

KEY ACCELERATION CONSIDERATIONS: POLICY

States and communities working to build successful programs that accelerate students' progress toward a postsecondary credential should review policies to understand whether they enable or inhibit the building and scaling of programs. Specific attention should be paid to the downstream effects of policy and regulation on students of color, students from low-income families, and students from other underrepresented backgrounds. Accelerated pathways to credential models create additional challenges beyond those present with dual credit¹ and may require revisions to **state accountability and graduation requirements policies, postsecondary credit transfer and articulation policies, and course mapping and career pathways.**

ACCOUNTABILITY AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS POLICIES CAN INCENTIVIZE THE SCALE OF ACCELERATED PATHWAYS TO CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS.

The traditional focus on four-year graduation rates in high school accountability systems should not hinder the growth of models that allow students to remain enrolled in high school for an additional year to complete an associate degree. In reviewing statewide accountability and graduation requirements, policymakers should consider:

- **How are students counted if they defer high school graduation en route to earning an associate degree in grade 13?** In **Louisiana**, fifth-year students who participate in Extension Academies are counted in the graduation cohort after their fourth year of high school.
- **Do policies incentivize earning an associate degree in high school and accumulating coursework within a pathway?** **Texas** students can meet the state's College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) indicator by earning an associate degree in high school, which in turn provides financial incentives to local districts. In **Louisiana**, schools earn additional "points" in the accountability system for students who earn an associate degree.
- **Do policies value early postsecondary opportunities, including dual credit, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and career-technical programs in a consistent way?** When early postsecondary opportunities are weighted, reimbursed, or incentivized differently, schools may be deterred from offering (and students from enrolling) in particular courses. **Ohio** requires school districts to give equal grade point average weight to courses taken under the College Credit Plus program as other early postsecondary opportunities.
- **Do students have flexibility within course schedules to count certain CTE and dual enrollment courses to satisfy graduation requirements, particularly if enrolled in a 13th year program?** **Florida** maintains a Dual Enrollment Course-High School Subject Area Equivalency List, authorized by section 1007.271(9), F.S., which establishes equivalencies between postsecondary courses and credits completed through dual enrollment courses toward meeting high school graduation requirements.²

¹ Common challenges related to dual credit include ensuring a sufficient number of qualified educators; revising academic entry requirements to expand access; and ensuring students are academically prepared for rigorous coursework.

² <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5421/urlt/AcademicList.pdf>

POSTSECONDARY CREDIT TRANSFER POLICIES CAN SEAMLESSLY SUPPORT STUDENTS ALONG THEIR EDUCATION JOURNEY.

Not all students have the support necessary to navigate complex processes to apply their dual credit towards a credential. Building accelerated pathways off state-defined credit transfer blocks can ease the burden on students, their families, and school-based staff; speed along the program development process and facilitate the replicability of the models in new communities, given that students can apply the credits at any two- or four-year institution. In assessing whether current policies maximize the acceptance of students' earned postsecondary credit, policymakers should consider:

- **Have transfer “blocks” of coursework been established? Are the prioritized pathways reflected in existing transfer agreements?** The **Indiana** College Core is a block of 30 credit hours of general education college-level coursework that transfers seamlessly among Indiana’s institutions. All courses in the block are freely available to students virtually. **Arizona** and **Utah** enable high students to complete a block of fully-transferable general education courses and use them at any 2- or 4-year institution in the state.
- **To what extent does the state leverage statewide articulation agreements?** The **Utah** Board of Higher Education has created articulation agreements for all high industry-demand career and technical education pathways. Credit earned through the concurrent enrollment program shall be transferable between USHE institutions. These courses are reviewed annually.³ **Kentucky** has created a Dual Credit MOU⁴ between the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS).
- **Are there memoranda of understanding (MOU) between high schools and community colleges? How are both two-year and four-year partners engaged?** The **Illinois** Dual Credit Committee developed a Model Partnership Agreement (MPA) addressing the parameters of local school district-community college partnerships to offer dual credit. In addition to serving as the default when local agreement is not reached, the MPA is intended by ISBE and ICCB to help structure the parameters of local collaboration between school districts and community colleges to deliver dual credit coursework. It is also intended to serve as a model of recommended practice for communities to scale and ensure access to quality dual credit courses. **California** and **New Mexico** similarly share model partnership agreements at the state level.

INTENTIONAL COURSE MAPPING AND CAREER PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT CONNECT EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES.

As students engage in career exploration in middle and high school, they need clear signals from their state (or region or locality) about which priority, in-demand credentials will provide currency in the workforce and advance them in their education journeys. In reviewing the intersection of education and workforce policy, consider:

- **Has the state (or region) determined which credentials are of high value? How are districts encouraged to offer courses within these pathways?** **Kentucky**⁵ annually publishes a list of valid industry certifications and incentivizes industry certifications identified as “high demand” by giving these greater weight in the state’s accountability system relative to other certifications students can earn and schools can offer.
- **Are there statewide programs of study or models for districts to support replication and scale?** **Illinois** has developed model pathways through their Model Programs of Study Guides.⁶ These guides include sector-specific recommendations to implement robust secondary through postsecondary course sequences that enable students to earn at least 15 hours of early college credit while in high school and seamlessly transition into the first year of an aligned postsecondary degree program.

³ https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title53E/Chapter10/C53E-10-S302_2020051220200701.pdf

⁴ https://education.ky.gov/educational/AL/dc/Documents/KCTCS-KDE_DualCreditMOU.pdf

⁵ <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=52910>

⁶ <https://edsystemsniu.org/model-programs-of-study-guides/>