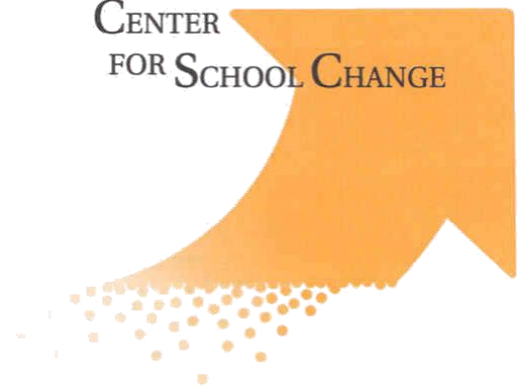


CENTER
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Dual Credit: Opportunity and Equity Indeed

By Joe Nathan, PhD

St. Paul, Minnesota

Center for School Change

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Dual Credit: Equity Indeed Executive Summary

Research shows that expanding dual credit participation can help Minnesota close major gaps in high school graduation and college/university certificate/diploma completion. This report describes steps that Minnesota could take to make progress. We also describe results of surveying a stratified random sample of 95 Minnesota districts and chartered public schools about their dual (high school/college credit) policies.

Key Findings:

- Minnesota's [PSEO law](#) requires that by March 1 or three weeks before students register, districts must provide "up to date" information on their website and in materials distributed to 8-11th grade students and their parents.
- 92 of 95 districts/charters did not provide all of the legislatively required "up to date" information about PSEO, such as the requirement that high schools must allow students to use their technology to take PSEO courses online.
- None of the 95 websites mention the revised notification schedule or online equity provisions adopted by the 2019 Minnesota state legislature.
- About half of 95 websites aren't providing other "up to date" information.
- Some of this information is not included in Minnesota Department of Education "PSEO recommended language" shared with schools.
- About 20 districts/charters have adopted policies or procedures that appear to be inconsistent with the PSEO legislation.
- About 60 percent of the 95 districts do not weight grades. Forty percent do.
- Weighting policies of dual credit courses vary widely. About 1/4 of districts weighting grades do not weight College in the Schools/concurrent enrollment.

Key Recommendations

- By February 1, 2020, MDE should revise, distribute and request that Mn public and advocacy groups share "up to date info" about PSEO
- By September 1, 2020, MDE should determine whether public schools have posted up to date information.

- MDE should review examples of questionable practices described in this report, determine which are inconsistent with state law and share this with educators.
- Districts/charters that aren't providing up to date information by November 2020 should face financial consequences.
- MDE should encourage schools to link on their website to [Minnesota Office of Higher Education report on college/university acceptance of dual credit courses](#).
- Districts and charters should treat all dual credit courses equally.
- Both district and chartered public schools should be eligible to create collaborate "early/middle college" collaborations with colleges. The Minnesota Legislature should modify existing legislation that permit only districts public schools to apply for "alternate program" status.
- Within 5 years, the Legislature should commission an independent evaluation of early/middle college programs. Best practices should be identified and shared.
- Some colleges/universities should be more flexible in allowing students to participate in College in the Schools/Concurrent Enrollment and PSEO program

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Table of Contents	3
Acknowledgements	4
Introduction	5
The Evolution of PSEO and other dual credit programs in Minnesota	8
Research Supporting PSEO and Other Dual Credit Programs	11
Information Sharing as a Key Issue	17
Summary of 2014 Report	18
Summary of 2015 Report	20
Summary of 2016 Report	23
Methodology	24

Results of 2019-2020 Research	25
Conclusion & Recommendations	33
References Cited	35
About the Author	40

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Introduction

Thirty-five years ago, in 1985, Minnesota adopted the Post-Secondary Options Act (PSEO). This law meant that Minnesota was the first state to allow its high school juniors and seniors to take all or part of their course-work at participating two and four year

public and private colleges and universities, with state funds following paying all tuition, lab and book fees. Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) allows Minnesota high school students to take college courses for free. Courses can be taken on a college campus or online

There have been revisions to the law, discussed below. Three of the most important have been

- Expanding the law to permit 10th graders to take one career technical course, and if they earn at least a C, permitting them to take additional courses.
- Requiring school districts and chartered public schools to provide “up to date” information about the law to 8th-11th grade students and their families prior to course registration or March 1, whichever comes first.
- Enabling high school students to take PSEO courses on line, using high school computers, wifi, etc.

As one of the original advocates for PSEO, the Center for School Change has tried to help assess, improve, refine and expand PSEO opportunities over the last three decades. From the beginning, a key issue has been ensuring that information about this opportunity is shared widely with families and students.

This report has several major parts:

- Introduction, key details of PSEO legislation and its evolution since being adopted in 1985
- Evolution of the PSEO Law.
- Summary of research about benefits of PSEO and other dual (high school/college) credit programs
- * Summary of previous CSC reports about PSEO.
- Methodology of the study conducted October 2019 – January 2020 of district and school websites (n=95), to determine how well educators are following provisions.
- * Findings
- Conclusions and Recommendations
- References cited

PSEO is one of several “dual credit” opportunities for Minnesota high school students to earn college credit. Other programs include Advanced Placement, concurrent enrollment, College in the Schools, Project Lead the Way and International Baccalaureate.

Center for School Change recognizes each of these programs is valuable. Additional details on dual credit programs, including student-produced videos in seven languages are available at <http://centerforschoolchange.org/dual-credit/>.

In 2014, the Minnesota legislature decided that by March 1 of each year, Minnesota public schools must provide “up to date information” on the district’s website and in materials distributed to parents and students in grades 8-11 about the PSEO program (MN Statute 124d.09)

The legislature modified that mandate in 2019, stipulating “By the earlier of (1) three weeks prior to the date by which a student must register for district courses for the following school year, or (2) March 1 of each year, a district must provide up-to-date information on the district's website and in materials that are distributed to parents and students about the program, including information about enrollment requirements and the ability to earn postsecondary credit to all pupils in grades 8, 9, 10, and 11.” (MN Statute 124d.09, subdivision 7)

This report describes how well a stratified random sample of 87 Minnesota district and charter high schools and eight additional districts are responding to this requirement. This report also describes the value of Minnesota’s pioneering, thirty-five-year-old Post-Secondary Enrollment Options law. The report shows the significant challenge facing students, families, community members and educators who want to learn about key components of this law. While research shows many benefits for participating, the challenge is obtaining accurate information. This challenge remains despite legislative efforts mandating that districts provide up to-date information to students and families.

This report also discusses the issue of grade weighting as it applies to various forms of dual (high school/college credit) enrollment in Minnesota.

Key details of the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) law

- High school students can take courses at public or private, two or four year colleges/universities
- 11th and 12th graders can do PSEO full or part time, if they are accepted at a college/university.
 - The PSEO law does not set any entrance requirements for 11th/12th grade PSEO students. It requires Minnesota’s public postsecondary institutions to participate in the PSEO program, and permit private institutions to participate
 - 10th graders who have passed the state’s eighth grade reading test or its equivalent can start by taking one career/technical education (CTE) course on a college campus. If 10th graders earn at least a C in their first CTE class, they can take additional courses.
 - College admission requirements vary. Some institutions will give students, regardless of their grade point average or class rank, the opportunity to try one or two courses.
 - Students may not take sectarian classes under PSEO.

- Students may not take remedial courses under PSEO unless they are enrolled in a state approved 'early college' program that includes such courses. These early college programs may be created by district public schools and public colleges. Chartered public schools may not create such programs.
 - Books, tuition and fees are free for PSEO students
 - Transportation funds are available to help students from low-income families travel to campuses for PSEO.
 - PSEO courses are also available online from some colleges and universities.
- * High schools are required to provide "up to date" information to 8-11th grade students and their families about PSEO, at least three weeks before students register for the following fall, or by March 1, whichever comes first.
- * High schools are required to provide their students with online access to PSEO courses.
- * Students are required to notify their high schools by May 30 if they plan to take PSEO courses during the following school year.

This report also discusses the issue of grade weighting as it applies to various forms of dual (high school/college credit) enrollment in Minnesota. The "weighting" of grades can have a significant impact on students' lives after high school. Dr. Walter Roberts, formerly a faculty member at Minnesota State University-Mankato who trained generations of school counselors, helps explain the importance of weighted grades.

As Roberts explained, weighting, or non-weighting of grades has an impact on students' grade point average and their class rank. Some scholarship programs are open only to students with a certain class rank (i.e. top 10%). Some colleges and universities use class rank to help determine whether to admit a student. (Roberts)

The report also examines other ways to increase successful participation in dual credit courses.

The Evolution of PSEO and other dual credit programs in Minnesota

Minnesota was the first state in the nation to allow high school students to enroll in public and private colleges/universities and high school at the same time, simultaneously earning high school credit and free college credit, with state funds following students, paying all tuition, book and required fees. In 1985, a diverse coalition helped to pass Minnesota's Postsecondary Enrollment Options program (PSEO). Initially, the law allowed participation only for high school juniors and seniors. When proposed, PSEO was controversial, though it generated bi-partisan support led by DFL Governor

Rudy Perpich, Minnesota House Majority Leader Connie Levi, Republican, and Senate Education Committee Chair Tom Nelson, DFL. Former Minnesota Governor Al Quie, a Republican, also became a strong, visible advocate (Mazzoni).

Several studies have described initial adoption of the PSEO law. (Mazzoni, 1986; Mazzoni, 1987; Boyd, Fitzpatrick and Nathan, 2002; Nathan, Accomando and Fitzpatrick, 2005). When Postsecondary Enrollment Options passed, it was controversial. The associate director of the Minnesota School Board Association was quoted in the national publication *Education Week* as asserting that the new law was “the most devastating piece of legislation in the past 20 or 30 years” (Wehrwein, 1985).

One of the state’s teachers’ union filed suit against PSEO, challenging its constitutionality. The Minnesota Court of Appeals ruled that the PSEO law is constitutional. (Court of Appeals, Minnesota, Minnesota Federation of Teachers v. Mammenga).

In 2012, the legislature and governor decided to expand PSEO to 10th graders. District and charter public high school students in 10th grade who have passed the state’s eighth grade reading test, and passed the appropriate entrance test at a public two-year college now are allowed to take one career technical class at a public, two-year institution. If students earned a “C” or higher in the first career-technical class, they are allowed to take additional courses (MS 124D.09 Subd 5a).

In 2014, the PSEO law was modified to require that school districts provide “up to date” information about PSEO on their website and materials provided to students and families (S 124D.08, Subd 7). The law also was modified to permit colleges and universities to provide information about PSEO directly to students and families if the students attended a high school enrolling at least 700 students in grades 10-12.

In 2015, PSEO was modified to allow continued participation in PSEO by a student “If a school district determines a pupil is not on track to graduate” (MS 124D.09, Subdivision 8).

In 2015, CSC, Minnesota Rural Education Association and Minnesota Association of School Administrators collaborated to increase legislative financial support for various form of College in the Schools and concurrent enrollment (courses taught in high schools, by high school teachers supervised by college faculty). Legislative was approved that increased financial support to high schools offering such courses. Funding also was provided to help create new CIS/CE courses in career/technical fields,

In 2018, there was a focus on whether PSEO students would be allowed to be in the high school building during the hours they're doing their college classwork or taking PSEO courses online. This came up because some students were being told they could not do so. Some students were told they must leave the school building during the hours they were not in class and were working on PSEO homework.

A news story reported, that some students "... go home and return to school later in the day. Others, who live on distant farms, must scramble to find a place to study online in a town with 1,300 people, no coffee shops and only one public Wi-Fi spot. With nowhere else to go, one student from a farm family went to the City Council and pleaded for special permission to hang out at City Hall to do her college coursework when the school forces her out." (Reinan).

The 2018 legislature decided school districts must allow students participating in PSEO to "remain at a school site during school hours." That same year, the legislature decided that a school district must allow students "reasonable access" to the computers and internet connections. The exact language is as follows:

"Subd. 11a. Access to building and technology.

(a) A school district must allow a student enrolled in a course under this section to remain at the school site during regular school hours.

(b) A school district must adopt a policy that provides a student enrolled in a course under this section with reasonable access during regular school hours to a computer and other technology resources that the student needs to complete coursework for a postsecondary enrollment course.

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/124D.09>

2019 Revisions

The 2019 Minnesota legislature made several revisions to the PSEO legislation. First, it revised the date by which 8th-11th grade students had to be notified about PSEO. Previously information had to be shared by March 1. But some districts had students register for the following fall in January or February. In addition, some university PSEO programs are open for application beginning in February. So, legislators moved the notification date to three weeks before students register for high school classes, or March 1, whichever comes first.

"Subd. 7. Dissemination of information; notification of intent to enroll.

By the earlier of (1) three weeks prior to the date by which a student must register for district courses for the following school year, or (2) March 1 of each year, a district must provide up-to-date information on the district's website and in materials that are distributed to parents and students about the program, including information about enrollment requirements and the ability to earn postsecondary credit to all pupils in grades 8, 9, 10, and 11. (PSEO Statute)

The second revision produced equity in treatment between online PSEO and other online student college university students. Several PSEO students pointed out that at least one major university limited online PSEO students to one course per semester. The students explained this was a major hardship for low income students and rural students who were miles from the nearest college or university. The legislature stipulated that online PSEO and on line students must be treated equally. This has the effect of allowing PSEO online students to have much greater access to these courses. "A postsecondary institution must allow secondary pupils to enroll in online courses under this section consistent with the institution's policy regarding postsecondary pupil enrollment in online courses." (PSEO statute, Subd 9, paragraph e)

Research Supporting PSEO and Other Dual Credit Programs

Why are PSEO & other dual credit programs important? Considerable research shows that PSEO and other programs allowing high school students to earn college credit are important opportunities for all Minnesota students.

Equally important, dual credit helps to effectively address many of Minnesota's most critical educational issues: gaps between student groups in high school graduation rates, college entrance rates, remediation rates, college completion rates, and college debt loads.

The non-partisan Education Commission of the States is a national organization to which legislators across the political spectrum look for research to support policies that will have an impact. In a May, 2018 report, ECS explains,

"A substantial and growing body of research indicates that, all other factors being equal, students who dually enrolled are more likely than their non-dually- enrolling peers to finish high school, matriculate in a postsecondary institution and experience greater postsecondary success... research indicates that middle-achieving high school students (whose grades or assessment scores fall just short of college readiness measures) not

only can be successful in dual enrollment coursework, but also can reap substantial benefits from program participation." (Zinth and Barrett)

Another Education Commission of the States concluded that "Research shows that students who participate in dual enrollment are more likely than their peers to finish high school, enter college and complete a degree" (Zinth).

A U.S. Department "What Works Clearinghouse" report on Dual Enrollment noted:

"Dual enrollment programs were found to have positive effects on students' degree attainment (college), college access and enrollment, credit accumulation, completing high school, and general academic achievement (high school), with a medium to large extent of evidence." (What Works Clearinghouse)

There are many studies supporting the ECS and Working Works Clearinghouse views. One study conducted by a University of Iowa professor found participation in dual credit courses/programs produced "significant benefits in boosting rates of college degree attainment for low- income students." (An, 2012)

In one statewide study of students from low-income families conducted in Texas, researchers found that "dual enrollment participants were 2.2 times more likely to enroll in a two or four-year college, two times more likely to return for a second year, and 1.7 times more likely to complete a college degree" (Struhl et. al).

A 2014 Colorado study "The Effects of Concurrent Enrollment on the College-Going and Remedial Education Rates of Colorado's High School Students," finds that dual credit enrollment correlates with (a) "a 22.9 percent increase in the likelihood of enrolling in college immediately after high school graduation," and (b) "a 9.0 percent decrease in the likelihood of needing remedial education in college." (Colorado Department of Higher Education.) A California study concluded: ". . . career-focused dual enrollment programs—in which high school students take college courses for credit—can benefit underachieving students and those underrepresented in higher education." (Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, and Belfield, 2012)

Carrie Billy, director of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, described the value of dual credit for American Indian students. Speaking at a national conference, she explained that tribal colleges and universities, "often without any compensation whatsoever – offer this service at their expense because they know it is one very effective way to help save our American Indian children. It keeps them on a path to a better future and a world of opportunity" (Billy 2014).

Dual credit courses help close gaps. A major University of Minnesota study examined records of more than 31,000 students who entered the University as freshman, 2005-2008. Preliminary results of this study found that “students from low socio-economic-status households who took advanced courses did just as well in first term and first year GPAs as students from high SES households who did not take advanced courses.” (Maruyama et. al) This study concluded: Advanced course enrollment has statistically significant effects on students’ college academic outcomes. Specifically, students successfully completing advanced courses during their high school years are doing better in college than their peers who do not take advanced courses: .15 points higher in first term and first year GPAs; 1.4 and 1.9 credits higher in first term and first year credit completion, respectively. In addition, they are graduating at a 2.7 percent faster rate. (Maruyama et. al)

One fairly recent national statements about the value of dual credit/dual enrollment comes from ACT, a national testing service. Their December 2015 policy brief was written in cooperation with organizations such as the National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Commission of the States, National Association for College Admission Counseling and other groups. “Shortening the amount of time students spend working toward a postsecondary credential can reduce their total college costs, which is highly desirable to students, their parents, and policymakers. Equally important is finding convenient and effective ways to ease students’ transition to college coursework. Critically, both of these factors disproportionately affect students from low– income families and/or students who are the first in their families to attend postsecondary education. ” (ACT, p. 1)

The ACT statement continues: Dual enrollment programs have shown great promise in improving student success in postsecondary education and progress toward a postsecondary credential. ACT research shows that high school graduates who enter college with credits from dual enrollment are more likely to be successful in college, including completing a bachelor’s degree in less time, than are students who enter college without such credits.... Dual enrollment programs can also help advance a more rigorous high school curriculum, potentially reducing the gap between high school teachers’ perceptions of the college readiness of their high school graduates and college instructors’ perceptions of the readiness of their incoming first-year students for college-level coursework... ACT also believes that there are benefits beyond improved academic preparation for students who participate in dual enrollment programs. While research supports the value of test scores in predicting postsecondary academic success, other factors are crucial determinants of both college and workplace success, including crosscutting capabilities such as critical thinking; collaborative problem solving;

behavioral skills such as persistence and self-regulation; and education and career navigation skills. Participation in dual enrollment programs exposes students to experiences that have the potential to strengthen their familiarity with these factors as well. (ACT, 2015, p. 5) .

A Minnesota Department of Education/Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System study showed that students from low income families and students of color who participated in even one PSEO or concurrent enrollment course had high school graduation rates up to 39 percentage points higher than students who had not done so. A chart with these figures is provided below. (Minnesota Department of Education; MDE Report Card and NCLB Grad Rate Carl Perkins Core Indicators)



MDE Statewide 4-year Graduation Rates
Report Year: 2012-2013

	STATE: All Students	Students who took 3 or more CTE courses (240 hours)	Students who took 1 or more PSEO or Concurrent Enrollment Course
African American	57.8% (Gap = 27.5%)	67.4% (Gap = 23.5%)	88.2% (Gap = 9.9%)
American Indian	49.0% (Gap = 36.3%)	74.6% (Gap = 16.3%)	88.0% (Gap = 10.1%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	78.2% (Gap = 7.1%)	82.2% (Gap = 8.7%)	95.9% (Gap = 2.2%)
Hispanic	59.0% (Gap = 26.3%)	77.5% (Gap = 13.4%)	92.5% (Gap = 5.6%)
White	85.3%	90.9%	98.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	63.8%	79.6%	92.8%
English Language Learner	59.3%	73.5%	88.6%
Individuals with Disabilities	58.2%	69.4%	84.3%
All Students	79.8%	88.0%	97.4%

Source: MDE Report Card and NCLB Grad Rate Carl Perkins Core Indicator

Do dual credit courses really produce progress with low income and low achieving students? Or are dual credit students already more likely to graduate?

A 2008 report from the Teachers College at Columbia University helps answer this. Researchers concluded that "Males, low-income, and low-achieving high school students all appear to benefit from participation in dual enrollment to a greater extent than their dual enrollment peers who enter college courses with more social, economic, and educational advantages. These findings indicate that dual enrollment can benefit a

range of students, and may have the greatest positive impact on those students who are often excluded from participation. (Karp, et. al)

CSC helped six St. Paul high schools, four district and two charter, serving mostly low-income students triple enrollment in courses that allow them to earn college credit in high school. As the students explain, these programs help youngsters change their view of themselves, seeing themselves as able to accomplish far more than they thought possible (Hawkins, 2015, Lonetree, 2015). Here is a link to three 90-second videos with three of those students: Khalique, Antonia and Jennifer: <http://bit.ly/11022cy>

A University of Iowa professor, using the National Educational Longitudinal data base of almost 9,000 students, concluded that dual enrollment programs have “significant benefits in boosting rates of college degree attainment for low- income students.” (An

Dual Credit courses:

- Help students, especially potential first generation students, develop what some researchers call “academic momentum,” which is a much greater level of confidence that they can do college level work (Karp et. al)
- Help students and families save thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of dollars on college costs
- Increase the likelihood that students will graduate from high school, enter and graduate from some form of 1, 2 or 4-year postsecondary program (Struhl, et al)
- Help reduce the likelihood that a student will have to take remedial, noncredit-bearing courses upon entering colleges or universities (currently 9 almost 30% of Minnesota high school graduates take remedial courses) (Fergus et al)

PSEO also is a valuable strategy for helping improve Minnesota’s high schools. Research by the Minnesota State Auditor found that more than half of the high school principals surveyed felt PSEO increased collaboration between high schools and colleges (Minnesota State Auditor). Moreover, some school district leaders have acknowledged that PSEO has helped encourage their high school(s) to add additional dual credit courses, taught on the high school campus, that they hadn't offered previously (Nathan, et. al, 2005).

Students with special needs also participate and can be successful in PSEO. One study found that “Eight percent of the reported participants were students with disabilities or special needs. Of the eight percent, the majority of students were those with learning disabilities. However, all disability and special needs groups were represented” (Lange, et. al).

A 2018 study found that Minnesota ranks ninth in the nation in average college debt accumulated by graduates. The average 4-year (public and nonprofit) college debt was \$32,317 (Institute for College Access and Success).

PSEO and other dual credit courses can help save individual students and families literally thousands of dollars and save Minnesota students statewide millions of dollars. A 2019 Minnesota Department of Education report found that in the school year 2017-18, Minnesota students earned 161,508 college credits via PSEO MDE estimated the total value of these courses as \$32,762,430. MDE also reported that students earned 261,829 college credits via concurrent enrollment. (MDE 2019).

Some research shows the value of high school students taking college level courses specifically on college campuses. For example, research cited by Columbia University Teachers College asserts: "Where Students Take Their College Courses Makes a Significant Difference...A statewide study of dual enrollment students in Florida found that students who took dual enrollment on college campuses had higher rates of college enrollment and degree attainment. Students who took dual enrollment courses on high school campuses showed no significant improvement in college outcomes. (Community College Research Center, 2008)

The University of Minnesota research cited earlier noted that while there were benefits from participating in all kinds of dual credit, "PSEO students tend to graduate at faster rates than students from other programs" (Maruyama, et al.).

An ongoing research issue has been what entrance requirements should colleges and universities use for admission to PSEO, and to College in the Schools/concurrent enrollment. The laws authorizing these programs have left this to the colleges and universities. They in turn have adopted various requirements in terms of grade points, class rank, and tests on college entrance/placement tests such as the ACT and Accuplacer.

A new PSEO program, starting in January 2020, has been created by a group of unions associated with the Finishing Trades. This program has no entrance requirements, other than student interest. Students will learn, among other things: 1) brush, roll and spray painting; 2) Glass and architectural aluminum handling and fabrication; and 3) Drywall and coating finishing (Finishing Trade Institute)

Information Sharing is a Key Issue

Since the adoption of PSEO in 1985, information sharing about this program has been a fundamental issue in Minnesota. The opportunity that PSEO provides is for any Minnesota high school student, but they can only take advantage if they know about it.

In addition, research suggests that the most underserved students reap some of the greatest benefits. Researchers at the Teachers College of Columbia University noted that students from low-income families, and those who traditionally have not participated in higher education, could gain substantially from participation in dual credit programs.

However, these researchers have found:

“Because underrepresented students may not have the same opportunities to learn about dual enrollment opportunities as their peers or may be less inclined to take advantage of such opportunities, it is important to ensure that states and programs pay particular attention to the recruitment of such students. States can encourage the participation of disadvantaged groups in dual enrollment by requiring notification of all students of the availability of dual enrollment, providing funds to create outreach programs for underrepresented groups, or creating their own outreach programs for such groups.” (Karp et. al p. 69)

A 2015 Minnesota Department of Education report also affirmed the continuing need to provide information about the PSEO program via websites, “family engagement events, statewide conferences, and workshops” MDE also urged that steps be taken to “ Provide timely and clear information to all students and their parents about the availability of dual credit opportunities as well as the impact they may have on future opportunities, especially targeting low-income, first generation and families of color.” (MDE, 2015).

A Minnesota Public Radio report noted that colleges and universities vary in their acceptance policies of dual credit. Their report highlighted the importance of students understanding these higher education policies before deciding which dual credit courses to enroll in (Friedrich 2013).

Summary of 2014 report

Center for School Change studied materials on 87 Minnesota school district websites in January 2014, including registration booklets that have been given to high school students. These booklets describe various programs and courses available to high school students. Although the 2012 Minnesota Legislature adopted the 10th grade portion of PSEO, Center for School Change research in January 2014 showed that

- less than 10 percent of the high school websites examined throughout the state had accurate, complete information on PSEO.
- Ninety percent did not include information about the 10th grade career/tech PSEO option, that PSEO courses can be taken online, or that funds are available to help low-income students get to college campuses for PSEO courses (CSC 2015).

CSC recognized that many districts and schools provide information to students that is not available on their website. CSC was not able to determine the accuracy of information distributed in other ways, such as through presentations to families. However, some families contacted CSC to determine whether information shared with them was accurate (and in some instances, it was not correct).

Moreover, some families have contacted CSC to ask if the 10th grade PSEO option exists, or if transportation funds are available for students from low-income families. These individuals reported that educators making these presentations did not mention 10th grade PSEO and transportation funds.

The 2014 Minnesota state legislature mandated placement of “up to date” information about PSEO on a district’s website, due to concerns raised by various individuals and groups. Changes in 2014 Legislation Legislators in 2014 listened carefully to testimony from CSC and several groups with concerns about information sharing. Some high schools and colleges were not providing accurate information about PSEO to students and families.

Minnesota legislators decided to make two key changes to increase community knowledge of these opportunities:

1) As of 2014 Minnesota law explicitly required that school districts provide “up-to-date” PSEO information to all 8th-11th-grade students and their families.

Specifically, Subdivision Seven of the law states: “By March 1 of each year, a district must provide up-to-date information on the district's Web site and in materials that are distributed to parents and students about the program, including information about enrollment requirements and the ability to earn postsecondary credit to all pupils in grades 8, 9, 10, and 11” (Minnesota Statute 124d.09, Subdivision 7).

2) The 2014 legislature also modified the ‘gag rule’ on colleges. Colleges and universities can now tell students and families (in districts with more than 700 pupils in 10th through 12th grades) that they can save money on college costs through PSEO.

Previously, postsecondary institutions were forbidden to tell students they could save money by taking PSEO courses.

A bipartisan group of legislators led this effort, including: Sen. Carla Nelson, R-Rochester; Sen. Patricia Torres Ray, DFL-Minneapolis; Rep. Linda Slocum, DFL-Richfield; Rep. Carlos Mariani, DFL-St. Paul; and Sen. Terri Bonoff, DFL-Minnetonka. Legislators worked with a diverse coalition to achieve this, including the Minnesota State College Student Association, Chicano Latino Affairs Council, Growth & Justice, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs, Minnesota Business Partnership, MinnCAN, Parents United, Education|Evolving, MIGIZI Communications, StudentsFirst, Voices for Justice, Migizi Communications, current and former PSEO students and parents, and the Center for School Change. Some of 2014's progress was limited to permitting colleges and universities to share information with student and families in schools that have more than 700 14 students in grades 10-12.

Thus, there is a continuing need to keep working so that ALL families have accurate information about their students' education. Here's what two PSEO students told legislators in 2014:

"As a graduate of the PSEO Program I can honestly say that participating is one of the smartest decisions I've ever made. I would encourage every student to participate in this program, as the rewards are immeasurable". Former PSEO student Aaliyah Hodge

"Due to the loss in funding, some MN high schools are very reluctant to let students know about PSEO and are withholding information. In my own experience, PSEO has also been a wonderful opportunity. As a high school junior and senior, I enrolled as a full time PSEO student at St. Cloud State University, taking all of my courses on campus. This May, I graduated with my Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences, participating in my University Commencement before high school. Roughly, the financial savings was \$16,000." Former PSEO student Jack Raisanen

[Summary of 2015 Report](#)

Parents Need to Know about PSEO CSC studied one district/charter website in each of Minnesota's 87 counties to help show compliance with the 2014 amendments to the PSEO law. CSC used a "random number generator" to identify one district or charter public school in each of Minnesota's 87 counties. Our earlier report studied whether these 87 websites were providing up to date information five key areas.

Those five areas are 1. Existence of opportunities for 10th graders to take PSEO courses in the career/technical field on college campuses, 2. Opportunities for students to take

PSEO courses online, 3. Transportation funding for students from low-income families, making it easier for them to get to college/university campuses for PSEO courses, 4. The fact that PSEO course tuition, books and required fees are paid by state funds, so that the courses are free to high school students. 5. Whether the district provided accurate information about when students are required to notify their school that they would be participating in one or more PSEO courses in the following school year (May 30)

Through this research on 87 websites, CSC found:

* 80% did not explicitly explain that tuition, books and required lab fees are covered for PSEO students

- 85% did not provide up to date information about the 10th grade PSEO option

* 91% did not provide the accurate date for a student to notify their intent to enroll

- 99% did not provide information on the availability of online PSEO courses

- 99% did not provide information on transportation assistance for PSEO students from low-income families

CSC recommendations included:

- MDE should notify each district and charter high school about the legislative mandate on providing up-to-date information about PSEO, and encourage each to follow through this fall.

- MDE should modify its website to include revisions the 2015 legislature made in PSEO

- All MN public high schools should review the information on their websites and in materials given to students and families to determine if they are in compliance with the law. If not, up-to-date information should be provided.

- Each district and school website should include a search function yielding up to date, accurate information about PSEO and other dual credit programs.

- MDE should consider sharing information about PSEO and other dual credit programs directly with families and community groups, in various languages.

- A follow-up study should be done in December 2015 to determine progress.

The Minnesota Department of Education responded immediately and constructively to this report. As the report suggested, MDE immediately revised its website to include all 2015 revisions.

In addition, Brenda Cassellius, Minnesota Commissioner of Education, included information about the report and the PSEO law's mandates about providing "up to date information" in an August 13, 2015 email sent to all district superintendents and charter public school directors. (Cassellius, 2015)

The text of that message was as follows: "2015 PSEO and Concurrent Enrollment Legislative Changes: In an effort to provide clear and helpful guidance, below is a paragraph that can be used on district websites to satisfy the obligation to notify parents and students about PSEO. Please note that by March 1 of each year, a district must provide up-to-date information on the district's website and in materials that are distributed to all pupils and their parents in grades eight through grade 11 about the program, including information about enrollment requirements and the ability to earn postsecondary credit. To assist the district in planning, a pupil shall inform the district by May 30 of each year of their intent to enroll in postsecondary courses during the following school year. A pupil is bound by notifying or not notifying the district by May 30. This text is suggested as a minimum, and may be copied and pasted to your site: Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) is a program that allows 10th-, 11th and 12th-grade students to earn both high school and college credit while still in high school, through enrollment in and successful completion of college-level, nonsectarian courses at eligible participating postsecondary institutions.

Most PSEO courses are offered on the campus of the postsecondary institution; some courses are offered online. Each participating college or university sets its own requirements for enrollment into the PSEO courses. Eleventh and 12th-grade students may take PSEO courses on a full- or part-time basis; 10th graders may take one career/technical PSEO course. If they earn at least a grade C in that class, they may take additional career/technical PSEO courses.

There is no charge to PSEO students for tuition, books or fees for items that are required to participate in a course. Students must meet the PSEO residency and eligibility requirements and abide by participation limits specified in Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.09. Funds are available to help pay transportation expenses for qualifying students to participate in PSEO courses on college campuses. Schools must provide information to all students in grades 8-11 and their families by March 1, every year. Students must notify their school by May 30 if they want to participate in PSEO for the following school year. For current information about the PSEO program, visit the Minnesota Department of Education's Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) webpage. "

The Commissioner followed up with the following reminder, distributed on February 4, 2016. <http://bit.ly/1RIE4e8>

"Reminder of Statutory Deadline for Dissemination of Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) Information

By March 1 of each year, a district must provide up-to-date information on the district's website, and in materials that are distributed to parents and students, about PSEO programs—including information about enrollment requirements and the opportunity

to earn postsecondary credit—to all pupils in grades 8, 9, 10, and 11 (Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.09, subdivision 7). In an effort to provide consistent and helpful guidance about PSEO, suggested language is available on the department website that may be used to satisfy the statutory obligation to notify parents and students. At a minimum, this language should be available on district websites and materials distributed to families. In addition, the PSEO Reference Guide is a tool for educators and families, and is available on the PSEO Program Web page. If you have any questions, contact Beth Barsness (651-582-8845).”

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota Rural Education Association and Minnesota Association of Charter Schools also had constructive responses to the report. These three organizations contacted their members, reminded them of the law’s requirements and urged them to comply. Moreover, news media throughout the state also provided readers/listeners with information about the report and about PSEO. CSC believes the news media interest, the MDE emails, and the constructive response from MREA, MASA and MACS helped produce progress reported later in this paper.

[2016 Report](#)

The 2016 report replicated and expanded research that CSC carried out in 2015. In January, 2016, CSC re-examined websites of the same 87 districts/charter websites that we reviewed in June-July, 2015. CSC researchers examined whether the website had accurate information about 4 key issues, explained below. CSC also noted whether the website had a search function. If so, CSC checked to see whether use of the search function brought us to information about PSEO. When CSC researchers were not able to find up to date information about PSEO on a website, we contacted the relevant district superintendent or charter school director via email. In many but not all cases, these educators responded. CSC staff explained that we would monitor the website up to March 1, when the state law requires that information be posted. (Nathan et. al 2016)

This report also included preliminary research that CSC staff to examine PSEO and other dual credit acceptance policies of Minnesota colleges and universities. We contacted 11 Minnesota colleges and universities to ask how much credit toward a degree they would offer for PSEO and other forms of dual credit. The colleges interviewed included Three University of Minnesota campuses

- Two four-year Minnesota College and University universities
- Two , two-year public community colleges and
- Four, four-year private colleges or universities.

CSC asked about how many credits from PSEO and other dual credit courses these institutions accepted toward a degree that they offered.

Finally, CSC listened to and reported concerns raised by families and educators throughout the state about how implementation of PSEO.

CSC's 2016 report noted "significant progress." It also identified several problems that CSC felt deserved further consideration. For example, CSC found what appears to be an inequity between district and charter public schools in the way funds are reduced to reflect students' PSEO participation. The report also briefly discussed the issue of how PSEO courses are "weighted."

Methodology for this 2019-20 Report

This report replicates and expands research that CSC carried out 2015 and 2016. In October -December, 2019, CSC re-examined websites of the same 87 districts/charter websites that we reviewed in earlier studies. One of those 87 districts no longer served high school students so another district in the same county was selected for study. Eight one of these are conventional district, and six are chartered public schools (which in Minnesota, also serve as districts). CSC also added Minnesota's six largest districts and two major regional centers to the sample, producing the final sample of 95.

In mid-October, 2019, CSC sent an email to the relevant district superintendent or charter school directors. CSC asked

1. Whether the district had adopted a policy on weighting of grades, and if so, for a copy of that policy.
2. What are your district/school's PSEO policies?
3. What information is posted on your website about PSEO?.

About half of the 95 districts/charter responded. CSC waited two weeks and then sent a second email request. Finally, CSC staff and several additional people, cited in the acknowledgements, contacted and obtained information from the final approximately 20 districts/charters.

This report also gained from a review of recent research about dual credit programs, and recent publications from the Education Commission of the States.

Results of the 2019-20 Study

1. Three Key Omissions of information shared with students and families

Our 2019 review of 95 websites found several key omissions.

First only three of the ninety-five websites mentioned that since 2017 the PSEO law requires that school boards must adopt policies that “Allow a PSEO student reasonable access to the high school building, computers and/or other technology resources during regular school hours to participate in PSEO courses, whether online or on campus.”

None of the websites noted that “ A school district must allow a student enrolled in a course under this section to remain at the school site during regular school hours. (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/124D.09>)

Second, CSC’s review found only one website noting that modifications are available for students with a disability who wish to participate in PSEO.

As the MDE webpage on PSEO explains: “The Minnesota Department of Education has developed a new Policy entitled: **Minnesota Department of Education Alternative Eligibility Options Policy for 10th Grade Students with a Disability who Wish to Participate in Career and Technical Education Classes through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program.** The Policy and written procedures are effective December 8, 2015. Access

the [policy, procedures](#), and the [Modification Request Form](#).
(<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/dual/pseo/>)

Third: CSC review did not find any websites that included amendments adopted in 2019.

Previously, as stated on the relevant PSEO website, the PSEO Law required that “By March 1 of each year, a district must provide up-to-date information on the district's website, and in materials that are distributed to parents and students, about the program--including information about enrollment requirements and the ability to earn postsecondary credit--to all pupils in grades 8, 9, 10, and 11.” (Minnesota Statute 124D.09, Subdivision 7)

However, the Minnesota legislature amended this in 2019 to reflect the fact that in some schools, registration takes place weeks or even months before March 1. Some schools begin having students register early in the year for the following school year. In some cases, registration materials for the 2020-21 school year already have been prepared. In other cases, they will be finalized soon.

So the 2019 legislature revised this section of the law to read as follows; “By the earlier of (1) three weeks prior to the date by which a student must register for district courses for the following school year, or (2) March 1 of each year, a district must provide up-to-date information on the district's website and in materials that are distributed to parents and students about the program, including information about enrollment requirements and the ability to earn postsecondary credit to all pupils in grades 8, 9, 10, and 11.” (Mn Statute 124D.09, Subdivision 7, retrieve at <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/124D.09>)

Another 2019 amendment stipulated that colleges and universities offering on-line courses must permit PSEO students to take the same number of courses as other student.

We did not this (revised) information date on a single district or charter website.

CSC believes there is an urgent need for MDE to

- 1) Modify its recommended language to reflect 2019 revisions in the PSEO law that were adopted by the Minnesota legislature and
- 2) Communicate by February 1, 2020 with Minnesota’s district and charter educators, asking that they communicate up to date information that fulfills the law’s requirements.

We did not the (revised) information date on a single district or charter website.

Students and families must have accurate, information to make informed decisions. And as the law requires, students must have this information three week before they register or by March 1, whichever comes first.

2. Concerns about some district policies and procedures

In the course of reviewing 95 websites for information about PSEO, CSC found a number of assertions that are questionable. Some seem completely inconsistent with PSEO legislation provisions. Some appear to fall in a "gray area."

Below are examples of what we found:

- One district's website includes a letter stating that PSEO students may not use school equipment (This, despite explicit language in the PSEO law guaranteeing students access to district equipment to participate in online PSEO)
- One school states that PSEO student "must have completed all of the school's required 9th and 10th grade courses before enrolling in PSEO." This seems inconsistent with provisions allowing students to take career tech PSEO courses in 10th grade.
- One district tells students that the purpose of PSEO is "to allow students. to take college level courses not available at ___ High School." This is not the purpose of PSEO. The school also does not mention the 10th grade option or mention that some students are eligible for transportation assistance.
- One district states that PSEO may not be taken if similar College in the Schools course is offered by the district. This provision is not found in the law.

The PSEO law states in part,

"Participation in high school activities. Enrolling in a course under this section shall not, by itself, prohibit a pupil from participating in activities sponsored by the pupil's high school. (Minnesota Statute 124D.09, Subdivision 11)

- One district states that a full time PSEO may not be student representative to the district's board of education.
- One district states that to earn honors at graduation, 75% of courses must be taken at high school
- One district states that to earn an academic letter, a PSEO student must take at least 50% of courses at the high school

- One district states that PSEO students will not be considered for graduation speaker

Other policies that raised concerns include:

- Some districts state that a student must have a specified grade point or; some specified class rank to participate in PSEO (true for Minnesota State but not necessarily for others)
- One district requires potential PSEO students to present a syllabus for a potential college course before district will approve course
- One district does not describe PSEO on its website (despite state law explicitly requiring this).
- One district states that admission to PSEO is subject to staff approval. There is no such provision in the state law.

3. Can the Commissioner of Education withhold funds from a district or charter in serious cases? Yes. Section 127A.42 of Minnesota Statutes gives the Commissioner of Education to withhold funds from a district under certain conditions. Among other provisions, the Commissioner may withhold funds for “noncompliance with a mandatory rule of general application promulgated by the commissioner in accordance with statute, unless special circumstances make enforcement inequitable, impose an extraordinary hardship on the district, or the rule is contrary to the district's best interests;” (Minnesota Statute 127A.42 “Reduction of Aid for Violation of State Law)

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/127A.42>

The “Reduction of Aid for Violation of Law” statute makes clear that the Commissioner of Education must follow a process before funds are withheld. This includes notification in writing, giving the district the opportunity to change, and holding a hearing.

CSC agrees that withholding state funds should be a final step. It should be taken only after MDE has determined that a violation has occurred and that procedures have been followed.

However, if districts refuse to comply with the PSEO legislation, CSC believes this process should be used.

4.Varying Patterns of Grade Weighting

The “weighting” of grades can have a significant impact on students’ lives both during and after high school. Weighting of certain courses is designed to influence

which courses at least some students take during high school. And taking weighted courses can have an impact on whether a student attends some form of college or university, as well as which college or university.

Dr. Walter Roberts, formerly a faculty member at Minnesota State University-Mankato who trained generations of school counselors, helps explain the importance of weighted grades.

As Roberts explained, weighting, or non-weighting of grades has an impact on students' grade point average and their class rank. Some scholarship programs are open only to students with a certain class rank (i.e. top 10%). Some colleges and universities use class rank to help determine whether to admit a student. (Roberts)

Darren Ginther, St Paul Public School Director, Office of College and Career Readiness, offered examples of organization that use grade point average to determine, or help determine recipients. He wrote: "Here are a few that require/highlight class rank.

- [American Association of University Women](#) - top 20%
- [The Gates Scholarship](#) - top 10% preferred
- [Quest Bridge](#) - top 5-10%"

Grade point average and class rank are two of the factors that Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities use to determine whether to admit students. It also uses those factors to help determine recipients of certain scholarships. As a University of Minnesota representative wrote, "The University of Minnesota does not recalculate class rank" (that the high schools provide. (Meyer). Thus, a class rank that includes grade weighting could have an impact on whether students are admitted to, and receive a scholarship for, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus.

CSC found that fifty-six of the 95 (59%) districts did not weight grades. They are as follows:

Alden Conger, Artech High School, Browerville, Burnsville, Caledonia, Carlton Public Schools, Chatfield, Clearbrook, Fisher, ECHO Charter, Foley Public Schools, Dawson Boyd, Duluth, Elgin Melville, Glencoe-Silver Lake, Granada Huntley, East Chain, Fulda, Greenway, Hawley, Henning, Heron Lake-Okabena, Hill City, Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton, Lake of the Woods, Lake Superior, LaPorte, Litchfield, Little Fork, Big Falls, Luverne, MACCRAY, Madelia, Maple River, Melrose, Menahga, Milaca, Minneapolis, New London-Spicer, New Heights Charter, New Ulm, North Branch, Northland, Ogilvie, Paladin Charter, Pierz, Pipestone, Plainview, Red Lake County Central, Redwood Area School District, Riverway

Learning Center, Rosemount Apple Valley Eagan, Rothsay, Rushford Peterson, United South Central, Watertown Meyer, and Westbrook/Walnut Grove.

Our research showed that thirty-eight (40%) did weight grades: Ada-Borup, Adrian, Anoka-Hennepin, Austin, Benson, Big Lake, Braham, Buffalo-Lake Hector, Choko-Alberta, Cook County, Frazee-Vergas, Goodhue, Greenbush-Middle River, Harbor City Charter, Hinckley-Finlayson Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead, Jordan, Lakeview, LeSueur-Henderson, Marshall County, Minnewaska, Mounds View, Nicollet, Osseo, Owatonna, Pequot Lakes, Red Lake, Rochester, Russell-Tyler-Ruthton, Sibley, St Paul, Stillwater, Tri-County, Thief River Falls, Triton, Waubun, Wheaton, and West Central

In addition, Alexandria High School does not give extra weight to any grades. However, as a counselor explained, the high school uses a slightly different system when figuring an "A" for students in Advanced Placement courses. This makes it slightly easier to earn an "A" in the Advanced Placement courses.

Amount of extra "weight" given to certain grade. The amount varied. The amounts included .2, .25, .33, .34, .5, .6 and 1.0.

We were quite surprised to learn that nine of the thirty-eight weighted A.P, but not College in the Schools/Concurrent Enrollment courses. This despite the fact that the state is providing extra funds to help districts offer these courses, and to pay for faculty to earn the credentials they are required to have to teach these courses.

Discussion of grade weighting

Weighing of grades is controversial. Good arguments can be made for and against this idea. One national research study cited advantages and disadvantages as follows:

Advantages: 1. More students take rigorous courses. 2. More challenging courses can be offered. 3. It increases a student's GPA. 4. Higher class rankings for those who take more demanding courses. 5. Students are more competitive with peers from other schools with weighted grading for first-choice and more elite college acceptance. 6. Better chance for students to receive more in scholarship monies. 7. More likelihood for students to have higher self-esteem

Disadvantages: 1. Lack of consistency from school to school as to what courses are weighted and how much they are weighted. 2. Not all courses, even honors and AP, are equally demanding. 3. It may send a message to those who are taking regular courses, that their work is not as highly valued as weighted classes, which may lower self-esteem and attempts to strive for high grades. 4. College admissions offices tend to look at the overall GPA and not if the grades had been weighted. 5. If a student is afraid of getting

a low grade in a more rigorous course, he/she may opt to take a less demanding course in order to earn a higher grade. 6. Tracking of students could become more common. 7. Students at the lower academic end of the spectrum would not have equal opportunities to take a more engaging academic program. 8. Litigation by parents may occur if they believe the system is hindering their child(ren) from equal access to the curriculum. 9. Smaller schools have fewer opportunities to offer a wide array of weighted and non-weighted courses. 10. Fine arts courses may not be taken because it is possible that a non-weighted grade will lower a student's GPA." (Educational Partnerships, Inc.)

However, a fundamental principle found on virtually every district and chartered public school website is the principle of equality – treating each student in the same way. Might this principle apply in grade weighting?

CSC agrees with the 56 districts and charters that do not weight grades. We urge other districts and charters to adopt that approach.

Another valuable approach has been adopted by St. Paul Public Schools. The district to weights all dual credit courses equally. CSC believes there is a lot to recommend this approach. If the goal is to encourage as many students as possible to participate in college level courses, doesn't equally mean all such courses such be weighted?

We were quite surprised to learn that nine of the thirty-eight districts that weighed grade, weighted A.P, but not College in the Schools/concurrent enrollment courses. This despite the fact that the state is providing extra funds to help districts offer these courses, and to pay for faculty to earn the credentials they are required to have to teach these courses. District weighting AP but not CIS/CE courses included both suburban and rural districts.

Perhaps the legislature should provide funds only to districts that either recognize the value of concurrent/CIS course and either

- a. Offer but do not weight dual credit courses, or
- b. Include CIS/Concurrent enrollment courses in the courses that are weighted.

4. Increasing access to various forms of dual credit.

Everyone wants students to succeed, and no one want to put students in a situation where they are likely to fail. However, CSC believe there Minnesota could be doing more to help more students participate in dual credit courses. Based on CSC's literature review and conversation with students and educators, here are two way that this could happen.

First, the Minnesota legislature could modify existing law to allow chartered public high schools serving predominantly low income and “at risk” students to create new collaborative “early/middle college models” with colleges and universities.

Minnesota Department of Education describes these as follows: “an Early/Middle College Program allows high school students to earn dual high school and college credits with well-defined pathways towards earning a postsecondary degree or credential in addition to a high school diploma. Early/Middle College Programs are partnerships between State-Approved Alternative Programs (SAAP) and eligible postsecondary institutions designed to serve and support students in the academic middle - especially low-income, English Language Learners, first generation college students, and/or students of color.” (Minnesota Department of Education Early/Middle College)

MDE lists more than 70 approved early/middle college programs, from Albert Lea to Zumbro. They are found in rural, suburban and urban communities. (Minnesota Department of Education, Postsecondary Enrollment Options, List of State Approved Early/Middle College Programs, 2019-20).

In the “early/middle college” model, high school students are allowed to both remedial and college level courses from college faculty on college campuses. Students receive extensive support from high school faculty. As noted previously, the “What Works Clearinghouse” has identified several studies showing that such programs produce a significantly significant increase in college attainment – something that is an explicit goal of the Minnesota Legislature and the Walz/Flanagan administration. (What Works Clearinghouse).

Currently only district public schools are allowed to be designated as an “alternative learning program” and thus, to create early/middle college models.

Legislators could allow a chartered public school serving predominantly “at risk” students to apply to the Minnesota Department of Education to be an alternative learning program. The Minnesota Association of Charter Schools strongly supports this modification of state law. (Piccolo)

Secondly, research suggests the value of greater flexibility in which students are allowed to take dual credit courses. As two Education Commission of the States wrote, “research indicates that middle-achieving high school students (whose grades or assessment scores fall just short of college readiness measures) not only can be

successful in dual enrollment coursework, but also can reap substantial benefits from program participation.”

These authors cite examples throughout the country showing that “Differentiated dual enrollment — defined as dual enrollment options for a wider range of learners — is a promising approach states can adopt to extend the benefits of dual enrollment participation (including higher rates of postsecondary enrollment and attainment) to middle- and lower-achieving students.” (Zinth and Barnett).

Among others, the ECS analysts cited research from Teachers College, Columbia: ““Males, low-income, and low-achieving high school students all appear to benefit from participation in dual enrollment to a greater extent than their dual enrollment peers who enter college courses with more social, economic, and educational advantages. These findings indicate that dual enrollment can benefit a range of students, and may have the greatest positive impact on those students who are often excluded from participation.” (Karp, et al)

CSC believes that the early/middle college high school programs being established throughout Minnesota are a very wise response to the research cited immediately above.

Another wise response is the “Finishing Trades Institute,” previously mentioned. This joint effort by businesses and unions is opening in January, 2020. It’s designed to help prepare young people for jobs in fields such as glazing, painting and welding. The program features no admissions tests. (Finishing Trades Institute)

Originally designed to open with 10 students, this new PSEO program instead will open with 21 participants. Demand exceeded what the planners hoped for, and they decided to accept all the applicants. (Scallon)

For several years, CSC maintained a website showing Minnesota College and University acceptance policies toward various dual credit courses. This can be helpful as students and families are considering which dual credit courses and programs students are participating in.

Ultimately the legislature decided to ask the Minnesota Office of Higher Education to conduct a study on this issue and post results. MOHE has completed the study, and it is [available on their website](#).

Conclusions

- Not one of the 95 districts is providing all of the legislative required “up to date” information about PSEO – specifically the fact that high schools must allow students to use their technology to take PSEO courses.
- About half of the 95 districts aren’t providing other “up to date” information.
- About 20 districts/charter have adopted policies or procedure that appear to be inconsistent with the PSEO legislation.
- Districts may not be providing all of the “up to date” information in part because the Minnesota Department of Education “PSEO recommended language does not included several recently adopted provisions.
- Finding district policies about dual credit and grade weighting policies was in some cases very challenging. This despite the fact that state law requires districts to post such information on their website.
- About 60% of the 95 districts studied do not weight grades, about 40% do.
- The amount of “weight” that various dual credit courses varies widely across the state.

Recommendations

- By February 1, MDE should revise, distribute and request that Minnesota districts, charters and advocacy groups share “up to date info” about PSEO
- MDE should check that by September 1, 2020, district & charter schools have posted up to date information.
- MDE should encourage districts/charters to link to Minnesota Office of Higher Education report about acceptance of various dual credit programs
- MDE should review examples of questionable practices described in this report, determine which are inconsistent with state law and share this information with Minnesota educators
- Districts/charters that by November 2020 aren’t providing up to date information should face financial consequence.
- Districts and charters should either weight all courses equally or should weight all dual credit courses equally.
- District and charters should post their dual credit and grade weighting policies in a guidance/counseling section of their website.
- The Minnesota Legislature should modify existing legislation so that chartered public high schools serving predominantly “at risk” students may apply for “alternative program” status and thus may create “middle college programs.
- Minnesota colleges and universities should be more flexible in permitting a broader array of students to participate in college in the schools and PSEO.
- Over the next three-five years, the Legislature should commission an independent study to examine which early/middle college programs are

producing the most progress. This research should be carefully structured so that programs enrolling similar populations of students are compared. The evaluation should seek to identify “best practices” that can be shared.

- Schools should be encouraged to post a link on their website to the [Minnesota Office of Higher Education study on Dual Credit College Acceptance Policies](#).

Based on research and experience cited above, CSC believes that taking steps outlined above will help virtually all Minnesota all high school students reach their potential. Research and experience also show that these actions also will help reduce high school graduation gaps and college/university completion gaps. Our suggestions will advance equity and opportunity indeed.

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About the Author:

Joe Nathan, PhD is the founder and director of the [Center for School Change](#). Educator, parent and student groups have given him awards for among other things, his work as an urban district public school teacher and administrator. Nathan also was an urban PTA president and member of the Minnesota State PTA Board.

Governor Lamar Alexander of Tennessee hired him to coordinate a NGA report published in 1985 called "Time for Results."

Nathan helped provide information leading to the adoption of the PSEO law in 1985. Since then, the Center for School Change has conducted research on PSEO, provided information to students, families, policy-makers, journalist and the broader community about various forms of dual credit, including but not limited to PSEO.

Nathan served as a weekly columnist for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* from 1989 – 2004. Currently, and for more than a decade, he has written [regular columns for a group of suburban/rural Minnesota newspapers](#). This formerly was called the "ECM Publications." It is now the APG of East Central Minnesota. The *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Detroit News*, *Atlanta Constitution*, *Sacramento Bee Star Tribune*, *Pioneer Press* and other Minnesota newspapers have published "op ed" columns that Nathan wrote. He has appeared on more than 400 television and radio programs, including "The Today Show," "Good Morning America," "ABC Nightly News," McNeil/Lehrer News Hour and National Public Radio.

Nathan has written three books, two of which were cited as "must read" by the *American School Board Journal*. He has edited a fourth book.

Several Congressional Committees and more than 30 state legislatures have asked him to testify on various education issues.

Nathan earned a B.A. at Carleton College, MA and PhD in Educational Administration at the University of Minnesota.

He has been married for 45 years to a former urban public school teacher, father of three and grandfather of five. The Nathan's children and grandchildren attend St. Paul Public Schools.