



Making Dual Enrollment Work

Solving the Access–Success Paradox
With OUSD’s Point Person Model

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Introduction

Dual enrollment policy has focused intensively on expanding access—removing fees, reducing eligibility requirements, and conducting outreach—but far less attention has been paid to what enables students to succeed once they are enrolled. This creates an access–success paradox: the assumption that expanding access to students who do not typically participate in advanced coursework must necessarily result in declining success rates, particularly for those with the most to gain. Yet Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) demonstrates that an open-access dual enrollment program can achieve high success rates through intentional support infrastructure.

Dual enrollment is an umbrella term used to describe high school students taking college coursework for high school or college credit on either a high school or college campus. Dual enrollment participation has grown dramatically over the past decade. The number of high school students taking college courses increased by more than 80 percent between 2010 and 2019, reaching approximately 2 million participants nationwide, and it continued to grow to 2.8 million by 2024 (Fink 2025; Velasco et al., 2024). This growth reflects intensive state policy activity. In 2024 alone, 39 states introduced 243 bills related to dual enrollment, resulting in 39 new laws in 21 states (College in High School Alliance, 2025).

In California, most dual enrollment occurs through Career and College Access Pathways agreements between local educational

agencies and community colleges. The expansion of dual enrollment in California has been particularly aggressive, with over 95,000 high school students enrolled in the 2022–23 school year. California Community Colleges Chancellor Sonya Christian has positioned dual enrollment as a central equity strategy, with [Vision 2030](#) goals and substantial state investments explicitly targeting schools that serve high proportions of students from low-income backgrounds and students of color (California Community College’s Chancellor’s Office, 2025; Rodriguez & Gao, 2021).

This expansion reflects strong evidence of dual enrollment’s benefits. Research demonstrates that participation is associated with improved outcomes, including higher rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, persistence, and degree completion, with particularly strong effects for students from low-income backgrounds and first-generation students (An, 2013; Estacion et al., 2011; Karp et al., 2007; Velasco et al., 2024).

Yet the policy focus on expanding access to higher education has often outpaced attention to ensuring that students can succeed once enrolled. Policy conversations typically emphasize removing barriers to entry—such as eliminating fees, reducing eligibility criteria, expanding course offerings, and conducting outreach—but give less attention to the equally critical question of what enables students to succeed once they are enrolled in dual enrollment coursework.

“ Most districts can answer [the question], How do students get into dual enrollment? Few can answer, What happens once they’re enrolled?”

– OUSD dual enrollment staff

The gap between access and success manifests in persistent equity challenges. Despite dual enrollment’s expansion, Black and Hispanic students, students with disabilities, and English Learners remain underrepresented nationwide, even when one controls for prior academic achievement (Kurlaender et al., 2021; Morales et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2021). These gaps are driven in part by eligibility requirements and adult decision-making. Many programs maintain gatekeeping mechanisms such as minimum GPAs, test scores, or teacher recommendations (Anderson, 2023; Hooper & Harrington, 2022). A teacher’s recommendations can be informed by an implicit or explicit bias, and teachers often recommend against participation in dual enrollment based on beliefs that students are unprepared or unlikely to succeed (Anderson, 2023; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Mehl et al., 2020), despite evidence that most participants are successful (Ryu et al., 2024). Even achievement-based eligibility can reproduce inequities when underrepresented students’ prior inequitable access to advanced coursework may yield underperformance on placement measures (Duncheon, 2020).

Underlying these exclusionary practices is the assumption that enrolling “underprepared” students will harm them—that failure will

discourage college-going, impact transcripts negatively, or undermine program credibility. Yet research provides little evidence that student struggle in dual enrollment results in these consequences. This situation reflects the **access–success paradox**: the idea that expanding access to more students who do not typically participate in advanced coursework must necessarily be accompanied by declining success, particularly for the students with the most to gain from expanded opportunity.

Research on college access programs has repeatedly shown that equitable outcomes require equitable supports. The dual enrollment program provided by OUSD demonstrates this principle in the dual enrollment context. Students who are historically underserved can succeed once they are enrolled in dual enrollment coursework, but it requires intentional, resourced support infrastructure. In more than 11 years of partnership with the Peralta Community College District (Peralta), OUSD has developed the **point person model**, a systematic approach to embedding support throughout the dual enrollment experience. The program maintains open access, and there are no GPA requirements or prerequisites other than students having the time in their schedule and being on track for graduation. OUSD is now achieving an 82 percent course pass rate among a student population composed predominantly of first-generation students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color.

This report examines how OUSD’s dual enrollment model operates, what infrastructure it requires, and what it reveals about making open-access dual enrollment work.

A Case Study of Oakland Unified School District

OUSD’s dual enrollment program serves the student population that California’s expansion efforts explicitly aim to reach. Tables 1 through 3 provide OUSD’s profile, student demographics, and high school outcomes. The district exemplifies both the challenge and the opportunity of equitable dual enrollment—it serves predominantly first-generation students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color in an urban context in which college access has been limited historically, yet it achieves outcomes that challenge assumptions about what open-access dual enrollment can accomplish.

Table 1. Oakland Unified School District, District Profile

Characteristic	Number/percentage
Total enrollment of K–12 students	34,000
Number of schools	82
Students of color	90%
Eligible for free/reduced-price lunch	60%
English Learners	31%

Note. OUSD 2023–24 Annual Report

Table 2. Oakland Unified School District, Student Demographics

Demographic	Percentage
Hispanic/Latino	47%
Black/African American	20%
Asian/Pacific Islander	11%
White	11%
Two or More Races	10%

Note. OUSD 2023–24 Annual Report

Table 3. Oakland Unified School District, High School Outcomes, Class of 2024

Outcome	Percentage
4-year graduation rate	80%
A–G completion rate	61%

Note. OUSD 2023–24 Annual Report

Prior to OUSD’s formal dual enrollment partnership, dual enrollment existed as an opt-in opportunity for students to pursue independently through the regional community college system. Students could take college courses for free, but utilization rates among OUSD students remained low. Even seemingly minor procedural barriers—requiring students to navigate enrollment processes

independently and physically deliver paperwork to community college offices—were significant deterrents, especially for students without prior college experience or family members who could guide them.

When OUSD launched its partnership with Peralta in fall 2015, the district designed the program intentionally to remove these barriers. “Dual enrollment is really a program that is open access in OUSD,” said an OUSD dual enrollment staff member. If you have the availability in your schedule, you are welcome and invited to take a dual enrollment class.” The program established no GPA requirements, no prerequisite coursework, and no teacher recommendation processes. Eligibility was determined solely by two factors: having time in one’s schedule and being on track for graduation. Students needed to have fulfilled credit

recovery needs to participate, but, otherwise, students could take any dual enrollment courses that fit within their schedule.

The partnership with Peralta established a specific delivery model: Dual enrollment courses are taught on high school campuses during the regular school day by Peralta instructors. College faculty travel to Oakland high schools to teach their courses, bringing college-level instruction into the students’ existing educational environment rather than requiring them to navigate to community college campuses. This “college comes to you” approach removes transportation barriers and integrates dual enrollment into students’ daily schedules alongside their other high school courses. All courses are offered free to students and funded through the partnership agreement between OUSD and Peralta.

OUSD DUAL ENROLLMENT AT A GLANCE

Program Features (2025–26)

- **68** course sections offered in fall 2025 and spring 2026
- **15** high schools participating, including comprehensive and continuation high schools
- **11 years** of partnership with Peralta Community College District
- **83%** average course pass rate (C or better)
- **90%** pass rate in fall 2025

Sample Course Portfolio

- College-level English, math, and statistics
- World languages (Spanish)
- Visual and performing arts (graphic design, animation, design, theater, photography)
- Social sciences (psychology, sociology, ethnic studies, business)
- Career and technical education (computer programming, wood technology, child development, robotics, EMT/first responder training)

OUSD's open-access philosophy extends beyond simply removing formal barriers. Recognizing that historically underrepresented students often do not self-select into advanced coursework, approximately one third of the district's schools take a proactive approach by using automatic enrollment. They place students directly into dual enrollment courses as part of career pathway sequences or to fulfill graduation requirements. "The reality of working with first-gen students, and students who are just historically underrepresented in college in general, [is that they] are not going to be like, yeah, I want to do more work, and I want to take a college class," said one OUSD dual enrollment staff member. Course schedules are developed and followed by counseling conversations about enrollment and the different expectations of college courses. Students are given an opportunity to drop classes, but students typically remain because they understand the benefits, find the course interesting, and are supported through wraparound services that help them succeed.

This approach reflects OUSD's interpretation of equity: not waiting for students to raise

their hands but actively providing opportunities paired with the infrastructure to support success. Over time, this approach has built both scale and culture. The district now operates nearly 70 dual enrollment sections per semester and maintains an average course pass rate of 83 percent.

Embedded Wraparound Supports in Practice: The Point Person Model

At the center of OUSD's approach is a role that appears in few other dual enrollment programs across the country: the point person. In every dual enrollment classroom, alongside the Peralta instructor who delivers content and assigns grades, sits an OUSD staff member, typically a classroom teacher though occasionally a counselor or other school employee. This person is not a substitute teacher, a passive observer, or an occasional visitor. The point person is actively engaged throughout the semester in supporting student learning and success.

WHAT IS A POINT PERSON?

The point person is an OUSD staff member who

- **is present during college instruction** alongside the Peralta instructor;
- **holds the classroom on "off days"** when the college instructor is not on campus due to block scheduling but classes are still held;
- **monitors student progress** through the college's learning management system;
- **coordinates interventions** for struggling students, connecting them to counseling, tutoring, and family supports;
- **bridges communication** between the college instructor, students, school staff, and families; and
- **manages logistics**, including enrollment, attendance, technical support, and grade reporting.

The point person knows the students, understands high school culture, and can convey the differences between the expectations of college instruction and the reality of adolescent learners.

The point person model did not emerge from dual enrollment research or policy mandates. It evolved organically as OUSD and Peralta worked to solve practical challenges: enrollment processing, technology access, scheduling mismatches between college and high school calendars, and the pedagogical reality of college instructors teaching in high school contexts. Over 11 years, what began as pragmatic problem-solving has been systematized into a comprehensive support model.

The point person functions as connective tissue, linking college instruction to the high school support ecosystem, facilitating communication between the college instructor and school-based staff, and ensuring that students do not fall through the gaps between two educational systems.

Before Day 1: Setting Students Up

The point person’s work begins before the college instructor ever enters the classroom. They prepare students during the weeks leading up to the start of instruction by handling logistics, building relationships, and assessing where students are starting from. This pre-instruction period serves multiple purposes: ensuring students have the technical access they need, identifying potential barriers early (e.g., lack of computer access at home, unfamiliarity with email communication), and establishing the point person as a trusted adult students can turn to when challenges arise.

This relationship building is intentional. Point people recognize that dual enrollment represents unfamiliar territory for many OUSD students. “For the population I work with, it takes a while ... [in terms of time] and [in terms of putting] good effort into building relationships,” one point person explained. “Once there’s trust in a relationship, then some students come out of their shell and they can blossom. They feel safer to show up in a different way.” The point person becomes the familiar face in an otherwise unfamiliar experience.

During this pre-instruction period, the point person may also communicate with the college instructor, sharing context about the student population, the school’s culture, and what the instructor can expect. This preparation benefits both students and instructors: Students enter the course already oriented to expectations and procedures, and instructors arrive with some understanding of their students’ context.

During Instruction: The Two-Adult Classroom

When the Peralta instructor begins teaching, the point person remains present in the classroom, creating what some educators describe as a team-teaching dynamic. The nature of this presence varies, but all serve similar core functions. One Peralta instructor who teaches career and technical education, or CTE, courses across multiple Oakland high schools described the range. Some point people are “very helpful ... walking around and telling students to get off their phones, assisting in

the class,” actively engaging in classroom management and student support during instruction. Others maintain a less active presence but remain available for logistical needs and serve as the known adult in the room. Regardless of the specific approach, the point person’s presence provides both students and instructors with a resource.

For students, the point person represents continuity and familiarity. As one instructor observed, “students are already comfortable with that person”—the point person is embedded in the school, knows students from other contexts, and remains accessible beyond the college instructor’s twice-weekly visits. Students who feel intimidated by or uncertain about approaching the college instructor can go to the point person first. One point person describes deliberately scaffolding this dynamic:

Even if an instructor comes in and is a little bit more brief with students, as long as I have a good relationship with them, then they feel safe coming to me, asking questions, and then I can sort of slowly, based on where they’re at, encourage them to go to the instructor directly, and I scaffold that experience for some students.

The point person thus functions as a bridge by helping students develop the agency and confidence to engage directly with college-level instruction.

For instructors, the point person reduces the isolation and anxiety that can accompany teaching in an unfamiliar environment.

An academic dean at Peralta college who oversees dual enrollment faculty in multiple disciplines noted that college instructors often find high school contexts daunting: “They’re going into this thing where ... it’s just a totally different setup” than teaching on a college campus, where students do not know each other and the instructor sets all norms. Having the point person present provides instructors with local knowledge, classroom management support when needed, and a communication channel for understanding what is happening with individual students.

Between Sessions: Continuous Monitoring and Intervention

The point person’s most distinctive function addresses a structural challenge common in dual enrollment: the mismatch between college and high school schedules. College courses typically meet on Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday schedules. OUSD’s high schools operate on block schedules in which classes meet on different day combinations, often including an “off day,” or a third day when the college instructor’s schedule does not permit attendance. Rather than leaving students unsupervised or canceling the class period, the point person manages the classroom on this off day. For example, at one school students meet with the Peralta instructor on Tuesdays and Fridays for 90-minute blocks. On Wednesdays, students meet in the same classroom for a shorter period with only the point person present.

What happens during these sessions varies by point person and course needs, but the time is used strategically. Students work on assignments, complete quizzes, or engage in project work. These are the asynchronous components of the course, which in a traditional college setting students would complete independently outside of class. The point person facilitates this work, answers questions, and supplements instruction as needed. “I have the bandwidth to come up with games, or projects, or whatever it may be, or little activities that help them,” one point person explains. “Because I’m an educator, I can bring in my little educator tricks and tips to then help them with the content.” This third-day structure solves the scheduling mismatch while providing additional instructional support and ensuring that students actually complete asynchronous work rather than leaving it to be done at home, where many lack computer access or quiet study spaces.

Beyond the third-day coverage, point people engage in continuous monitoring of student progress. Through access to the Peralta learning management system, point people can view the gradebook, see which assignments students have completed, and identify who is struggling. OUSD’s dual enrollment specialist trains point people to check gradebooks weekly or biweekly, starting at the beginning of the semester and filtering from low to high to identify any student

whose course grade is 70 percent or lower. When struggling students are identified, point people activate intervention protocols. These protocols include OUSD-developed email templates that point people use to alert the student, the family, the counselor, and the dual enrollment coordinator when a student is falling behind. The point person then follows up directly, often pulling students from advisory periods for one-on-one check-ins, diagnosing barriers to success, and providing targeted support.

This intervention is highly individualized. One point person describes their diagnostic approach: “I really tune in to, what are the barriers? Is it fear? Is it confidence? Is it skill? Is it overwhelm? Is it emotional relationships? What is it? And then I go in at that level.” Sometimes the barrier is technical—a student does not have a computer at home. Sometimes it is motivational—students feel overwhelmed and do not know where to start. The point person provides “morale building, lots of encouraging ... a lot of positive reinforcement to build self-esteem or to build confidence.” Throughout the dual enrollment experience, the point person maintains communication with the Peralta instructor, sharing observations about student engagement, discussing which students need additional support, and collectively determining whether interventions are working or whether a student should withdraw from the course.

Table 4. The Point Person’s Role Throughout the Student’s Journey

Phase	Point person activities	College instructor activities	Student experience
Pre-course (2 weeks before semester starts)	Facilitate Canvas onboarding, assess student readiness, build relationships, communicate with instructor	Meet with point person and school staff	Preparation, technical setup, relationship building with familiar adult
During instruction (2 days per week)	Be present in classroom, monitor engagement, provide management support, identify early struggles	Deliver course content, assess learning, assign grades	Two adults in the room, familiar face alongside the college instructor
Between sessions (3rd day each week)	Lead class session, facilitate asynchronous work, review content, supplement instruction	Not present	Continuous support, homework help, additional practice
Ongoing monitoring	Check Canvas gradebook weekly, identify any student whose course grade is 70 percent or lower, check in with students	Communicate concerns about students to point person, provide office hours	Early warning system, individualized interventions
When students struggle	Diagnose barriers, connect to supports by communicating with family/counselor/coordinator, provide scaffolding	Share observations with point person, adjust instruction as needed	Wraparound support, engagement with multiple supportive adults working together, aligned messaging

What Makes the Point Person Model Work

The point person model operates at scale and has been refined over 11 years. This model has required deliberate investments in staffing, professional development, partnership management, and institutional commitment.

District–Level Coordination

OUSD’s dual enrollment program is managed by a dedicated two-person team whose primary job is coordinating dual enrollment

across the district. The scope of work is significant. The team manages course requests and master scheduling for more than 70 sections across multiple high schools, coordinates with instructional deans at four Peralta colleges, maintains relationships with point people at each school site, facilitates professional development for instructors and point people, and processes all student enrollment and withdrawal paperwork. The team maintains records of all dual enrollment sections, interfaces directly with Peralta schedulers, and handles backend enrollment so the college does not manage individual student adds and drops.

HOW POINT PEOPLE ARE FUNDED

OUSD has developed multiple funding approaches based on school context. There is no single formula, and funding sources vary by site.

Teaching Line

The point person would otherwise teach a different class. The dual enrollment section is part of a regular teaching assignment.

Second Prep

The point person takes the section in addition to a full teaching load and receives additional compensation.

Assigned Duty

Taking the section is part of existing staff duties for positions already inclusive of postsecondary career and college access (i.e., counselors, intervention specialists, college and career coordinators).

Floating Staff

Classified or certificated staff rotate across sections as part of broader responsibilities. This arrangement results in less relationship continuity but is accessible to smaller schools.

Initial Funding: Point people are funded through various sources depending on their role and school site, including general funds (base, supplemental, concentration); Measures N and H (OUSD parcel taxes for college and career pathways); and, occasionally, grant funds such as K12 Strong Workforce Program funding. Over time, some schools have absorbed costs into regular budgets.

“None of this is very affordable for us, but we’re making it work because it’s that important.”

– OUSD Dual Enrollment Staff

Professional Development and Partnership Infrastructure

The model functions because both college instructors and point people receive training. Before entering a classroom, new instructors attend a course agreement meeting with the point person, dual enrollment coordinator, and district staff (and occasionally Peralta deans when available) to meet one another, exchange contact information, and learn about the student population. Instructors then participate in professional development sessions at least twice per semester on topics that include adolescent brain development, mastery-based grading, and scaffolding strategies. In addition, OUSD has partnered with San Francisco State University to offer courses and stipends for dual enrollment instructors, creating clear incentives for community college faculty to develop pedagogical skills for teaching high school students. One instructor who had taught for 20 years described the professional development as revealing “a new level of teaching,” and a college dean observed that the district specialist effectively “taught [one instructor] to teach, basically.” Point people receive tools, templates, and training with the autonomy to adapt approaches to their specific context. This dual investment in professional learning

for both instructors and point people creates a shared understanding of student needs and instructional strategies.

What the Point Person Model Reveals

The access–success paradox asks whether dual enrollment programs can expand access to historically underserved students while maintaining strong success rates, and, if so, what makes this possible. OUSD’s experience provides an answer: Yes, open-access dual enrollment can achieve equitable outcomes, but it requires transforming vague commitments to “student support” into concrete, systematic infrastructure. The point person model demonstrates what this transformation looks like in operational terms. Support is not an add-on service or occasional intervention. It takes the form of an embedded adult present throughout the student experience, continuous monitoring of student progress, proactive identification of and response to struggles, and structured communication between college instructors and the high school support ecosystem.

What Support Actually Means in Practice

When dual enrollment programs reference student supports, the language is typically abstract: advising, tutoring, college readiness programming, wraparound services. The point person model specifies what these abstractions mean operationally. Support means a knowledgeable adult who is physically present during college instruction and available between class sessions. It means access that

allows real-time monitoring of assignment completion and grade trends, with protocols for weekly gradebook checks and email templates to alert families and counselors when student success starts to slip. It means pulling students from advisory periods for individualized conversations about barriers, diagnosing whether the challenge is technical (e.g., no computer at home), motivational (e.g., feeling overwhelmed), or confidence-based (e.g., first-generation students unsure that they belong in a college setting) and providing targeted responses to each. It means providing the college instructor with a partner who can share context about students' home situations, attendance patterns, and what is happening in their other classes, enabling instructional decisions that are more informed and compassionate.

Perhaps most importantly, support means integration rather than separation. The point person is not an external service students must seek out or an intervention that happens only when students are already failing. The support is built into the structure of the course itself. The point person is simply present as a normalized part of the dual enrollment classroom, available without students having to identify themselves as struggling or navigate to find help. This integration appears to matter. When surveyed about who provided their main support in dual enrollment courses, students frequently identified the point person at higher rates than they did the instructor, peers, or family. The point person's consistent presence and relationship building created the conditions for students to access support before small challenges became insurmountable barriers.

Intentional Support Can Help Solve the Access–Success Paradox

Dual enrollment has become central to state equity strategies for expanding college access. California has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in dual enrollment expansion. Forty-eight states have enacted dual enrollment policies. Yet policy attention has focused primarily on access, such as removing fees, reducing prerequisites, and expanding course offerings. The operational question of what happens once students enroll has received less systematic attention. OUSD's point person model provides a concrete answer to that operational question. It shows what student support means in practice, what infrastructure is required to make it function, and what outcomes become possible when support is embedded rather than peripheral. For districts and states committed to equitable dual enrollment, OUSD offers not a prescription to be replicated exactly but an existence proof: Open access paired with intentional support infrastructure can produce both equitable participation and equitable success. The question is whether the field is willing to invest in making it happen.

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