



SB 2539 Establishes a Pathway to Increase Disadvantaged Students' Dual Credit Enrolment and Expand their Access to Opportunities in Higher Education

IDRA Testimony for Senate Bill 2539, submitted by Steve Kemgang to the Texas Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education, March 23, 2023

Dear Chair Creighton, Vice-Chair Middleton and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Steve Kemgang, and I have the honor of serving as an education policy fellow at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

IDRA supports the creation of the Advanced Career and Education Scholarship program to expand financial access to dual credit courses, particularly among underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students, who make up 60% of our total student population (TEA, 2022). Eligible students take dual credit courses while still in high school, enabling them to earn college credit toward a future associate or bachelor's degree upon graduation.

Participation in dual credit courses and programs greatly benefits students to be successful in their postsecondary studies and beyond. Research shows that Texas students who take dual credit courses have a higher likelihood of remaining on track to complete college degrees and overall experience better college outcomes regardless of their backgrounds (RAND, 2017).

Furthermore, a notable dual credit study by the University of Texas System found that students who took college level courses in high school are more likely to be retained and graduate from a UT system school and have higher GPAs throughout college than noncredit-bearing students at time of admission (Troutman, et al., 2018). These students reported that exposure to college level coursework played a huge part in their successes in college.

In IDRA's studies on college readiness in 2014, 2016 and 2018, access to advanced courses that conferred college credit led to increased graduation rates and college preparedness among students from low-income backgrounds and rural areas (Bojorquez & Bahena, 2018). IDRA identified that adopting a college-going future teaching model alongside dual credit courses was tremendously beneficial to students' continuing into higher education (Bojorquez, 2014; 2019).

As beneficial as these programs are for our students, existing gaps in representation in enrolment remain as a point of concern. Black and Latino students coming from low-income backgrounds are underrepresented in dual credit courses, with the pandemic further exacerbating their declines in enrolment (Villarreal, 2021).

Some financial hurdles may prevent scholarship eligible students from enrolling. Thus, IDRA recommends that SB 2539's ACE scholarship program additionally cover any fees beyond tuition.

Increasing funding and initiatives to expand dual credit enrolment for educationally disadvantaged students is more crucial than ever. It will support more students in becoming equipped to enroll in and become successful in college, and it will lead to more graduates who become productive, contributing members of our economy and society

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Steve Kembang at steve.kembang@idra.org.

Resources

- Bojorquez, H. (2014, 2019). College Bound and Determined. IDRA. <https://www.idra.org/publications/college-bound-determined/>
- Bojorquez, H., & Bahena, S. (2018). Ready Texas: A study HB5 Implementation in Texas and Implications for College Readiness. IDRA. <http://www.idra.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Ready-Texas-A-Study-of-the-Implementation-of-HB5-in-Texas-and-Implications-for-College-Readiness-by-IDRA-May-2018.pdf>
- Miller, T., Kosiewicz, H., Wang, E.L., Marwah, E.V., Delhommer, S., & Daugherty, L. (2017). Dual Credit Education in Texas: Interim Report. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2043.html
- TEA. (2022). PEIMS 2021-2022 Student Program and Special Populations Reports. Texas Education Agency. <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker>
- Troutman, D., Hendrix-Soto, A., Creusere, M., Mayer, E. (2018). Dual Credit and Success in College. The University of Texas System. <https://www.utsystem.edu/documents/docs/ut-system-reports/2018/dual-credit-and-success-college>
- Villarreal, A. (2021). Pandemic reduces number of high school students taking dual enrollment courses. Hechinger Report. <https://hechingerreport.org/pandemic-reduces-number-of-high-school-students-taking-dual-enrollment-courses/>

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by leading policy analyses and advocacy; dynamic teacher training and principal coaching; useful research, evaluation and frameworks for action; and innovative student, family and community engagement.