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The Place for Dual Enrollment in College to Career Readiness

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THE PLACE FOR DUAL ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGE TO CAREER READINESS

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***Abstract:** Since high school achievement has reached permeation in American society today, a college degree is becoming the new norm in the level of education that is needed for a sufficient standard of living desired by most people. Studies indicate pre-college experiences are key to the transition to college and completion of a degree. Although high school GPA was the gauge of later success in college, it has been found there is more to college and career readiness than GPA indicates. Students must be educated in developing the necessary skills in college admissions procedures, financial aid and scholarships, and the disposition and tenets of being a college student. Dual enrollment can help provide high school students college experience, which builds familiarity and a basic understanding of how colleges and universities operate and confidence so these students can manage the demands of higher education. Dual enrollment offers authentic course delivery, assessments, and professional development so students can have a smooth bridge from high schools to college and career readiness. The success of dual enrollment programs can be seen in students feeling competent in their chosen areas, and the feelings these students develop of real responsibility and success which builds motivation, even though the courses were challenging.*

College to Career Readiness

Due to the increasing numbers of students who will be competing for their future role as a productive member of society, not just in this country but globally as well, it is even more important for students to enter and complete some form of post-secondary institution to study a path that can contribute to their goal (Conley, 2014; Barnes & Slate, 2013). Conley states that the ‘...implications of this transition to a high-skills knowledge economy where essentially everyone needs to keep learning beyond high school.’ p 13 is valuable guidance for those entering secondary schools.

Through an analysis of what Conley stated, there is an indication of a new financial basis with new opportunities for individuals who can follow the changing direction of societal needs. Therefore everyone in blue- and white-collar positions need to be able to interpret, change, and adapt to the rules of careers of the next generation. The changes in career readiness, and therefore college readiness demonstrates a need for individuals who can meet the challenges of transition, as well as adapt as societal needs change (Conley, 2014).

For a number of years GPA was the best gauge for employers trying to determine the success of possible future employees. However it is not just the academic success evident in GPA alone that indicates success. Included within those grades is an indication of metacognitive skills, time management skills, and the ability of commitment to reach conclusions that indicates the focus on study and persistence to reach goals (Conley, 2014.) Also keeping this thinking in mind, Conley states... “Not every student needs exactly the same knowledge and skills to be college and career ready. A student’s college and career interests help identify the precise knowledge and skills the student needs.” p15. For example you may have a first generation minority student who has a high GPA, but due to being limited in the other skills needed to navigate the college system, they become overwhelmed when

trying to understand how to build a successful college life other than through high academic grades. Therefore to help students move beyond a high GPA, teachers need to have students set a goal for a good transcript and to drive for readiness profiles as well. (Conley, 2014).

It is important that policy makers, at both the state and federal level, realize the changing horizon in colleges and the students who attend them (Karp, 2012). For a number of years, policy makers would rely solely on data collected on students seeking college degrees, for the different strategies that would be adopted for determining college readiness. For example following high-stakes testing, and accountability of numbers from numerous studies were used as indicators of college-readiness. This attitude created the one-size fits all policies that were instituted in schools and colleges (Barnes & Slate, 2013). The results of this thinking is that now students are not graduating from high school, and even if students start college, they are not prepared for college and drop out before the second semester which indicates that these students are not college-ready, let alone career-ready.

In a recent National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) report it was found that when dealing with college readiness, the adolescent trends are discouraging. (Radcliffe & Bos, 2013). NAEPs statistic appears to paint a negative picture of the drop-out rate, and in further discussion of the unpreparedness of high school graduates when it come to entering and staying in college (Karp, 2013). The report states that approximately 71% of high school students graduate on time, with only about how 50% of minority high schools students graduating on time (Radcliffe & Bos, 2013).

Therefore Radcliffe and Bos (2013) began a seven-year study that involved a cohort of adolescents, beginning with grade six and it continued through high school. It was thought that if college and career readiness, was initiated sooner such as in the early secondary school years, it would be beneficial for students. Radcliffe and Bos stated that in constructing college and career readiness one must go beyond the successful completion of high school with an acceptable GPA level, and that for a student to be successful in college to career transitions they must also be prepared in 1) understanding the nature of college 2) realizing a college education is an asset to a better future 3) developing positive dispositions and ambitions concerning college 4) being well prepared, academically, for college admissions and 5) having short and long term goals that enhance becoming college-ready.

Radcliffe and Bos (2013) go on to share strategies that build college and career readiness. For example they suggested that campus visits for secondary students should involve pre-service teachers as the leaders. Campus tours are usually done by someone who is a good spokes person for the college in general, but the tour guide is not necessarily interested in the same field as the visitor. Another way that pre-service teachers can help with campus visitors is in having pre-service teachers participate as tutors to help students while they are in secondary school. Also if the visitors are paired with pre-service teachers in their field of content, this gives a strong connection to the college, and the pre-service teacher gains added practice in their field of choice.

Even though this would be a good way to introduce a prospective high school student to the content they want to teach, it is not enough, because college to career readiness is more than that. These prospective college students must be educated about college and career readiness beyond content. They must also be educated about developing the necessary skills in becoming a successful college student, which is sometimes over-looked. Many students from middle and lower social economics status and some minorities need help in learning to migrate through the process of becoming a college student with the policies and steps that follows that process. They also need to develop an understanding of financial aid and scholarships and how to maneuver through many different avenues that can benefit a prospective student.

One only has to be a college graduate to be reminded of the peculiarities of how to apply to a college, how to find monetary support, and how to migrate through the complexities of enrollment in college courses. The prospective college student needs to not only be able to select and enroll in courses, but also to understand how to determine a major that is in line with the goals they have set for themselves. This can be overwhelming for some students due to the fact that they have had limited experience in setting future goals, let alone choosing courses to take or deciding on a college major (Karp, 2012; Darche & Stam, 2012). As Radcliffe and Bos (2013) shared a prospective college student could benefit a great deal from having a mentor be the guiding support, for helping to find their path to succeed in college and a later career. Again pre-service teachers could be valuable assets for helping prospective students, because of their previous success navigating through college and a possible future career.

In a statement made by Darche and Stam in *Techniques* (March 2012) [the dual enrollment academy] "...established high expectations for its students: every student would be prepared for the full range of postsecondary education opportunities, and for the world of work."p 21. This statement was concerning the academy in the world of health, but many such academies exist in secondary schools today especially in the field of education. The emphasis of these types of academies is to help students in the educational world to aspire to finish secondary school, then further their education through higher education that will lead to success in their chosen

career. Further more students should begin investigating their niche as early as early secondary (middle or junior high school) that will carry them further through secondary school and beyond (Darche & Stam, 2012).

The bridging of secondary courses to higher education keeps students interested in their field, and shows them how they can be successful at each level of education. It gives them experience in the world of college even before they enter college, which builds familiarity and a basic understanding of how colleges and universities operate. This experience will build confidence so these students can manage the demands of higher education. They can learn not only about how colleges function, but also about the specifics of housing, tuition, financial aid, and special programs that can support them in their college life (Karp, 2012).

One last thought is the courses that prospective college students take while in high school should not be taken just because they are on the list of requirements that are checked off, but courses should be taken that give authenticity to the learning experiences. Having dual enrollment courses that give valuable experience to prospective college students in secondary school and later college, lend authentic support their future careers. Quality experiential programs and courses support the student needs for long-range goals in education, and create a fit for the student in modern day societal and economic world of (Darche & Stam, 2012).

Dual Enrollment Courses/Programs

In the states of New York with their College Now dual enrollment programs, North Carolina's Early College High Schools programs (Hoffman, Vargas & Santos, 2009; Allen, & Dadgar, 2012), and Florida's dual enrollment programs, the support for the paths of early college learning has been well developed. As Khazem & Khazem stated in their article 'Dual Enrollment: The Way Forward', published in 2013: "Dual enrollment is a successful acceleration learning mechanism...[that] reduces the average time-to-degree and increases the likelihood of graduation...[all the while increasing] academic performance and educational attainment." Dual enrollment operates through articulation agreements between the high school and the postsecondary school, there needs to be on-going communication between the institutions to ensure continuity, and to ensure the bridge to early college learning is efficacious.

Dual enrollment is one of the educational options that has received a great deal of attention in past years due to the fact that it is seen as a path to accelerated learning within a specific focus or area of study (Khazem, & Khazem, 2012). Dual enrollment differs from other accelerated options such as International Baccalaureate (IB) Advanced Placement (AP), and College Board Examinations, in that dual enrollment offers authentic learning experiences through courses/programs in the high school student's chosen field, which is referred to as early college, then later in when the student enters college. Dual enrollment is seen a great deal in the fields of teaching, nursing, and social work (Darche & Stam, 2012). An shares in his article 'The Role of Academic Motivation and Engagement on the Relationship Between Dual Enrollment and Academic Performance' (2015) that in 2002-03 1.1 million students in high schools were enrolled in dual credit courses. However the most recent findings show that in 2010-11, the enrollment of students in dual credit courses has almost doubled to almost 2 million students.

Dual enrollment has added value in that although the student is still in high school, he or she is treated as a college student, receives credit in both institutions, and has dual access in both high school and the college. For example, the student can use the college library if they so chose in order to have access to a wider resource base than what is offered in the high school library (Khazem & Khazem, 2012). Dual enrollment courses/programs also act as a socializing agent in the transitioning of high school students to becoming college students. Through the process of being in a college course, the student learns the tenets, dispositions, and normative rules of behavior of a successful college student. Later when that student enters college, they have already adopted their role as college student and are ready to deal with expectations of faculty, administration, and college life (An, 2015).

Looking at the history of dual enrollment course/program development, some institutions both at the secondary and higher education levels have questioned the rigor of these courses (Hofman & Voloch, 2012; Allen, & Dadger, 2012). However, this concern has been put to rest since it has been proven that dual enrollment courses/programs offer the same educational rigor as college level courses. For example when looking at the requirements of the faculty who teach dual enrollment courses, the faculty must have earned a Master's Degree as a minimum and some institutions require additional credit hours (Khazem & Khazem, 2014). The courses offered must be approved college level credited courses as described by college academic standards and policies.

Since high school achievement has reached permeation in American society today, a college degree is becoming the new norm of level of education that is needed today for a sufficient standard of living desired by most people. Dual enrollment helps in that if a student is taking college courses in high school it builds the momentum

for the transition to college. Studies show that pre-college experiences are key in the transition to college and completion of a degree (An, 2012; 2015). Also one sees a change in the disposition of students in a dual enrollment course/program. These students have a higher expectation of self and the work they do while in high school, because these courses are related to their future success. Since dual enrollment courses are related to their focus of study, they take a more analytical approach than they would in the general courses that are taken. Another view on the benefits of dual enrollment courses taken in the later years of high school, is that it reduces ‘senioritis’, and the need for remedial courses that those who have not taken dual enrollment courses might need to take in the beginning years of college (An, 2013). Students in their senior year of high school, who struggle in the final year of high school tend to feel less focused, and when they enter college in the fall, they have to take remedial courses that help them learn to adjust to the demands of college coursework and management of college life. Students who were in dual enrollment courses have learned self-accountability and can deal with academic expectations. This can be seen in the studies that show students who were in dual enrollment courses are more academically successful in college than those who were not in dual enrollment courses/programs (An, 2012; Karp, 2012).

Some states see dual enrollment courses/programs as a way to recover high school dropouts, and help students who lag behind in the number of credits they have earned (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009). It is suggested that a greater array of young people can be successful college students, even if they did not consider themselves ‘college material’ before, through dual enrollment courses/programs. Since the numbers of students taking dual enrollment courses has doubled (An, 2015), the possibility of the underrepresented population of high school students, are the focus of many dual enrollment programs. In the past it was community colleges that led the way in offering accelerated learning. However four-year colleges and universities are seeking to build or expand accelerated learning to help dropouts and those who lag behind in order to give them a bridge to their future through dual enrollment. Special programs have been developed for students on the dual enrollment pathway, to ensure a greater chance of success through college preparation, and to provide study skills to guide the students who have not had experiences that support them in the beginning college years. Not only are there programs available to help with study skills, but also with other non-academic skills which students need to be successful in college.

Local Flavor of Dual Enrollment

At a mid-western university, the College of Education (COE), Department of Teacher Education (TED) has been offering an Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment course since the spring of 2010. The process of bringing this course to fruition started with a TED administrator from the COE, along with eight teachers from the surrounding metropolitan community. These teachers who taught a similar course in their high schools, to the dual enrollment course that was being developed at the university, were valuable in the development of the dual enrollment course. This course was developed with certain stipulations such as the course description, justification, objectives, content and structure, and guiding resources. The course was reviewed by the TED department, the COE, as well as by the academic standards and policies committee through various procedures during the spring and fall semesters of 2009.

When this course was first offered as a dual enrollment course there were four metropolitan schools that met the requirements set up for the approval of this Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment course. The course had to cover the approved syllabus, and it had to have a teacher who met the minimum of having a Master’s degree in order to meet the university’s basic requirements of those who teach in higher education, as adjunct faculty. During that first academic year there were 25 students enrolled in the Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment course. Currently there are 8 schools that offer the approved Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment course, and approximately 269 students who have taken the course since that time.

When viewing the table below, we see that the spring semester has the largest enrollment for the Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment course. Even though this dual enrollment course has only been offered for fewer than five years through the university, it continues to grow through the increasing numbers of schools that now offer the approved course. Several schools that began offering the dual enrollment course already had well-developed courses/programs, and the high school faculty of these schools were essential in developing the dual enrollment course and in updating the dual enrollment course through the university. Changes and continued growth in this dual enrollment course prevail for these and other high schools that want to offer the Introduction to Teaching as a dual enrollment course. For example one of the recently approved schools is negotiating arrangements to go beyond the Introduction to Teaching course, by developing an academy to expand the experience for students taking the dual enrollment course, and including other fields other than education.

When the dual enrollment course was first offered through the university, the credit hours were only offered as general credit hours when the students entered college, therefore the dual enrollment course was not offered as a substitution for any specific course. However, for the fall 2015 semester, the Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment course taken at the approved schools through this university, will have the option to substitute this course taken while in high school for the required college course Educational Foundations in TED. Since this change has been instituted the University Dual Enrollment Coordinator projects that there will be an increase of the number of students taking the course from this university.

Introduction to Teaching Dual Enrollment Metro and Surrounding Area Schools

Year	Student Enrollment, Spring	Student Enrollment, Fall	Schools Offering Course/Program
2010	25		4 (2 urban, 2 suburban)
2011	37	20	6 (3 urban, 3 suburban)
2012	39	6	7 (3 urban, 3 suburban, 1 rural)
2013	37	8	7 (3 urban, 3 suburban, 1 rural)
2014	34	16	7 (3 urban, 3 suburban, 1 rural)
2015	37		8 (4 urban, 3 suburban, 1 rural)
Totals	209	50	

Two instructional coaches from TED surveyed the eight schools to determine how the various schools offered the Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment courses/programs. The teaching coaches were surveying the similarities and how these courses and programs varied. The survey was based on a set of basic questions for the survey. These questions were:

1. Does your high school offer a complete Introduction to Teaching Dual Enrollment program or a course(s) dedicated to this topic?
2. What is the length of your program or course(s)? (How many days a week, weeks in a semester, semester in a year, and number of years?)
3. What are the other courses that must be taken in conjunction with the Introduction to Teaching course?
4. What are the program or course(s) entry requirements? (I.e. GPA, grade level/age, student educational focus, etc.).
5. What are the major topics that are covered in this course?
6. What are the major assignments that must be completed for a student to successfully pass this course? (I.e. Class room observations, Speaker reviews,

When looking at the results from these surveys, the four schools that were suburban or rural were grouped together and the four urban schools were grouped together.

Suburban and Rural Schools Survey Results

The largest of the suburban schools surveyed that offer Introduction to Teaching as a dual enrollment course represents a total 2013-14 enrollment of 23, 549 students, and is comprised of three high schools. The students are recruited and interviewed for the consolidated program to represent the school district's Education Academy. Each year a total of 25 juniors are accepted into the Academy, from a pool of nearly 75 applicants. The Introduction to Education dual enrollment course is part of an extensive program where students can earn up to 27 college credits in courses integrated with educational topics such as English Composition, Speech, Research Methods, and Psychology. The Introduction to Education dual enrollment course is offered daily in a 90-minute extended time block, with various topics and field experience opportunities offered within the academy during the Junior and Senior years. This academy participates in the state affiliated Future Educators Association and invites many educational professionals to speak to their group.

The other two suburban schools offering an Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment program are in the same school district, with a 2013-14 enrollment of 10,753 students. Each year 10-15 students are selected from each high school to participate in the Education Academy program. The Introduction to Education dual enrollment course is year-long with an optional second year internship held in the district's elementary or middle schools. The Introduction to Education dual enrollment course is offered daily in a 53-minute time block and includes course curriculum, speakers, classroom observation, and a mentoring program for elementary students in the district. While the curriculum of this academy has gone through transitions over the ten years since it was adopted, the curriculum collaboration with other partnering Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment programs in the area has solidified a strong foundation of educational content including history, governance, ethics, cultural competence, and an introduction to effective teaching practices related to planning, management, assessment, and instruction.

The only rural school surveyed has particular qualities that differ from many of the other Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment courses/programs in the area. The district enrollment is approximately 1,805 students, and the Introduction to Education dual enrollment semester course on a sporadic basis due to low enrollment, therefore when the enrollment is higher the course can be offered to the students. Along with the Introduction to Education dual enrollment course students are offered two courses in Early Childhood Education. This course, when it is offered, is for a daily 94 minute extended time block during the semester, and includes opportunities for students to observe teaching and learning in the community.

Urban School Survey Results

Of the four urban schools surveyed, three of the schools are within the largest school district in the state with enrollment of 51, 069 students. The Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment course is offered in 3 of the 7 district high schools and while much of the curriculum has recently been aligned, the organization of the courses are quite diverse. While two of the participating schools offer the year-long course daily for 42-minute time blocks, the third school is able to offer the course for 90-minutes time block, everyday, all year. While all of the schools have field experience and observation opportunities, the frequency of those opportunities are also varied with in the Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment course. Due to their block scheduling the school is able to spend the final nine weeks of the second semester in a classroom setting, while the other schools only ten days total for the year in elementary and middle schools. Fortunately, along with the Introduction to Teaching dual enrollment course during the junior year, students have an option to take a senior internship, where they are able to assist classroom teacher for 90 minute time block each day, for the entire school year. In addition to these opportunities students within the district have other coursework that is not required, but very relevant to their interest in teaching, learning, and working with children. These courses include Human Growth and Development, and several levels of Child Development.

The other urban school has only one high school in that district, with approximately 2000 students enrolled. Their Introduction to Education dual enrollment course is offered in the fall semester, for one semester, three days a week. Two classes have a 40-minute time block, while the third class lasts for two and a half hours that is for practicum observations. In order to take the Introduction to Education dual enrollment course, students must also take Child Development, which they must pass with a C or better. The student must also be a junior or senior, have access to transportation, and be interested in teaching. Major topics in their course include dispositions, history of schools and education, classroom management, diverse learners, child development theories in review, assessment, classroom and school layout. They also include a section called "The Next Step" which entails creating resumes,

completing mock interviews, and going on college visits. Major assignments at this school include practicum site observation assignments, a Philosophy of Teaching paper, and a lesson plan.

Implication for Schools

Dual enrollment is not the answer to all of the issues of preparing students for early college years or for helping students in high school to stay motivated and to stay in school, but it is an opportunity to help with those who are challenged when learning. Dual enrollment is not always easy to implement due to the critical communications needed between the partners from the high school and college where negotiations are sometimes a struggle. If any stakeholder in this endeavor fails to complete their role, whether it is the student, faculty, high school or college administrator, then this course/program will not be successful. It behooves these stakeholders to construct a dual enrollment course/program and set up a management system that can ensure success for students and the institutions.

Hofman and Voloch state in their chapter ‘Dual Enrollment as a Liminal Space (2012), that dual enrollment could develop in such a way “to make the border between high school and college more permeable (rather than better policed)”p 103. While high schools are struggling to determine what can be done to make sure students are college-ready through key competencies, colleges struggle with what college teaching should look like in dual enrollment courses/programs. What should the rigor of the content be, what should the specific courses be in a particular area of study in dual enrollment, and what type of scaffolding or support should be offered for these early college students are questions that should be asked.

Dual enrollment proponents need to also define their view of college-ready students, and ask themselves what is the true focus of college and career readiness is for these students. As far as the focus and direction of high schools and colleges, these institutions have always had considered preparatory institutions for individuals’ lives. Will dual enrollment courses/programs be able to reach the greater number of students from various social economic levels to assist these individuals as they try to improve their futures through education? As societal needs change, will these institutions meet the needs of society to better the lives of individuals? These are thoughts that continue to be expressed while these institutions try to define their place in society.

The curriculum and instruction of schools from secondary through college need to have more authentic delivery, assessments, and professional development as a part of their curriculum so that students can have a smooth bridge through their education to their future. The success of these types of programs can be seen in the students feeling competent in their chosen areas and for many students, that was the first time in their lives that they felt real responsibility and success (Darch & Stam, 2012). It was the success they felt that kept these students motivated and remained in the courses even though the courses were challenging.

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