

Understanding Access to and Participation in Dual Enrollment by Locale and Income Level

By providing high school students with an opportunity to take college courses and earn college credits while in high school, dual enrollment programs effectively increase college access, enrollment, and degree attainment.¹ Such programs might be particularly beneficial for high school students who might be less likely to go to college, including students from rural areas and low-income households. Given the comparatively rural geography of the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Central region, stakeholders need a comprehensive resource for understanding dual enrollment access and participation in their states in order to support the identification of strategies to expand opportunities for college and career preparation.

This study examined patterns in dual enrollment program provision and participation for the 2017/18 school year in the REL Central states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming) and the region overall and compared them with national data. The study also explored how dual enrollment access and participation varied with school characteristics, including school locale (city, suburban, town, or rural) and percentage of students from low-income households.

Key findings

- **In the Regional Educational Laboratory Central region, high school students in rural and city locales tended to have lower dual enrollment access than students in town and suburban locales did, while students in rural, town, and suburban locales had higher dual enrollment participation than their peers in city locales did.** In Colorado, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, rural locales had the lowest percentage of students attending high schools that provided dual enrollment (84 percent in Colorado, 92 percent in Nebraska, 90 percent in North Dakota, 88 percent in South Dakota, and 73 percent in Wyoming). In all these states except North Dakota, rural locales also had the lowest percentage of high schools providing dual enrollment (73 percent in Colorado, 85 percent in Nebraska, 80 percent in South Dakota, and 69 percent in Wyoming). Rural locales had the highest percentage of students participating in dual enrollment in Wyoming (41 percent), Missouri (33 percent), and Nebraska (32 percent).
- **On average, high schools in town locales in the REL Central region provided higher dual enrollment access than did high schools in rural, suburban, and city locales.** Across the region high schools in town locales (89 percent) were more likely to provide at least one dual enrollment course than were high schools in other locales (83 percent in rural and suburban locales and 71 percent in city locales).
- **High schools with high percentages of students from low-income households were more likely than high schools with low percentages of students from low-income households to provide dual enrollment.** In the REL Central region schools with the highest percentages of students from low-income households had higher dual enrollment access and participation than did schools with the lowest percentages of students from low-income households. However, although schools serving students from low-income households usually provided dual enrollment, the data did not enable analysis of how many students from low-income households actually participated in dual enrollment.

1. What Works Clearinghouse. (2017). *Dual enrollment programs*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED572842>.