Accelerate ED

ESG | Education Strategy Group

DUAL ENROLLMENT ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES TO Promote Postsecondary Enrollment

Accelerate ED

Accelerate ED is a learning community of state and regional cross-sector teams working to expand access to high-quality pathways that enable students—especially those historically underrepresented in advanced coursework—to earn substantial college credit and pursue aligned career pathways while in high school. The community advances this work through peer learning, convenings, and collaborative problem-solving that focus on developing coherent systems, aligning policy, and providing meaningful student support. The community is led by Education Strategy Group (ESG).

About This Resource

This resource is one of three interconnected public goods created through an Accelerate ED Designathon. Facilitated by ESG between August 2025 and January 2026, the Designathon brought together participants from community colleges, K–12 districts, intermediaries, and research organizations across Illinois, Louisiana, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia to address a critical question: *How might we strengthen the connection between dual enrollment and full postsecondary matriculation at the same institutions, creating seamless transitions that significantly increase the likelihood of students persisting in their chosen pathways?*

Through four virtual meetings; a three-day in-person design sprint in Charlotte, NC; and ongoing asynchronous collaboration, teams explored root causes, generated solutions, and rapidly prototyped practical tools. The process centered on real practitioner insights, iterative feedback, and a commitment to creating resources that could be immediately useful across diverse contexts. The result is three public goods that can be used independently or together to support practitioners and system leaders in strengthening dual enrollment transitions. **To view all of the public goods, visit https://edstrategy.org/resource/accelerate-ed-designathon.**

OVERVIEW

Dual enrollment participation leads to strong academic outcomes, including increased college enrollment and degree completion (Edmunds et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2022; What Works Clearinghouse, 2017). However, research shows that academic access alone is not enough. Student engagement—the extent to which students feel connected to, informed about, and welcomed by the college where they take dual enrollment courses—significantly influences whether students matriculate to that institution after high school (Taylor et al., 2022). Participating in a dual enrollment course alone is not sufficient to foster meaningful engagement; it is an initial point of access that must be complemented by intentional, streamlined engagement strategies to support students' connection to the institution. When students feel engaged with their dual enrollment college, they are more likely to see postsecondary education as a viable next step and choose to continue their education at that college.

WHY THIS MATTERS

This resource provides dual enrollment practitioners with practical strategies to strengthen student engagement. These strategies help practitioners understand students' college and career interests, support the development of a college-going identity, and guide students in planning to continue their education at the college where they earned their dual enrollment credits. This resource includes the following:

■ **Student Engagement Questionnaire:** A questionnaire that dual enrollment partnerships can use to understand students' interaction with, connection to, and understanding of the college where they are taking dual enrollment courses. The questionnaire can be administered at the beginning and end of a semester or academic year to measure changes in student engagement over time.

■ **Engagement Strategies for College and K–12 Dual Enrollment Partnerships:** Practical research-based suggestions for increasing matriculation to the college where students are taking dual enrollment courses.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

The Student Engagement Questionnaire is a flexible tool designed to help dual enrollment partnerships better understand students' college and career interests, sense of connection to the college, and advising and support needs. It can be adapted to fit a range of partnership contexts and used for both planning and continuous improvement.

Purpose of the Questionnaire

Research on effective dual enrollment partnerships highlights the importance of intentional student engagement and meaningful college and career advising in supporting students' continuation into college after high school (Fink & Jenkins, 2023; Taylor et al., 2022). This questionnaire helps partnerships:

■ Assess students' awareness of and connection to the college where they are earning credits;

■ Identify gaps in advising, resource access, and support; and

■ Target engagement strategies and program improvements.

When and How to Use the Questionnaire

Many dual enrollment partnerships use college and career planning platforms that assess students' interests, skills, and postsecondary alignment. This questionnaire is not intended to replace those tools. Instead, it serves as a student-centered diagnostic designed to surface dimensions that platforms typically do not capture well—namely students' social capital, sense of belonging, and understanding of their relationship to the college where they are earning credit. By focusing on students' perceptions of connection and support, the questionnaire complements existing systems, providing actionable insight into the lived student experience. Used alongside current advising and planning tools, it helps partnerships identify gaps in connection and engagement that can inform more intentional advising, communication, and program design.

The questionnaire can be administered as a pre- and post-tool to capture changes in students' experiences over time. Partnerships may choose to administer each questionnaire once per semester or once per academic year, depending on program structure and capacity.

■ **Pre-questionnaire:** Administer within the first two to three weeks of the semester or academic year to understand students' starting point, expectations, and existing supports.

■ **Post-questionnaire:** Administer during the final two to three weeks of the semester or academic year to assess growth in connection, engagement, and clarity around next steps.

Using the Resource Across Dual Enrollment Partnership Types

- **New partnerships:** Use the pre-questionnaire to establish a baseline understanding of students' knowledge of the college, sense of belonging, and access to support. Based on results, select one or two engagement strategies to prioritize for the year.

- **Established partnerships:** Use responses to identify specific gaps in student engagement (e.g., lack of advisor awareness or limited use of campus resources) and focus efforts where needs are most evident.

- **All partnerships:** Compare pre- and post-questionnaire results to measure progress over time and refine strategies based on what students report is working.

Adapting, Administering, and Acting on Results

The questionnaire may be administered by high school counselors, college advisors, dual enrollment instructors or coordinators, or cross-sector system leaders or through a text messaging or learning management system. To support strong response rates and meaningful follow-up, have an adult who has regular contact with the students deliver the questionnaire.

This resource is intentionally designed to be customizable to reflect local context and partnership priorities. Programs may replace "[college]" with the name of their institution, modify response options to align with available programs and services, add questions related to local initiatives or partnerships, or remove questions that do not align with their goals.

Aggregate results should be used to inform which student engagement strategies to prioritize and how to allocate supports. Sharing findings across K–12 and postsecondary partners can help identify common areas for improvement and strengthen coordination across systems.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre-Questionnaire

This is my __ semester/year taking dual enrollment courses at [college].

1. Dropdown: 1st semester, 2nd semester, 3rd semester, 4th semester, 5th semester

I take my dual enrollment courses: *(select all that apply)*

1. At my high school
2. On the [college] campus
3. Online through [college]
4. In a hybrid format

I plan to attend college after high school. *(critical control variable)*

1. Definitely yes
2. Probably yes
3. Probably no
4. Definitely no

I would be the first in my family to earn a college degree. *(critical control variable)*

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

I feel connected to [college] and view myself as a college student. *(critical control variable)*

1. Definitely yes
2. Probably yes
3. Probably no
4. Definitely no

I have discussed my dual enrollment plans with: *(select all that apply)*

1. High school counselor
2. High school teacher
3. Advisor or other adult at the college where I am taking dual enrollment courses
4. Family member or other trusted adult in my support network
5. Friends

I have discussed my post-high school plans with: *(select all that apply)*

1. High school counselor
2. High school teacher
3. Advisor or other adult at the college where I am taking dual enrollment courses
4. Family member or other trusted adult in my support network
5. Friends

I would like to participate in the following activities at [college]: *(select all that apply)*

1. Touring campus/facilities
2. Attending visits from college representatives, such as advisors, at my high school
3. Participating in college events
4. Interacting with college instructors
5. Interacting with other college students
6. Participating in college clubs
7. Participating in events hosted by specific college departments or programs

I am aware of the following services at [college]: *(select all that apply)*

1. Academic advising (college staff member providing help on course selection, academic degree programs, and student support services)
2. Career counseling (meeting with a high school or college staff member to discuss and explore career pathways and opportunities)
3. Skills labs (hands-on career based experiences)
4. Support for accessing nonacademic resources such as basic needs, student clubs, or other student services

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Post-Questionnaire

This was my __ semester/year taking dual enrollment courses at [college].

1. Dropdown: 1st semester, 2nd semester, 3rd semester, 4th semester, 5th semester

I took my dual enrollment courses: *(select all that apply)*

1. At my high school
2. On the [college] campus
3. Online through [college]
4. In a hybrid format

I plan to attend college after high school. *(critical control variable)*

1. Definitely yes
2. Probably yes
3. Probably no
4. Definitely no

I would be the first in my family to earn a college degree. *(critical control variable)*

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

I feel connected to [college] and view myself as a college student. *(critical control variable)*

1. Definitely yes
2. Probably yes
3. Probably no
4. Definitely no

I have discussed my dual enrollment plans with: *(select all that apply)*

1. High school counselor
2. High school teacher
3. Advisor or other adult at the college where I am taking dual enrollment courses
4. Family member or other trusted adult in my support network
5. Friends

I have discussed my post-high school plans with: *(select all that apply)*

1. High school counselor
2. High school teacher
3. Advisor or other adult at the college where I am taking dual enrollment courses
4. Family member or other trusted adult in my support network
5. Friends

I participated in the following activities at [college]: *(select all that apply)*

1. Touring campus/facilities
2. Attending visits from college representatives, such as advisors, at my high school
3. Participating in college events
4. Interacting with college instructors
5. Interacting with college students
6. Participating in college clubs
7. Participating in events hosted by specific college departments or programs

I am aware of the following services at [college]: *(select all that apply)*

1. Academic advising (college staff member providing help on course selection, academic degree programs, and student support services)
2. Career counseling (meeting with a high school or college staff member to discuss and explore career pathways and opportunities)
3. Skills labs (hands-on career based experiences)
4. Support for accessing nonacademic resources such as basic needs, student clubs, or other student services

Use the questionnaire results to figure out which engagement area matters most right now. Are there patterns in the responses? Rather than trying to implement all strategies at once, select one to two priority areas in which student feedback indicates the greatest need or opportunity.

Following are three engagement strategies to consider. Each strategy outlines why it matters, the goal for that strategy, and specific things high schools and colleges can do.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR COLLEGE AND K-12 DUAL ENROLLMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Where should dual enrollment partnerships start? The questionnaire provides partnerships insights from students about their dual enrollment experiences. Based on the results, stakeholders have the opportunity to collaborate in developing engagement strategies such as the following to increase students' matriculation at the same institution where they are taking dual enrollment courses. By tracking indicators on the questionnaire such as increased awareness of advisors, greater participation in campus activities, and stronger intent to enroll at the dual enrollment institution, teams can translate data into meaningful outcomes.

Providing Personalized Advising on College and Career

To help dual enrollment students select courses that both align with their interests and encourage them to continue their college education after high school, colleges should provide students with personalized and regular academic advising. This advising can help students identify their interests, understand how their interests connect to a postsecondary degree program, and make a plan to attend college. Advising is not just relegated to the college, though, as high school counselors should reinforce college-led advising sessions by ensuring that students understand the course options that are available to them and how they connect to college and career options (Fink & Jenkins, 2023). At all levels, **advising should connect students to trusted adults who can provide academic support and foster a sense of belonging on campus.** *(See* Belonging by Design for Dual Enrollment Students *for more information.)*

Dual enrollment students will have the opportunity to:		■ Discuss their interests, skills, and aspirations and understand how their interests align with programs at the college. ■ Develop a preliminary educational plan that they can pursue at the college after they graduate from high school. ■ Have ongoing contact with college staff during dual enrollment, which is especially important for students who need to adjust their coursetaking plans. ■ Understand how dual enrollment affects time, cost, and progress toward credentials.
ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES	**High School**	■ Ensure that dual enrollment courses satisfy high school graduation requirements while also aligning with students' postsecondary interests. ■ Streamline cross-institutional communication to ensure that all critical information (grades, drop deadlines, advising) are clear, timely, and accessible via a single, trusted channel. ■ Proactively introduce students to college support services (tutoring, library, career center) during high school orientations and classroom visits, not only after students express a need for help.

	College	■ Meet with dual enrollment students at regular intervals to discuss their progress (e.g., a checkpoint system based on credit hour attainment). During these sessions, advisors:
		  ▶ Inform students about degrees/credentials at the college where students are earning college credit and their course requirements (e.g., transfer requirements) (Fink & Jenkins, 2023; Jenkins & Lahr, 2022).
		  ▶ Support students in developing an educational/degree plan that maps out all the courses that students need to complete through degree completion and/or transfer, starting at the institution where the student earned their college credits through dual enrollment (Fink & Jenkins, 2023; Jenkins & Lahr, 2022).
		■ Normalize the process of seeking help at the college and encourage students to view dual enrollment instructors as future collegiate professors.
		■ Identify college resources for academic success.

Connecting Dual Enrollment Students to the College Where They Are Taking Their Coursework

Creating authentic connection to the college campus—both in person and virtually—is essential for helping dual enrollment students see themselves as future college students, not just high school students taking college courses. When students feel they belong on campus they are more likely to choose that institution for their postsecondary education. Promoting this sense of belonging can be accomplished through orientation experiences, peer relationships, access to campus resources, and recognition as legitimate members of the college community. This work is especially important for first-generation college students and students from underrepresented communities, who may not have prior exposure to college environments or clear models for navigating campus life.

Dual enrollment students will have the opportunity to:	■ Feel a sense of belonging. ■ Identify the value and relevance of dual enrollment experiences. ■ Matriculate into the college where their dual enrollment experience occurs.	
ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES	High School	■ Create a college-centric space in the high school with college swag and other perks for students to foster connection to the campus. ■ Allow time for college-connected experiences such as advising and peer mentoring. ■ Encourage the use of college resources (e.g., library services, tutoring).
	College	■ Schedule college orientation days to help students feel that they are legitimate members of the college community, not just temporary high school visitors, leading to increased academic comfort. ■ Identify a dedicated student success liaison who can facilitate office hours to handle communication about campus student life and academic success programming. ■ Create a peer-mentoring program through which successful, continuing dual enrollment students or current full-time college students mentor new students. ■ Regularly communicate directly with students (in the classroom, by email and text message, and via social media), rather than relying solely on high school partners for communication.

Providing Dual Enrollment Students With Academic Supports

Academic support helps dual enrollment students succeed in college-level coursework while they are still developing the skills, habits, and confidence needed for college success. Effective academic support goes beyond offering tutoring when students struggle: It includes proactive skill-building, clear communication about college-level expectations, and a culture in which asking for help is encouraged. When high schools and colleges coordinate academic support, students are more likely to succeed in their dual enrollment courses and feel prepared to continue at the college level.

Dual enrollment students will have the opportunity to:	■ Overcome a double challenge: mastering college-level content while adapting to college expectations for independence, time management, and academic rigor. ■ Understand what supports exist and feel comfortable using them, which is especially important for first-generation students. ■ Build strong and positive habits through academic supports that are proactively introduced and/or integrated into courses.
ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES — **High School**	■ Embed study skills and time management workshops into dual enrollment courses at the beginning of the semester. ■ Establish study groups or peer tutoring led by teachers or former dual enrollment students. ■ Monitor student progress through regular communication with instructors (on campus and at the high school).
College	■ Create guidance for dual enrollment students to explain available supports in an accessible way (tutoring, writing center, STEM labs). Be clear about how to access them and when to use them. ■ Prepare tutors and support staff to help dual enrollment students with both academic content and questions they may have about navigating the experience (e.g., anticipate questions dual enrollment students may have about how to navigate college systems and expectations). ■ Bring tutors/skills lab staff to the dual enrollment classroom to encourage students to participate in a tutoring or study skills session early in the semester—before they struggle with the content—so they are familiar with the process and experience. ■ Designate faculty office hours or study sessions specifically for dual enrollment students to reduce intimidation and build peer connections.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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