

Charting a New Course: An Examination of Dual Enrollment Pathways & Programs in the Rio Grande Valley

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The RGV

"communities united for educational success"

- **Worthy Subject**

- RGV as hub of innovative college readiness models and approaches targeting a population of students with historically low college-going rates
- Academies, CTE, AP/IB, ECHS, etc.
- Demographic reality of the Rio Grande Valley & Texas

- **Policy Imperative**

- HB1, §5.01, 79th Texas Legislature, 3rd Called Session (2006) requires school districts to provide at least 12 hours of dual credit opportunities for students
- College credit may be earned through Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, local and statewide articulated courses, and courses for dual credit.
- TEA: "Collaboration between the high school and the college is a crucial element of a dual credit program"

- **Affordability Imperative**

- Make college-going more accessible and affordable for RGV students and families

Impetus for Study

Dual Enrollment Pathways/Programs in the RGV

- **Growth & Demand for Dual Enrollment Opportunities**
 - Many new DE opportunities and pathways are coming online; about 1/3 of all ECHS models are in the RGV
 - Gives rise to questions about the capacity of the existing/future infrastructure in place to support them
- **Quality & Rigor**
 - How can IHEs and ISDs in the RGV increase dual credit opportunities and maintain quality and integrity of approaches?
 - Challenges around long-term viability of dual enrollment or dual credit programs
- **Lessons Learned**
 - What can RGV school districts and IHEs learn from each other about navigating challenges related to dual enrollment?
 - What can the State of Texas learn from the RGV dual enrollment experience?

The Study

Key Questions:

- How are ISDs and IHEs in the RGV preparing and managing the increased demand for dual enrollment opportunities?
- What recommendations do key stakeholders believe are important to improving the quality of dual enrollment in the RGV?

The Study: Two Phases

- Phase I: May 2014 (*three-day site visit*)
21 individuals: two IHEs and four ISDs
- Phase II: Fall 2014 (*multiple-day site visit*)
50 individuals: nine ISDs and three IHEs

Participants included various perspectives on dual enrollment and capacity (ISDs, IHEs, other stakeholders) from the upper and lower RGV

Methods included interviews and focus groups; member checks and validation; iterative process; use existing data on DE programs and enrollment

Executive Summary

Key Findings

- I. **Creative Financing is Essential to Expanding & Sustaining Dual Enrollment Pathways**
 - Leveraging institutional resources
 - Inequity of approaches
 - Subsidies from state

- II. **Overcoming “Access” and/or Geographic Barriers**
 - Distance and transportation
 - Partnerships with outside entities

Executive Summary

Key Findings (cont.)

III. Managing for Current & Future Growth of Dual Enrollment

- Assessment of current staffing infrastructure for DE
- Teacher & Counselor staffing levels
- Teaching incentives; “grow your own”

IV. “Regional Mindset” is **KEY** to Dual Enrollment Success

- ISDs have varying approaches to: TSI prep, student workshops, funding models, book/tuition expenses
- Share students’ data between institutions
- Engage ISD & IHE partners to tap into spirit of collective impact
- What happens at one school district affects another (“spread the virus”)

Lessons Learned

Develop Stronger Partnerships

Improve the “sharing of strategies” similar to the collaboration occurring through RGV FOCUS’s Leadership Team.

Ensure alignment in programs of study from K-12 to two and four-year institutions. (e.g., curricular alignment b/w DE courses and HS equivalent)

Encourage IHEs to collaborate and develop a roadmap for addressing the growth and the future of dual credit needs in the RGV.

Recognize different student needs based on different dual enrollment models in place, (e.g., district-wide ECHS vs. a school within a school, or a stand-alone Early College High School). All ISDs and IHEs personnel need to be aware of the various models.

Lessons Learned

Improve Communications

Need overarching message and vision for dual enrollment within each ISD and their IHE partner, as well as for the entire RGV.

Constant communication with parents, students, and all stakeholders is key, especially given the changing nature of DE programs and policies.

Encourage ISDs and IHEs to form partnerships with other non-profits and community based organizations to communicate with families

Develop a common vocabulary around dual enrollment within the RGV

RGV FOCUS Leadership team (“backbone”) could lead the way.

Lessons Learned

Need for a Coherent Regional Strategy for Dual Enrollment

Establish common evaluation metrics to assess DE programs (i.e., beyond teacher evaluations and other performance appraisals)

Engage all stakeholders when planning for the expansion and sustainment of dual enrollment opportunities, especially given the myriad of resource challenges that accompany this growth

Create common protocols across ISDs and IHEs for uniform practices (e.g., master schedules, student advising, teacher incentives, transportation, etc.)

Tap into spirit of Collective Impact

The Team



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Questions and Discussion

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