they should also consider the feasibility of more online offerings if there is interest since students seem to have comparable performance (Arnold et al., 2017).

Eligibility criteria for DE also varies significantly and can include factors like grade level, GPA, guardian permission, and placement tests. Some high schools allow freshmen 9th graders to participate in DE, while others require at least junior standing. One should note that inequalities in access to dual enrollment are sometimes driven by academic eligibility requirements like GPA and testing (Giani et al., 2023). Placement tests may be an insufficient criteria because standardized tests are known to be biased towards more privileged knowledge, skills, and experiences, and as such are not reliably useful measures (Byrd & Macdonald, 2005). The use of alternative, non-cognitive criteria for college readiness, like high school counselor recommendations, may be more accurate and could expand access to DE for those with

minoritized racial and ethnic identities and those from a low socioeconomic background. Barriers to dual enrollment, and higher education in general, for marginalized students are layered on one another and require nuanced solutions to reduce inequities (Bettinger et al., 2022). When considering just one piece of the layered barriers, eligibility criteria that are too high is likely to exclude marginalized students that could greatly benefit from DE programs (Hofmann & Voloch, 2012). Social inequities will exist in all criteria, so administrators need to consider which criteria will be most accurate, appropriate, and useful for determining college readiness and DE readiness in their specific context.

### **The Impact of Dual Enrollment**

Participation in dual enrollment programs increases the likelihood that students will graduate high school, attend a HEI, and complete a degree compared to non-DE students (Adkins & Garcia, 2023; Lee et al., 2022). Part of this effect may result from an increased emphasis on a college-going culture for students who may have otherwise not considered higher education as an option (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017). For some, dual enrollment can be “the first and last step in a student’s college search” (Jagesic et al., 2021, pp. 136) since students often continue their education at the HEI partnered with their DE program. High school and college administrators should thus acknowledge how DE can influence the decision to attend college, college choice, and subsequent academic performance. One of the most common motivations for participating in DE is to get a head start on a college degree, and DE can help students feel more prepared to take college courses full-time (Adkins & Garcia, 2023; Gaille, 2018).

Dually-enrolled students overall are 34% more likely to enroll in college and 22% more likely to complete college compared to students who do not participate in DE (Taylor, 2015). This positive effect is smaller for racially and ethnically minoritized students and low-income

students but is still evident; Students of Color are 26% more likely to enroll in college and 14% more likely to complete a degree, and low-income students are 30% more likely to enroll and 16% more likely to complete a degree compared to students who do not take DE courses. High school students may choose their HEI based on a variety of factors, including available financial aid, the opinions of their friends and family, institutional size, and the likelihood of being admitted (Jagesic et al., 2021). While dual enrollment may have an influence on certain students, administrators should keep in mind that those programs do not always impact students' college choice process; for some, other factors like proximity to home or family input may be more impactful (Allen et al., 2018; Jagesic, 2021).

### **Critiques of Dual Enrollment**

Dual enrollment often has a positive impact on dual enrollment students, but these programs have received deserved critiques as well. Academic success in DE is not guaranteed, and failure in a course can cause a student stress, hurt their confidence, and negatively impact both their high school and college transcripts (Giani et al., 2023; Jones, 2017). This is not to say that administrators should structure their programs to ensure every student passes, but they should intentionally structure their programs to adequately support their students both academically and emotionally (Faught et al., 2022). Success should not just be measured by academic performance and should also incorporate considerations of students' emotional well-being. Some literature demonstrates dual enrollment does not provide a strong enough academic foundation; while not generalizable, Faught et al. (2022) found that dual enrollment students had lower GPAs in their first semester of college compared to their high school GPAs. Their study may suggest there is a disconnect between what dual enrollment provides and what students need to be academically successful. Administrators should keep in mind that while likely many



students experience lower GPAs in their first year of college, structured support may offset this effect with dual enrollment students in particular to prepare them for the transition to college. The disconnect may be especially prevalent for marginalized students since dual enrollment yields more benefits for White and high-income students (Adkins & Garcia, 2023; “Dual enrollment,” 2019). The unequal benefits from dual enrollment programs as they currently exist will not reduce educational inequities, and may even exacerbate them (Buckley et al., 2022; Taylor, 2015).

Another critique is the tension that arises from an attempt to serve a specific population of students in each district while simultaneously standardizing the DE experience so that students are given similar experiences. DE programs should not be exact copies of one another, but drastically different programs can negatively impact students from different schools once they get to college if they were not engaging with similar educational materials and activities. If one DE program is a more rigorous and authentic college experience and another is closer to a normal high school class with a special title, those students are likely not receiving the same education even though they earn the same college credit. As they advance through subsequent college courses the initial DE experience may not provide an adequate foundation for those in the class that is structured more like a typical high school course rather than like a course in a HEI. Since the DE students do not have control over their programs, the dual enrollment students have to trust their schools to provide an effective curriculum to prepare them for college later on.

### **Effective Dual Enrollment Programs**

With those critiques in mind, certain characteristics help establish more effective dual enrollment programs. On the student side, certain personality and behavioral characteristics are

positively correlated with academic success, including high self-esteem, self-discipline, and an internal locus of control (Byrd & McDonald, 2005). Students' high educational expectations for themselves in college also predict high academic achievement in their college courses (Giani et al., 2023). However, many factors that contribute to students' success should be implemented on the institutional side. A successful transition from high school to college requires non-academic skills and knowledge that students may not develop on their own. These skills include time management, motivation, self-efficacy, study habits, and goal-setting (Karp, 2012; Faught et al., 2022). Students of Color and first-generation students may have lower self-efficacy and less academic preparation before starting a DE program, so they may benefit from additional psychosocial support in their DE program to supplement their academic support (Giani et al., 2023). These supports could help all dual enrollment students develop the non-academic skills that contribute to academic success, but are most important for Students of Color and low-income students who experience inequitable benefits from DE. The interplay between academic performance and college aspirations is important too because negative performance in college-level classes may be interpreted by the students as a predictor of future performance (Giani et al., 2023). If they perform poorly in high school and develop low expectations for themselves, these students may not have the motivation or confidence to pursue higher education. High-achieving students may face academic challenges in their college-level work as well (Karp, 2012). Those involved in implementing DE programs need to be aware of how students' perceptions of themselves and their performance may impact their experiences in college and future decisions regarding higher education.

One major responsibility of high school and college DE personnel is to share relevant information with dual enrollment students about resources and higher education options. DE

programs need to provide guidance on how to compare institutional characteristics, academic programs, and financial aid offers so high school students have a complete picture of their options before making decisions on where to enroll (Jagesic et al., 2021). This includes explaining how the transfer process works for college credits. If a student has a specific career path in mind, they may want to choose specific DE courses that will transfer to their preferred institutions to ensure they do not retake courses unnecessarily (Hofmann & Voloch, 2012). Many dual enrollment students do not work with a college academic advisor at all, so their DE choices are based solely on the guidance of their high school counselor (Adkins & Garcia, 2023). Students may benefit from a coordinated effort between high school counselors and college advisors regarding the classes they take for college credit. Dual enrollment providers should also consider sharing information with students' families who may not be familiar with how the higher education system operates (Jones, 2017). Just because students may be taking courses for college credit does not mean they inherently understand the system. For example, financial aid is convoluted and can be frustrating, and academic schedules include withdrawal policies and deadlines that do not apply to K-12 education. Further, support services like Disability Services require students to advocate for themselves, and students need to be more proactive in interactions with their professors. This is especially important for students who may have had an Individualized Education Plan to support their specific needs. Small details of higher education that are not intuitive, like how to access books and supplies, can make a significant impact on the student experience and should be thoroughly explained. Academic preparation and knowledge are not enough to ensure success in dual enrollment courses and beyond, so program providers should incorporate appropriate structure to support both academic and psycho-social development for dual enrollment students (Taylor, 2015). Effective dual enrollment programs

should include attention to student's self-perceptions and significant information about the college application cycle and college environment. Improved efficacy could increase the likelihood that students will be both emotionally and academically prepared at the completion of the course (Arnold et al., 2017).

### **Summary**

1.4 million high school students in the United States participated in a dual enrollment program in 2019, and estimates predict that involvement will continue to increase in coming years (Fink, 2021). The dual enrollment experience should be understood as a liminal space for both students and administrators in that it is an environment in between the standard operations of high school and higher education (Hofmann & Voloch, 2012). Students are thus required to attend to both sets of expectations and norms simultaneously. It can also be understood as a means of anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal for dual enrollment students, where they come to understand a new set of behaviors and practice them before entering college as full-time students (Merton, 1957, as cited in Karp, 2012). Anticipatory socialization can help improve college readiness, though the definition of college readiness varies significantly (Harrington & Rogalski, 2020). While college readiness is typically understood using factors like GPA and standardized test scores, it should include other factors like emotional intelligence and motivation as well (Caldwell et al., 2021; Norvilitis et al., 2022). Further, college readiness should include better preparation to help students and their families understand the differences between K-12 and HEIs, especially as it relates to privacy policies such as FERPA. Students and administrators must consider the differences between K-12 and postsecondary education landscapes and how those differences impact the experiences of dual enrollment students. While in agreement that dual enrollment has an overall positive impact on students and their college

outcomes, K-12 personnel and HEI administrators do differ on what the largest barriers to DE are and whether DE can help determine college readiness (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017). Dual enrollment is one of the most popular options for college acceleration in the United States, but participation is stratified by racial and ethnic identity and socioeconomic status (Fink, 2021). Marginalized students still benefit from dual enrollment but at a lower rate than White and/or students with a high socioeconomic status (Adkins & Garcia, 2023). DE modality and eligibility criteria vary dramatically between schools and states which raises an issue of standardized experiences between students; DE programs should not be identical but should still be relatively similar in the value of the credits earned (“Dual enrollment,” 2019; Arnold et al., 2017; Buckley et al., 2022; Jones, 2017). Effective DE programs should include both academic and psycho-social support because success cannot be achieved through academic preparation alone (Faught et al., 2022). They should also incorporate information regarding the higher education system, the college choice process, and how to compare institutions so that students can make informed decisions on their next steps in higher education.

### **Conclusion**

Dual enrollment programs have significant positive benefits for participating students but still fall short on psycho-social preparation. This is especially true for racially and ethnically marginalized students and low-income students. The proposed intervention will attempt to improve college readiness for dual enrollment students by focusing on psycho-social development which is not adequately addressed in dual enrollment programs as they currently exist.

## **Chapter Three: Project Description**

### **Introduction**

Dual enrollment (DE) requires students to exist between high school and postsecondary education simultaneously and balance two roles and sets of expectations (Hofmann & Voloch, 2012). While students may be acclimated to the expectations associated with high school, colleges and universities often have different expectations that may not be intuitive for high school students who have not been previously exposed to higher education. Dual enrollment courses and programs can help students prepare for the academic rigor of higher education, but most do not currently offer comparable support for students to develop the social-psychological skills such as learning how to set reasonable goals and to manage their time in order to reach those goals, skills that are vitally needed for success. Additionally, DE offers a college-level academic experience but does not help students understand the basics of the higher education system (Karp, 2012; Faught et al., 2022). The goal of this project is to develop a program to support the social-psychological development and knowledge base of students in a dual enrollment course offered in cooperation with Joliet Junior College in Joliet, Illinois. This chapter will describe the project components and evaluation method, the conclusions both high school and college administrators can draw from the reviewed research, and will end with a plan for implementation of this project. This project was developed under the assumption that dual enrollment students will transition to either a two or four-year HEI after high school graduation. Schools with a higher percentage of students that immediately enter the workforce or a trades program may need to modify their support program to appropriately meet student needs.

## **Project Components**

The proposed intervention is a nine-week seminar for first-time dual enrollment students. It will be hosted by the students' high school and will be facilitated by a student affairs professional from the JJC Student Advising Center. Each of the weekly units of this nine-week program will feature a topic that will help students strengthen the social-psychological skills they may need to be successful in college and expose them to more college-specific information like understanding financial aid and transfer credits. The students can utilize role rehearsal and anticipatory socialization to develop skills like goal setting and time management. The seminar will be held in the first nine weeks of the semester and will be offered in the fall semester, regardless of the semester the student will actually take the DE course. The college application cycle begins in the fall semester, so this timeline will prepare graduating seniors to apply to college, understand their financial aid offers, and submit final decisions within the standard timeframe.

The seminar will be held in-person after school at the high school for an hour each week. The seminar will feature guest speakers like a JJC financial aid counselor, a JJC academic advisor to discuss credit transfer, or previous dual enrollment students that could share their experiences and recommendations for success. A sample schedule outline is included in Appendix A. These seminars will be open for parents and supporters to attend so they can prepare for their students' transition to college as well. This aligns with Harper et al.'s (2020) suggestion that parents go through their own transition when their children go to college and thus may benefit from inclusion in the seminar. However, administrators should also recognize that some students and families do not have the time or resources to attend a seminar after normal school hours. As such, it should be offered in a hybrid format via a service like Zoom or Google

Classroom so students and their families can access it from another location if needed. Additionally, the facilitator should record each meeting so anyone who cannot attend can still access the material. This option may also benefit students who did attend in case they want to look back on the material later as a refresher. The teacher would need to obtain consent from the students and their families for the recordings beforehand. If feasible, the facilitator should schedule one of the weeks to include a visit to JJC's campus. If this is too difficult to coordinate, they could instead help the students schedule a campus visit outside of the normal seminar time so the students have the opportunity to experience the campus and learn about the available resources.

Ultimately, the seminar should be offered as credit/no credit for the high school curriculum since it is not meant to impact GPA or academic standing. This seminar is meant to complement students' first dual enrollment course to prepare them more holistically for success in higher education. JJC can document the completion of this seminar as a 1-credit elective that contributes to the overall credits needed for graduation.

### **Project Evaluation**

Administrators can determine the effectiveness of this program through a qualitative pre- and post-assessment of the students' sense of preparedness and knowledge of the college environment. These will be provided on the first and last days of the seminar. The dual enrollment course itself supports academic preparation, while the seminar is meant to help develop their social-psychological skills, confidence, and understanding of the higher education system. As such, the seminar is successful if students self-report higher feelings of preparation for future college courses and confidence in their social-psychological skills.



The pre- and post-assessments should ask the same questions so that administrators can accurately assess growth in the relevant areas. The assessments will use quantitative questions to ask students to rate their self-confidence in skills like time management and goal-setting, and should also ask them to rate their understanding of HEI support systems. The students will use a scale from 1-5 for the ratings. The assessments will also use qualitative questions so students can elaborate on their answers. These questions will ask students to identify similarities and differences between high school and college, strategies for mental health, and available JJC resources. By asking them to identify these in both the pre- and post-assessment, the facilitator and administrators can have proof of whether the seminar helped grow the students' knowledge in those areas. It will then ask students their perceptions of the most and least helpful topics and activities, whether they found the seminar as a whole to be helpful, and whether they have suggestions to improve future seminars. This assessment is also an opportunity to gauge whether students are interested in participating in student panels in subsequent semesters. Sample assessments are provided in appendices B and C.

Success of the intervention should not be measured by whether students proceed directly into enrollment in a HEI after high school since some students benefit from a non-traditional path through college later in life.

### **Project Conclusions**

Some dual enrollment high school students have no previous exposure to a college environment and benefit from deliberate scaffolding to prepare for a transition to higher education. This research and project can improve preparation for dual enrollment students as they progress through their first college-level course. Success is not only measured through academic indicators but should also consider a student's social and psychological skill set.

Improved preparation can improve students' confidence, academic performance, social engagement, and overall retention in higher education, which will then benefit their chosen HEI(s) as well. Improved support for dual enrollment students benefits all stakeholders, including the students, their families, and their schools.

### **Plans for Implementation**

The proposed intervention is designed for implementation at Joliet Junior College but can be modified to appropriately support another high school's student population. For example, as previously stated, if a high school has a higher percentage of graduates who upon leaving high school enter the military, a labor union trades school, or the workforce, they may benefit from alternative social-psychological support, like development of interpersonal communication skills, awareness of healthy lifestyle habits, or guidance on how to network with industry professionals.

High schools should analyze student demographics and post-graduation aspirations before implementing this program to best support their students. The post-assessment survey of the dual enrollment students can help administrators evaluate the program efficacy annually to make appropriate adjustments and improvements. An understanding of the student experience will be the most direct, effective way to determine whether the program provides the intended services and achieves the intended objectives. As such, administrators must gather as much student feedback as possible and may want to include qualitative data from student interviews or collect responses from parent-supporters to see how the program could be improved.

Administrators should ask parent-supporters whether the timing of the seminar worked and which topics were most and least helpful, in addition to whether the parent-supporters found the seminar to be a beneficial intervention. See Appendix D for a sample parent-supporter survey.

This intervention will require dedicated staff from both the high school and the HEI. All DE students would benefit from strengthened social-psychological development before they graduate high school. This intervention is a long-term commitment because efficacy cannot be determined after the first year. Each year students and parent-supporters will provide feedback to help guide administrators on how to better support their dual enrollment students as the students begin their college journey.

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## Appendix A

### Sample Seminar Syllabus

<b>Week 1: August 29</b>	Welcome, introductions, pre-assessment
<b>Week 2: September 5</b>	Time management in college
<b>Week 3: September 12</b>	Goal-setting and staying motivated
<b>Week 4: September 19</b>	Student Panel Q & A: Previous DE student experiences & recommendations
<b>Week 5: September 26</b>	Financial Aid 101
<b>Week 6: October 3</b>	General education requirements and transferring credits
<b>Week 7: October 10</b>	High School vs College: what's the same, what's different? <i>*Field trip to JJC's campus—permission slips required</i>
<b>Week 8: October 17</b>	Burnout and mental health
<b>Week 9: October 24</b>	Wrap-up, Q & A, post-assessment



## Appendix B

### Student Pre-Assessment

*Please select the option below that best represents your level of agreement with each statement.*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have strong time management skills.					
I know how to effectively set reasonable, attainable goals and pursue those goals.					
I understand how to apply for financial aid in college and how financial aid works.					
I can identify the similarities and differences between high school and college.					
I understand how to monitor and tend to my mental health.					
I feel prepared to be successful in college-level classes.					

- Do you have any questions about dual enrollment or higher education right now that you are hoping will be answered in this seminar?
- Identify two similarities and two differences between high school and college.
- Identify two strategies to maintain mental health.
- Identify two JJC support services available to students.

## Appendix C

### Student Post-Assessment

*Please select the option below that best represents your level of agreement with each statement.*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have strong time management skills.					
I know how to effectively set reasonable, attainable goals and pursue those goals.					
I understand how to apply for financial aid in college and how financial aid works.					
I can identify the similarities and differences between high school and college.					
I understand how to monitor and tend to my mental health.					
I feel prepared to be successful in college-level classes.					

- Identify two similarities and two differences between high school and college.
- Identify two strategies to maintain mental health.
- Identify two JJC support services available to students.
- Did the scheduled times and days of the seminar work for you to attend? If not, what times and/or days would have worked better?
- Overall, did you find this seminar to be a helpful resource for your first dual enrollment experience? Why or why not?
- Which topic or activity did you find most helpful?
- Which topic or activity did you find least helpful?
- Were there any topics not covered that you wish had been included?
- Would you be interested in participating in a student panel for future seminar classes to share your dual enrollment experience?
- Do you have any suggestions for how to improve this seminar for future students?

## Appendix D

### Sample Survey for Parent-Supporters

- Did the scheduled times and days of the seminar work for you to attend? If not, what times and/or days would have worked better?
- Overall, did you find this seminar to be a helpful resource for your student's first dual enrollment experience? Why or why not?
- Which topic or activity did you find most helpful?
- Which topic or activity did you find least helpful?
- Were there any topics not covered that you wish had been included?
- Do you have any suggestions for how to improve this seminar for future parents and supporters?