

Illinois P-20 Network Dual Credit Think Tank

Strategies to Support Dual Credit Teacher Credentialing

Policy Brief - July 2022

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of dual credit offerings has been a primary goal for school districts across the State of Illinois. The focus on expanding early college course availability in high schools, and specifically dual credit courses, has caused educational leaders to collaborate on identifying solutions to increase access for students. There are many barriers to achieving this expansion of dual credit courses, which range from school size and its impact on how many offerings can be provided to students, the availability of resources necessary for equipment and materials, ensuring that high school teachers have the necessary academic credentials, and meeting the expectations of postsecondary partner institutions and the Higher Learning Commission.

Advocates have pointed to policy improvements as one mechanism to address these challenges. In early 2020, the Illinois Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACEP), in partnership with the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) and the College in High School Alliance, convened state and local dual credit stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of policies across six categories, including but not limited to – program integrity and credit transfer, finance, course access and availability, and instructor capacity. The [Illinois Dual Credit Report](#) assessed dual credit-related policies and offered recommendations to modify or institute additional policies that would improve access and quality of programming throughout the State. Based on this policy landscape analysis and feedback from secondary and postsecondary educators, the issue of instructor capacity has been deemed a critical barrier that partnerships must work to overcome - especially in light of the ongoing crisis of teacher shortages.

The situations contributing to the limited availability of high school dual credit teachers are multifaceted. One roadblock with increasing the number of credentialed teachers is the inconsistent interpretation and practices used to review instructors' experience and credentials per regional, state, and local policies. In the State of Illinois, prospective dual credit teachers must meet the minimum qualifications to teach as determined by the [Higher Learning Commission](#). The Higher Learning Commission, as well as Illinois legislation, offers various options for teachers to meet the minimum requirements ([Determining Qualified Faculty Through HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices](#); [Illinois Dual Credit Quality Act](#)). Another contributing factor is the limitation of resources available to support teachers to complete the required additional coursework and/or training to meet the minimum qualifications. Most recently, the College in High School Alliance, in collaboration with other leading national organizations, released a report with recommendations that specifically addressed how school districts could commit to providing support for potential dual credit teachers to attain their dual credit accreditation - [Building a Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Pipeline: Opportunities, Challenges, & Lessons](#).

A key recommendation noted in both reports is the opportunity for school districts to provide financial support and incentives to high school teachers to help them complete additional coursework or training to be fully credentialed to teach dual credit classes. Related to this recommendation, in January 2022, the Illinois P-20 Network Dual Credit Think Tank launched a statewide survey that asked school districts to share information about their collective bargaining contract language, school district policies, and school district practices, including administrative procedures, designed to support and encourage teachers to attain the credentialing requirements to teach dual credit courses.

SURVEY OVERVIEW

The survey was disseminated via multiple communication channels, including the Illinois P-20 Network's regular newsletter and through social media channels, as well as through ILACEP's quarterly newsletter. A total of 17 respondents (15 school districts, 1 private school, 1 community college) representing 4 regions (Lake County, McHenry County, Northern Kane, North Cook) participated in the survey.

Questions

- Do you currently have language in your collective bargaining agreement that is designed to support teachers with completing additional coursework for additional licensure?
- Is there any Board Policy in place in your school district designed to support teachers with completing additional coursework for additional licensure?
- Are there any regular practices that your school district maintains that are designed to support teachers with completing additional coursework for additional licensure?

Results and Themes

The results showed that the majority of school districts' collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) include language that supports teachers completing additional coursework *and* incentivizes them to teach dual credit courses. The information revealed two themes associated with how school districts support their teachers:

1. Schools offer various levels of **financial support in the form of reimbursement** for the costs associated with the teacher's completion of additional coursework.
2. Schools offer various levels of **financial incentives to encourage teachers to teach** dual credit courses.

Both are clear indicators of school districts' commitment to increasing opportunities for their students to participate and diversify their course selection with high-value classes. Furthermore, the school districts' positions to provide these types of support coincide directly with both state and national best practices.

At this point, it's important to pause and consider, once again, the geographic origin of the survey responses. Not only were all of the responses from Suburban Chicagoland, but they were specifically from Chicago's North and Northwest Suburbs. While the schools in these regions are very demographically diverse with regards to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, students' racial and ethnic backgrounds, and as it relates to the socioeconomic levels of students' families, school districts in this region tend to be well-funded in comparison to school districts across Illinois. Additionally, the fact that these school districts responded to this survey is also an indicator that their level of investment in dual credit, in terms of time, energy, and money, is significant. This does not invalidate the survey in any way as it was not intended to be a landscape analysis but rather to identify best practices that could be replicated in other school districts across Illinois. With that said, if the best practices require financial resources, it is conceivable that many other districts across Illinois will have difficulty being able to fund such efforts. This question will require additional investigation from the Illinois P-20 Network and other groups interested in supporting efforts to increase the number of high school teachers credentialed to teach dual credit classes in Illinois.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Financial Assistance for Completing Additional Coursework

School districts should include language into their collective bargaining agreements that provides teachers with the full or partial reimbursement of the cost associated with the completion of additional coursework that leads to attaining the required credentials to teach dual credit coursework. If reimbursement is not an available option, then school districts could provide teachers with a stipend as an alternative.

The process should ensure that the district and teacher collaborate on identifying the coursework, or program, that meets the requirements to teach the dual credit course/s aligned to the instructor's discipline. This will likely require a school or district administrator that is knowledgeable about dual credit in Illinois and is responsible for working closely with the community college on issues related to dual credit. Due to the unique intricacies of managing a dual credit program, it should be acknowledged that smaller school districts in Illinois may lack the resources to identify an administrator that can provide leadership amongst other key responsibilities. In such cases, districts should explore a collaborative hire of a shared position through a Regional Office of Education or some other arrangement.

Furthermore, it is highly recommended that school districts understand the language included in the Higher Learning Commission standards and convene with their partnered postsecondary institutions for confirmation on the required minimum qualifications to teach. Lastly, in planning for future dual credit courses, it is recommended that school districts are mindful of the [ISBE Dual Credit Endorsements](#) for the nine specified content areas, which are intended to ensure the portability of teachers' credentials across the State regardless of a postsecondary institution's independent review.

A few examples of this type of contract, policy, or procedure language shared from the field are listed below:

- "School pays 100% Master's program tuition for content area degree towards teaching dual credit; this includes a second Master's."
- "Up to 100% but not less than \$350 per semester hour tuition reimbursement with the percentage determined at the discretion of the District for any coursework which the district requests an employee to complete."
- "\$165 per credit hour for a maximum of 9 credit hours per fiscal year. Tier I is defined as Reading, Core Content Area (i.e. English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science) Industrial Technology, Bilingual Special Education, Early Childhood Special Education, School Counseling and English as a Second Language."

Financial Incentives for Teaching Dual Credit Coursework

School districts should include language into their Collective Bargaining Agreements that provides teachers with a financial incentive in the form of a stipend for teaching selected dual coursework - including the planning, training, and communication that is required in collaboration with the partnered postsecondary institution. The process for instituting this additional incentive should be collaborative and align with the school district's college and career pathway development. Dual credit courses - within career-focused course sequences - that meet the requirements of the College and Career Pathway Endorsement should be prioritized whenever possible.

Examples shared from the field via the survey are listed below:

- “Dual Credit teachers earn an annual stipend of \$5000; paid out only once per year, regardless of number of sections or type/length of class.”
- “Staff who currently teach a dual enrollment class are given a \$200 stipend to teach the class because of additional paperwork involved with the class.”

CONCLUSION

School districts have an invaluable opportunity to leverage their collective bargaining agreements as a key strategy to align with their priority to increase dual credit offerings in their high schools. By implementing language that specifically encourages, guides, and supports teachers to enroll in additional coursework that leads to their credentialing to teach dual credit courses, school districts reinforce the importance of diversifying early college credit programming. Such policies, procedures, and practices also establish an opportunity to steer teachers to enroll in a master's program that aligns with their discipline, while limiting teachers who would otherwise automatically be inclined to select a master's in curriculum and instruction or other education specialties. This does not mean that school districts should not support teachers earning master's degrees in key licensure shortage areas, such as special education; counseling, social work, school psychology; teaching students learning English; and administration. Moreover, incentivizing teachers who are credentialed to teach dual credit courses will further their involvement and direct contribution towards expanding future opportunities in other disciplines. It is also a strategy to ensure dual credit courses are included in the Career Pathway course sequence as part of the College and Career Pathway Endorsement. Prioritizing and sustaining dual credit courses supports students by offering meaningful and transferrable early college credit as well as supporting Illinois' now mandated College and Career Pathway Endorsement initiative.