



## The State of Advanced Coursework in Texas

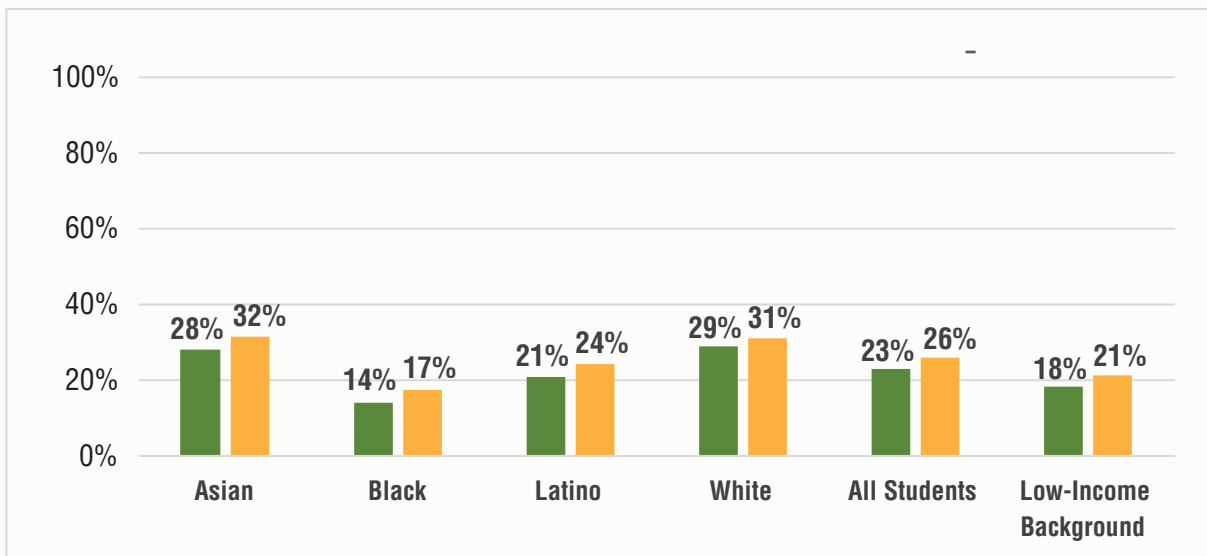
Texas has done exciting work over the past two decades to broaden access to dual credit (DC) opportunities, which give high school students early access to college credit and degree pathways. While DC enrollment has grown steadily, participation has lagged for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, and rural districts and districts that serve large numbers of students from low-income backgrounds have struggled to offer DC at no cost to students.

Fortunately, recent policies such as House Bill 8 and Senate Bill 2124 aim to extend access to DC and other advanced coursework options, particularly for students in underserved districts. As these policies are implemented, it is important for state and local policymakers to consider existing opportunity gaps from available data to ensure that historically underrepresented students have more on-ramps to college and career success.

### State Context and Highlights

From 2018-19 to 2020-21, the first full school year navigating the pandemic, advanced coursework completion fell only slightly, with 42% of students completing an advanced course in 2020-21, down from 44% the year before. This slight decrease was due to a widening of existing disparities for Black and Latino students and students from low-income backgrounds.

**Graduates With Dual Credits, by Subgroup: SY 2018-19 & 2020-21**



● 18-19      ● 20-21

**Reading this figure:** In 2020-2021, more Latino students graduated with dual credit (24%) than in 2018-19 (21%).

Source: EdTrust analysis of the [Texas Academic Performance Reports](#) from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (accessed July 2023)

Note: Students could have taken DC courses at any point in their high school career, so any changes observed for the class of 2020-21 could reflect changes in course-taking patterns from as early as the 2017-18 school year.

There were slight increases in the number of graduates with DC in both urban and rural districts. And every student group in rural districts had slightly higher percentages of graduates with DC than those in urban districts. Notably, more Latino students completed advanced coursework **and** graduated with DC in high-poverty districts than in low-poverty districts. Although there is no immediate data to explain this, we should continue to learn from districts implementing promising practices that increase student access and success.

### **Recommendation #1: Collect and clearly report essential data and monitor access to and success in advanced classes**

- The state should share completion and proficiency data separated by advanced course type and income status to better monitor the impact of House Bill 8 and the [FAST](#) program, which provides DC funding for economically disadvantaged students. Additionally, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) should share enrollment data from colleges that used multiple measures to determine eligibility for DC courses during the pandemic to better understand how academic requirements, such as [Texas Success Initiative](#) (TSI) Assessment criteria, may or may not act as barriers to entry for students who are underrepresented in DC courses.

### **Recommendation #2: Expand eligibility, access, and advising support for advanced courses**

- To maximize the impact of Senate Bill 2124, school districts should make its purpose clear to all staff and provide teachers with needed support. Local and state policymakers should also consider extending similar “opt-out” policies to high schools. A recent EdTrust report, [“Opportunities Denied: High-Achieving Black and Latino Students Lack Access to Advanced Math,”](#) finds that even high-achieving students of color and students from low-income backgrounds who succeed in eighth grade Algebra are less likely to take advanced math courses in high school.
- Districts should prioritize strong and proactive advising, so students are aware of available coursework options and pathways. Existing policies and procedures for identifying students who are eligible to take advanced coursework may need to change as higher education institutions start to utilize [College Connect](#) to offer dual enrollment courses that do not require the same TSI thresholds as traditional DC.

### **Recommendation #3: Clearly signal the value of advanced coursework within state accountability indicators and local goals for College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR)**

- The stated purpose of Texas’ accountability system is “to ensure this state is a national leader in preparing students for postsecondary success.” As state policymakers continue to improve the indicators within this system, they should select indicators that reflect the strong correlation between DC participation and postsecondary success.
- At the local level, school district leaders should adopt rigorous CCMR goals and progress measures, like those aligned to the state’s [CCMR Outcome Bonus](#). EdTrust’s [district-level policy scan](#) provides criteria, rubrics, and guiding questions for district board members and administrators to use and follow.