Moving the Needle on Access and Success

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Accelerated Learning Options

**Definition:** Activities that provide high school students with a more rigorous, college-level curriculum and possibly the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school.

**Why Policymakers, Students & Families Want Them:**
- Provide a more rigorous curriculum.
- Enhance students’ chances of succeeding in college.
- Give some a competitive edge in admissions process.
- Allow students to “test the water” with college.
- Decrease time to degree.
- Lower cost of degree.
- Serve as a recruiting tool for institutions.
- Serve as a screening mechanism for institutions.
Moving the Needle - Purpose

• To learn more about the efficacy of these programs (separating myth from reality)
• To provide recommendations on how such programs might be better utilized to increase access and success of low-income and underrepresented students in higher education.
• The focus: Advanced Placement, dual/concurrent enrollment, International Baccalaureate, and Tech-Prep
1. Examined state policies through an extensive inventory of legislation and board rules (K-12 and higher education).

2. Surveyed public and private, two- and four-year colleges and universities on institutional policies and practices.

3. Conducted focus group interviews with students (and teachers and counselors) at two high schools and two postsecondary institutions.

4. Prepared a review of the literature.

5. Examined state financing approaches.

A National Snapshot of Accelerated Learning Options

• Breadth and scope of some Accelerated Learning Options:
  • Most high schools offer dual credit and/or exam-based courses.
  • 57% of all Title IV degree-granting institutions had high school students taking courses for college credit in 2002-03.
  • Estimated enrollments: 1.2 million in dual credit courses, 1.8 million in AP, and 165,000 in IB.

• Accessibility of programs varies by type and school size and location:
  • 82% of large schools offer dual credit courses vs. 63% of small schools.
  • 97% of large schools offered AP vs. 40% of small schools.
  • Schools in towns or urban fringe areas were more likely to offer dual credit courses than were schools in cities or rural areas.
  • Schools in urban fringe areas were far more likely to offer AP than schools in cities, towns, or rural areas.
  • Schools with the highest minority enrollment are the least likely to offer dual credit courses when compared to schools with lower minority enrollment.
  • Schools with higher minority enrollment are more likely to offer AP courses than schools with the lowest minority enrollment.

Source: NCES, Dual Credit and Exam-Based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2002-03.
The State Policy Landscape

- Identify state statutes through searches conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).
- Scan state-level board rules through web searches.
- Send the policies with summary paragraphs to the SHEEO offices in the states for verification.
- Merge the policies with other domains in the State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO) www.wiche.edu/policy/SPIDO/index.asp
- Analyze the policies to be included in the final report.
As of early January 2006, 45 states had state policy related to accelerated learning (statute or board rule).

Only five states did not have state-level policy:
- Alaska
- Delaware
- New Hampshire
- New York
- Rhode Island
The State Policy Landscape

- Advanced Placement: 32 states
- Dual/concurrent enrollment: 42 states
- International Baccalaureate: 12 states
- Tech-Prep: 13 states

Additional activity not captured in *Moving the Needle* also is happening at the local level.

But, does it work?
Transcript Analysis Overview

- Florida’s K-20 Education Data Warehouse
- Public high schools and public postsecondary institutions in Florida
- High school graduating classes: 1997-2003
- Postsecondary enrollments: 1997-2005
- Data elements (not exhaustive):
  - Accelerated credits obtained in high school through AP, dual/concurrent enrollment, IB
  - High school attended
  - Courses taken at community colleges, including remedial courses
  - Postsecondary enrollment: institution(s) and credits attempted and earned by term
  - Postsecondary degree(s) and date(s) of graduation
  - Postsecondary credits awarded for accelerated learning, CLEP, life experience, etc.
  - Demographic information, including race/ethnicity
  - Proxies for low-income: free or reduced price lunch, Pell receipt
- Total of 734,467 high school graduates
- Selection bias
Participation During High School

- In just six years, almost 14,000 more Florida students earned AP credit, an increase of 72 percent. A 6.6% increase in participation rate.
- Participation in dual/concurrent enrollment and IB were also up modestly.

**Fig. 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Cohort %</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>19,390</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>33,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>12,492</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>17,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>2,011</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3,323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unequal Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AP</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>IB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-income</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not low-income</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low-income: Students who participated in free or reduced-price lunch program or received a Pell Grant.

- Low-income students participated in accelerated learning at much lower rates than wealthier students did.
- Black and Hispanic students participated at lower rates than White and Asian students.
- **EXCEPT** -- Hispanic students earned AP credit at approximately the same rate as White students.
With the exception of IB, low-income students in 2-year colleges were more likely to have earned accelerated credit than either higher income students in the same colleges or than low-income students in a 4-year institution.

Not-low-income students with accelerated credit attended a 4-year institution at much higher rates than low-income students.
Persistence (Continuous Enrollment) by Income

- No large differences in persistence (i.e., continuous enrollment for two consecutive years) by income.
- Persistence rates at community colleges were lower across the board (Fig. 5).
- Persistence rates at universities varied little by income level and were higher for all students with accelerated credit (Fig. 6).
- Persistence rates at the universities for students with accelerated credit were generally higher than persistence rates for students with no accelerated credit.

**Fig. 5 Students Who Persisted in a Community College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>Not Low-Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No accelerated credit</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With AP credit</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With IB credit</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With dual/concurrent credit</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 6 Students Who Persisted in a State University**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>Not Low-Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No accelerated credit</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With AP credit</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With IB credit</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With dual/concurrent credit</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Completions by Income

- Students with accelerated credit are more likely to complete degrees than those without, regardless of income level.
  - Of associate’s degree completers, students with dual/concurrent enrollment credit were most likely to finish.
  - Of bachelor’s degree completers, students with IB credit were most likely to finish.
- At community colleges, low-income students with some accelerated credit were at least twice as likely to earn an associate’s degree as those without (Fig. 7).
- At state universities, 41% of low-income students without accelerated credit completed a bachelor’s degree vs. at least 60% of those with this credit (Fig. 8).
- Low-income completion rates are still lower across the board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig. 7 Students Who Completed an Associate’s Degree</th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>Not Low-Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No accelerated credit</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With AP credit</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With IB credit</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With dual/concurrent credit</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig. 8 Students Who Completed a Bachelor’s Degree</th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>Not Low-Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No accelerated credit</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With AP credit</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With IB credit</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With dual/concurrent credit</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elapsed Time to Associate’s Degree

- In general, wealthier students did not earn associate’s degrees much faster than low-income students.
- Students from both income groups with any type of accelerated credit completed associate’s degrees in less time than students with no accelerated credit.
- Students with accelerated credit were more likely to earn an associate’s degree within two years than students without accelerated credit.
- Students with dual/concurrent enrollment credit were most likely to finish within two or three years.

Note: Elapsed time to degree is the number of years between high school graduation and associate’s or bachelor’s degree completion.
Elapsed Time to Bachelor’s Degree

- In general, wealthier students earned bachelor’s degrees faster than low-income students.
- Only a small percentage of students were able to complete a bachelor’s degree within 3 years.
- Students with AP or IB credit were more likely than those with dual/concurrent enrollment credit to finish within four years.

Note: Elapsed time to degree is the number of years between high school graduation and associate’s or bachelor’s degree completion.
In sum...

- The transcript analysis supports the assertion that accelerated learning options are associated with higher rates of postsecondary participation and success.
- Students who entered Florida’s public postsecondary institutions with accelerated credit were more likely to continue their enrollment and complete an associate’s or a bachelor’s degree.
- On average, students with accelerated credit completed postsecondary degrees within a shorter timeframe following high school graduation.
- Establishing whether participation in an accelerated program is the cause of these positive results requires a more statistically sophisticated analysis (selection bias).
Thorny Questions

- Do these programs streamline the transition from high school to college and increase BA degree attainment for low- and moderate-income students?
  - Yes, based on persistence and completion rates. Especially when low-income students who had accelerated learning are compared against those who didn’t.
- Did the accelerated learning courses cause the higher persistence and completion?
  - We don’t know.
- Do they reduce time to degree?
  - It’s hard to say.
Recommendations for Improving Effectiveness

- Research
- Access
- Financing and Financial Aid
- Quality
- Collaboration
Recommendations for Improving Effectiveness

**Research**

- Develop a national effort to establish consistency in collecting, analyzing, and reporting data across states.
- Support trans-sector research and data analysis on student participation, access, and success.
- Promote collaboration among the research community, federal government, state departments of education, and higher education executive offices to design and conduct studies that will provide evidence-based research.
- Commit sufficient resources to support a robust and targeted research agenda.
Recommendations for Improving Effectiveness

Access
- Assure that all high schools provide at least one of the major accelerated learning options.
- Encourage students to include at least one course offered as an accelerated learning option as a high school graduation option.
- Require all high schools to provide students in grades 9 through 12 with accurate, timely and appropriate information and counseling on accelerated options available at their schools.
- Provide incentives to encourage schools and districts to establish outreach programs that target at-risk students and provide alternatives for them to participate in accelerated learning options.
- Examine policies for language that may limit access to, or participation in, accelerated learning programs.
Recommendations for Improving Effectiveness

Financing and Financial Aid

- Require annual assessments by a state agency of the cost effectiveness and benefits of accelerated learning options.

- Require annual reporting on how these options are funded, investments in each option, sources of these funds, and number of students served by each option; disaggregate this fiscal information by income level, gender, and race/ethnicity.

- Assure economically disadvantaged students that they will not incur expenses for participating in these options and taking the associated examinations.

- Explore funding options that compensate both the high school and postsecondary institution for their costs associated with accelerated learning.
Recommendations for Improving Effectiveness

**Quality**
- Joint development, implementation, and monitoring by state K-12 and higher education agencies of statewide guidelines with benchmarks that address quality issues concerning curriculum, faculty, materials, and assessments for accelerated learning options.

**Collaboration**
- Require stronger, well defined collaboration between K-12 and higher education and between state and federal levels.
- Ensure transparency in the process of accepting and applying accelerated credit at the institutional level.
Contact Information

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