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## **POLICY RESEARCH BRIEF**

### **Dual Enrollment & Advanced Placement: Preparing More Limited-Income Students For Success In College**

Many high schools throughout Florida are celebrating the improvement of their school letter grade after results of a new high school grading formula were recently released by the Florida Department of Education. The revised formula includes measures that account for how well schools are preparing students for college-level work. The new accountability system awards points for student participation in acceleration programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Dual Enrollment as well as student performance on college-readiness exams such as the SAT, ACT, and the CPT. With burgeoning student participation in AP in Florida during the last ten years, not only have more students gained access to advanced high school instruction through AP, but high schools are now being rewarded for it by the state's revised accountability system. Over 70% of Florida's high schools received an A or B grade last week, in part, because of increased student access to AP.

Despite Florida's success with AP, legislators are now beginning to ask tough questions about Florida's investment in the College Board curriculum and whether or not the benefits outweigh the costs. In a recent St. Petersburg Times article, Rep. John Legg was quoted saying the state is now looking for "a better financial deal."<sup>1</sup> With the Florida Legislature now facing an estimated \$3 billion revenue shortfall, tough decisions to balance the state's budget are on the horizon. The Advanced Placement program could be at risk of losing key funding while legislators look to other less expensive acceleration program options such as Dual Enrollment.

ENLACE Florida, in transition to become the Florida College Access Network, has supported the expansion of AP in Florida believing that it has been an effective tool for rapidly expanding much-needed access to rigor for all high school students, particularly limited income and minority students. In fact, more Hispanic students in Florida today are passing AP exams than ever before completely eliminating the achievement gap for Hispanics within the program.<sup>2</sup> ENLACE Florida has also emphasized in previous reports that "AP is not Florida's college-readiness solution."<sup>3</sup> Over the years we have urged policy-makers in Florida to infuse the basic high school curriculum with more rigorous and relevant college-prep course work. With the recent passage of Senate Bill 4, which raises high school graduation requirements, and with Florida's participation in the national Common Core Standards initiative, we are well on our way to providing all students in Florida with access to rigor. With this in mind, the future of acceleration programs in Florida should no longer be rooted in simple access, but in how well students perform in these courses and the level to which such programs prepare our students for college success. It is time for Florida to become more intentional about diversifying student participation in acceleration programs. Florida's lagging economy presents an opportunity to expand access to other low-cost acceleration programs that prove to be just as effective as AP in preparing students for college success.

For this policy brief, ENLACE Florida compares the participation, college continuation, and college-readiness rates of Florida high school graduates taking Advanced Placement their senior year with Florida high school graduates taking a Dual Enrollment course their senior year. This brief is produced in an effort to better understand which acceleration program is more likely to result in Florida graduates entering college immediately following graduation ready for college-level work. While the AP program has received more attention and funding throughout the state, the data indicate that Dual Enrollment is equally effective (if not more so) in preparing high school students for success in college. However, neither program should be the target of budget cuts at a time when the state economy demands that more high school graduates go on to earn a quality post-secondary degree or certificate.

## PURPOSE OF THE ACCELERATION PROGRAMS: AP and DUAL ENROLLMENT

According to the Florida Legislature’s Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA), acceleration programs “are intended to shorten the time it takes for a student to complete college degree requirements, broaden the scope of curricular options available to students, and/or increase the depth of study available for a particular subject.”<sup>4</sup>

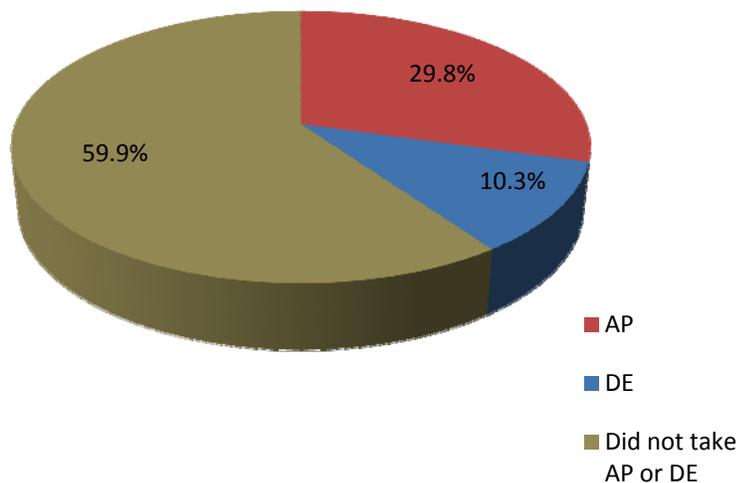
The AP program is designed to provide students with access to advanced high school instruction with an opportunity to earn college credit. Students participating in AP can earn college credit by earning the requisite score on a corresponding AP exam. Generally, school-based leadership determines a student’s eligibility for participation in the program by using Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) scores. All 10<sup>th</sup> graders attending public school in Florida are given the opportunity to take the PSAT free of charge.

Dual Enrollment provides an opportunity for high school students to earn both high school and college credit by enrolling in a course administered by a community college or university. Under current law, public high school students must: (1) pass the College Placement Test (CPT), and (2) be recommended by a guidance counselor or principal. In order to receive college-credit, students must pass the Dual Enrollment course.

## PARTICIPATION IN AP & DUAL ENROLLMENT

Across the state, AP is by far the more popular acceleration program. In 2008-2009, 45,541 graduates took an AP course their senior year compared to 15,754 graduates who took a Dual Enrollment course. With 152,546 graduates in Florida that school year, that amounts to 29.8% of all graduates taking at least one AP course and 10.3% taking a Dual Enrollment course (See Figure 1) their senior year. Nearly 60% of graduates that year did not participate in either AP or Dual Enrollment their senior year.

**Figure 1:  
Percentage of High School Graduates  
Participating in Advanced Placement and  
Dual Enrollment Programs their Senior  
Year in 2008-2009**



Source: Florida Department of Education

As shown in Table 1, the majority (51%) of Florida high school graduates in 2008-09 were not eligible for free or reduced lunch, while 35% of graduates were considered limited-income and eligible for free or reduced lunch.

**Table 1:**  
**2008-09 Florida High School Graduates<sup>1</sup> by Family Income Status<sup>2</sup> As Determined by the Federal Free & Reduced Lunch Program**

Total Number of Graduates <sup>1</sup>	NOT Free or Reduced Priced Lunch <sup>2</sup>		Free or Reduced Price Lunch <sup>2</sup>		Unknown <sup>2</sup>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
152,546	77,952	51%	53,216	35%	21,378	14%

<sup>1</sup>Graduates Award Codes used are the NGA codes (W06, W07, W27, W43, WFW, WFT, W6A, W6B, WFA, WFB, W52)

<sup>2</sup>Lunch Status determined in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Source: Florida Department of Education

Participation rates of Florida graduates in AP or Dual Enrollment their senior year varied by income status. Of the 45,541 graduates who took at least one AP course their senior year in 2008-09, 24.6% qualified for free or reduced lunch while 60.7% did not qualify for free or reduced lunch (See Table 2).

Of the graduates who took at least one Dual Enrollment course their senior year, 18.7% qualified for free or reduced lunch while 66.8% did not qualify for free or reduced lunch. This presents a significant equity gap in terms of student participation in acceleration programs by family income-status.

**Table 2:**  
**Percentage of Florida High School Graduates<sup>1</sup> Taking AP or Dual Enrollment Their Senior Year by Income Status<sup>2</sup> for 2008-2009**

Advanced Placement		Dual Enrollment	
29.8% (45,541/152,546)		10.3% (15,754/152,546)	
Free or Reduced Lunch	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	Free or Reduced Lunch	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch
24.6% (11,226/45,541)	60.7% (27,682/45,541)	18.7% (2,959/15,754)	66.8% (10,530/15,754)

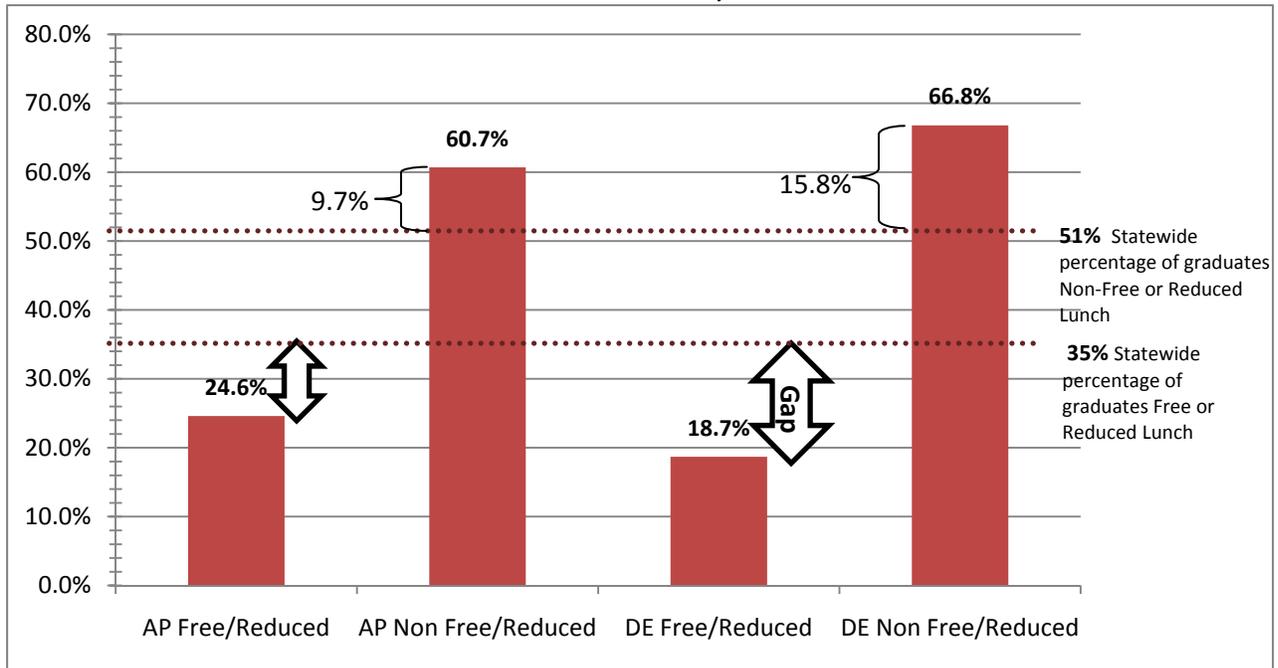
<sup>1</sup>Graduates Award Codes used are the NGA codes (W06, W07, W27, W43, WFW, WFT, W6A, W6B, WFA, WFB, and W52)

<sup>2</sup>Lunch Status determined in 8th Grade; Source: Florida Department of Education

As shown in Figure 2, Florida high school graduates who qualified for free or reduced lunch were underrepresented in both AP and Dual Enrollment courses their senior year. For AP, these graduates were underrepresented by 10.4 percentage points while non-free or reduced lunch graduates were overrepresented by 9.7 percentage points in relation to the statewide percentage of high school graduates in Florida.

For Dual Enrollment, high school graduates who qualified for free or reduced lunch were underrepresented by 16.3 percentage points while non-free or reduced lunch graduates were significantly overrepresented in Dual Enrollment courses by 20.2 percentage points.

**Figure 2:**  
**Percentage of Florida High School Graduates<sup>1</sup> Taking AP or Dual Enrollment their Senior Year by Income Status Compared to Overall Statewide Percentage of Florida High School Graduate Income Status, 2008-09**



<sup>1</sup>Graduates Award Codes used are the NGA codes (W06, W07, W27, W43, WFW, WFT, W6A, W6B, WFA, WFB, and W52)

For the high school graduates of 2008-09 who did not qualify for free or reduced lunch and did participate in at least one AP or Dual Enrollment course their senior year, the likelihood that they would immediately enroll in a community college or 4-year university and be college-ready was significantly high across the board at 86% for AP participants and 89.6% for Dual Enrollment participants.

However, when comparing the college-continuation and readiness rates of limited-income graduates who participated in at least one of the programs their senior year, Dual Enrollment appears to be more effective with 78.9% of graduates immediately enrolling in a postsecondary institution college-ready compared to only 61.8% of graduates who participated in Advanced Placement.

**Table 3:**  
**Percentage of Florida Graduates<sup>1</sup> In 2008-09 Who Entered a 4-yr Higher Education Institution<sup>3</sup> or Community College Immediately Following Graduation & Were College-Ready As Measured by SAT, ACT, or CPT**

Graduates who took at least one AP course their senior year		Graduates who took at least one DE course their senior year	
Free/Reduced Lunch <sup>2</sup>	Non Free/Reduced	Free/Reduced Lunch	Non Free/Reduced
Immediately Enrolled & College-Ready: <b>61.8%</b> (6944/11,226)	Immediately Enrolled & College-Ready: <b>86%</b> (23,815/27,682)	Immediately Enrolled & College-Ready: <b>78.9%</b> (2,334/2,959)	Immediately Enrolled & College-Ready: <b>89.6%</b> (9,436/10,530)

<sup>1</sup>Graduates Award Codes used are the NGA codes (W06, W07, W27, W43, WFW, WFT, W6A, W6B, WFA, WFB, and W52)

<sup>2</sup>Lunch Status determined in 8th Grade

<sup>3</sup>4 Year Higher Education Institution includes State University System and Independent Colleges and Universities (ICUF). ICUF enrollments determined by FRAG disbursements.

## THE COST OF AP vs. DUAL ENROLLMENT

School districts receive state funding for the AP and Dual Enrollment programs through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). The FEFP program was enacted in 1973 by the Florida Legislature and is the primary mechanism for funding the operating cost of local school districts. Under the program, school districts are allocated a set dollar amount, differentiated per school district, for every full-time equivalent student.

Students who enroll in AP or Dual Enrollment are included in their school districts' full-time equivalent (FTE) student count for FEFP funding purposes. Florida community colleges and universities also receive funding through the FTE count for students participating in Dual Enrollment at their institution.

On top of the regular FEFP funding provided to districts, Florida provides incentive funding to districts for student performance on AP examinations. For every student who passes an AP exam with a score of 3 or higher, districts receive additional state funding used for teacher bonuses or to cover AP examination fees. For 2009-10, approximately \$50.5 million has been allocated to districts for incentive funding based on student performance on AP and other acceleration program exams the prior year.

In addition to FEFP funding and incentive funding, the Florida Legislature has also traditionally allocated state dollars for the Florida Partnership with the College Board. Part of these dollars cover costs associated with Florida AP teacher training, AP summer institutes, curriculum development, and AP Virtual School exam preparation. For fiscal year 2009-10, the Legislature appropriated \$4.1 million to the partnership.

In contrast, the Dual Enrollment program appears to be a much less expensive acceleration option for the state. In 2008-09, Florida paid \$627 per semester for each student participating in a dual enrollment class. For Florida high school graduates taking a dual enrollment course their senior year in 2008-09, this totaled approximately \$8.8 million.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment acceleration programs are equally effective in providing student participants with access to advanced coursework. As this policy brief highlights, they are also effective tools that ensure graduates immediately continue on to college and are prepared for college-level work when they get there. However, the costs of implementing both programs are noticeably different.

Florida should not slow the expansion of acceleration programs in Florida nor should we look to move backwards by reducing access to AP. Instead we should begin to look closely at diversifying acceleration program offerings beyond AP as a strategy to reduce overall costs. The Dual Enrollment program is a great place to look.

As shown in Table 3 of this report, Dual Enrollment appears to have a slight edge over AP in terms of the likelihood a limited-income graduate who participates in the program their senior year immediately enrolls in a postsecondary institution without the need for remedial work. While AP and Dual Enrollment differ in terms of which students are eligible to participate, *college-continuation* and *readiness* are the true metrics by which any acceleration program should be measured for effectiveness. While there's value in participation, it's not enough to justify high costs over low-cost alternatives that are just as effective if not more effective. This is especially true during a time when rigor will be a requirement for *all* students as higher graduation requirements are phased-in over time through SB 4. The more high school graduates that enroll in a Florida postsecondary institution without the need for remediation, the more savings Florida will realize.

- Florida should work to expand Dual Enrollment course offerings to high school seniors in all districts, particularly limited-income seniors who are currently underrepresented as participants.

- Florida should also consider significantly expanding current efforts underway to provide high school seniors, who pass one section of the CPT, with access to community college remediation courses in math, reading, and writing during their senior year. This will help reduce the percentage of graduates who require remediation upon entering a college or university.
- The lion's share of Florida's Dual Enrollment participants are enrolled in one of Florida's community colleges or FCS institutions (90%). Florida should consider expanding participant access in Dual Enrollment to SUS institutions and ICUF institutions.
- Florida should do more to insure Dual Enrollment is being promoted to students and families at the district and school level as a viable acceleration program and a good alternative to AP. Incentive funding for AP is likely to undercut the promotion and implementation of Dual Enrollment since no incentive funding is tied to Dual Enrollment course participation or performance.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Ron Matus, "AP classes save families money, but for taxpayers the jury is out" *St. Petersburg Times*, Nov. 18, 2010
- <sup>2</sup> Frances Haithcock, Presentation: "College and Career Ready", Higher Education Coordinating Council, Dec. 14, 2010
- <sup>3</sup> "The Big Prize: A College-Prep Curriculum", ENLACE Florida Policy Brief, Vol. 3, Issue 6, December, 2009
- <sup>4</sup> "Acceleration Programs Provide Benefits But the Costs Are Relatively Expensive", OPPAGA, Report No. 06-24, March, 2006



ENLACE Florida promotes college-readiness, access, and success through research, communication, advocacy, and support with the BIG GOAL of increasing Florida's level of college degree attainment for working adults to 60 percent by 2025. [Read more](#) about Florida's BIG GOAL and our efforts to engage Florida's communities and future talent pool.



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