



ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Tracking Progress Toward Kentucky's Dual Credit Attainment Goal



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The Council on Postsecondary Education is Kentucky's higher education coordinating board overseeing state public universities and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. The Council also licenses non-profit and for-profit higher education institutions to operate in the Commonwealth. The Council facilitates a positive return on investment of public funds by monitoring academic quality, affordability, and student success through policy and accountability measures.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kentucky is on track to meet its statewide dual credit goal.

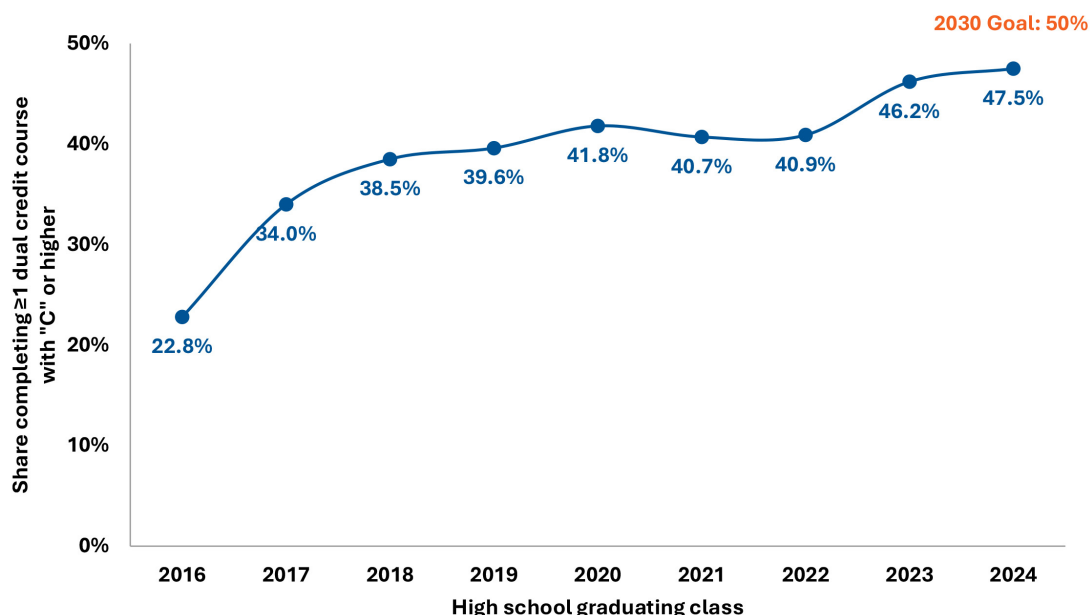
Kentucky is within reach of its statewide dual credit attainment goal. Established in 2022 as part of the Council on Postsecondary Education's (CPE's) strategic agenda and reinforced by a comprehensive dual credit policy framework in 2023, the goal calls for at least 50% of each public high school graduating class to complete at least one dual credit course with a grade of "C" or higher by 2030. For the class of 2024, the state reached 47.5%, up from 40.9% in 2022 and more than double the 22.8% recorded in 2016. Kentucky is now just 2.5 percentage points from the target.

That progress matters because rigorous, high-quality dual credit courses enable students to experience college expectations in a supported setting, lower the

cost of a credential, and build a clearer path to postsecondary education. Dual credit has scaled quickly: enrollment grew 49.4% and credit hours increased 59.6% from 2019-20 to 2024-25. Growth has been broad across demographic groups and regions, including continued gains among students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

As Kentucky approaches 50%, the task shifts from expanding access alone to strengthening both access and quality. In the years ahead, CPE will focus on advising, course transferability and applicability, instructor qualifications, stronger postsecondary partnerships, and better data on how dual credit transfers and applies after students enroll.

Figure 1. Dual credit attainment goal progress, classes of 2016-2024



Source: 2016-2024 Kentucky High School Feedback Report.



BACKGROUND

What is dual credit and why does it matter?

Under Kentucky law (KRS 164.002), dual credit is a college-level course in which a high school student earns both high school and postsecondary credit. Courses may be offered on a college campus, at a high school, at an area technology center (ATC), or online by qualified and credentialed instructors. Dual credit courses must meet the same learning outcomes, quality standards, and rigor as comparable courses taken in college. These courses pair authentic postsecondary instruction with the structure and support of high school.

Dual credit exposes students to college-level work, giving them confidence that they can succeed after high school. This opportunity can be especially important for first-generation, rural, and under-resourced students who may not yet see college as attainable. When credits transfer and

apply to program requirements, dual credit can reduce the time and cost of a credential. For Kentucky, dual credit creates a more direct bridge from college readiness to postsecondary enrollment and supports the Commonwealth's broader educational attainment goals (Community College Research Center 2024; Fink, Bedoya, and Jenkins 2024).

CPE's role in dual credit is to establish guiding policy, collect and report institutional data, maintain the dual credit dashboard with the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), and coordinate partnerships among postsecondary institutions, school districts, KHEAA (Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority), the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS).

KY offers generous financial support for dual credit.

Created by the General Assembly in 2017 (KRS 164.786) and administered by KHEAA, the Kentucky Dual Credit Scholarship Program pays for up to two general education dual credit courses for eligible juniors and seniors (a maximum of one each year). The Work Ready Dual Credit Scholarship covers up to eight career and technical education (CTE) dual credit courses (a maximum of 2 in each year of high school). Participating providers may offer additional courses at reduced rates (no more than half the current per-credit-hour rate charged by KCTCS). The scholarships are funded by Kentucky lottery proceeds.



RESULTS

Dual credit participation and completion rates are rising.

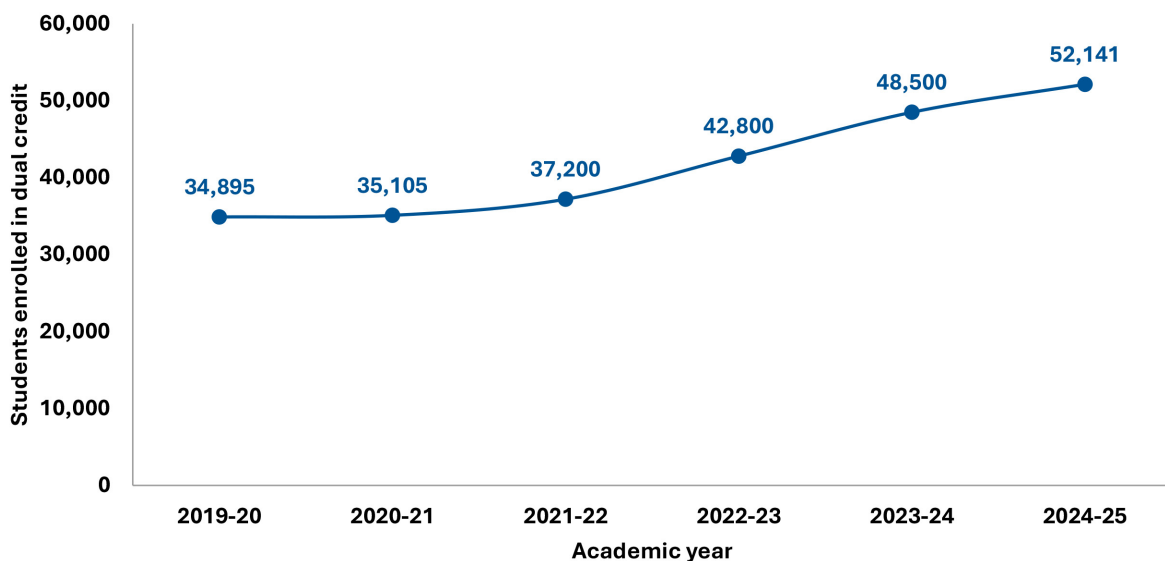
The policy, funding, and delivery structures surrounding dual credit are anchored by a clear public target: by 2030, at least 50% of each public high school graduating class should complete at least one dual credit course with a grade of “C” or higher. Because the measure is based on successful completion rather than enrollment alone, it captures whether students leave high school with usable postsecondary credit.

Progress has been steady and, lately, accelerating. The share of graduates meeting the goal more than doubled between 2016 and 2024, from 22.8% to 47.5% (Figure 1). Two inflection points stand out: the increase from 2016 to 2017 coincided with creation of the Dual Credit Scholarship Program, and the rise

from 2022 to 2023 followed adoption of the comprehensive dual credit policy framework. The timing of these gains suggests scholarship support, clear standards, and a visible public target have helped accelerate progress.

Rising completion also has been matched by rising participation. In 2024-25, 52,141 students enrolled in dual credit, a 49.4% increase since 2019-20 (Figure 2). Importantly, dual credit participation also is rising among underrepresented populations.

Figure 2. Dual credit enrollment by year, 2019-20 to 2024-25



Source: 2024 Kentucky High School Feedback Report.



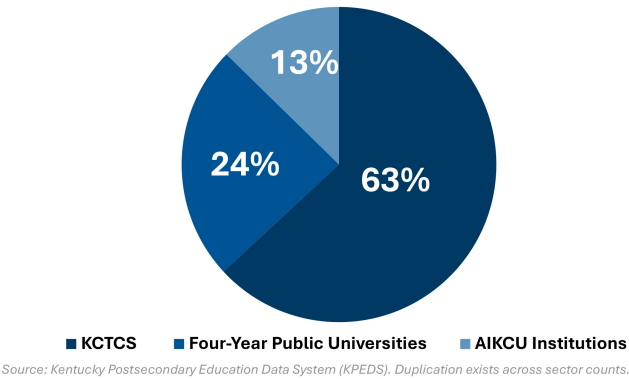
RESULTS

The provider network is broad, but participation varies by region.

Kentucky's dual credit provider network is broad, encompassing every postsecondary sector and region. Because some of the 52,141 dual credit students in 2024-25 took multiple courses from different providers, total sector enrollment was higher than the unduplicated headcount, at roughly 60,040. Of these enrollments, 37,890 were at KCTCS institutions, 14,532 at four-year public universities, and 7,618 at institutions affiliated with the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities (AIKCU) (Figure 3). KCTCS accounted for nearly two-thirds of sector enrollment and is often the only point of access in rural communities.

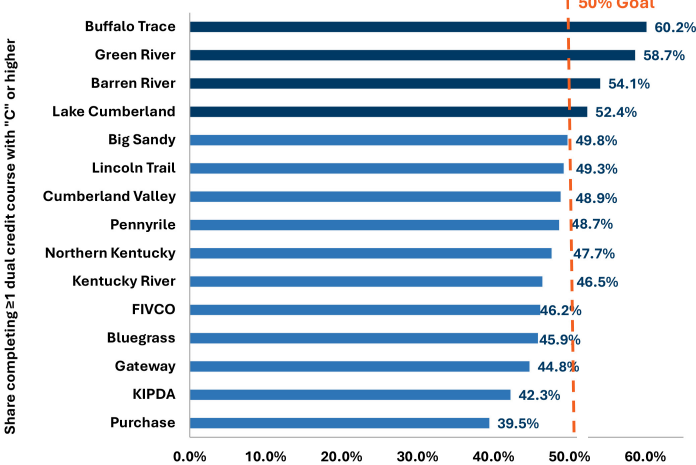
While dual credit participation spans all 15 area development districts (ADDs), completion rates are uneven. Several ADDs already meet or exceed the 50% goal while others are still building capacity (Figure 4). At the county level, Carlisle, Lee, Green, Lewis, and Morgan lead the state in successful completion. Counties with lower rates may face structural constraints such as fewer credentialed instructors or nearby providers, or they may offer other early postsecondary opportunities, such as Advanced Placement courses.

Figure 3. Dual credit enrollment by provider sector, 2019-20 to 2024-25



These differences invite practical questions: How do local course offerings, partnerships, advising, scholarship use, transportation, modality, and instructor availability shape outcomes? The data should be used to guide improvement, not assign blame. As outlined in a previous CPE report, "Beyond Participation," how and where a dual credit course is offered has measurable consequences for whether students go to college (Figure 6). This means helping counties expand access to high-quality, in-person dual credit is also a strategy for improving college-going rates.

Figure 4. Dual credit completion by area development district, class of 2024



Source: 2024 Kentucky High School Feedback Report.

RESULTS

Statewide trends in dual credit completion

Dual credit access is only half the equation, because the goal itself is defined by success—a final grade of “C” or higher, the point at which dual credit becomes transcribed college credit. By that standard, Kentucky is improving on three fronts: course completion, credit accumulation, and career-connected credentials.

Course Success

Successful completion has risen across every reported demographic group since 2016, gaining 24.7 percentage points overall. The largest increases were among female students (+25.3 points) and male students (+21.6 points), with double-digit gains as well for free- or reduced-price-lunch students (+19.8 points) (Figure 5). Kentucky's expansion, in other words, has come with stronger completion, not just higher enrollment.

Credit Accumulation

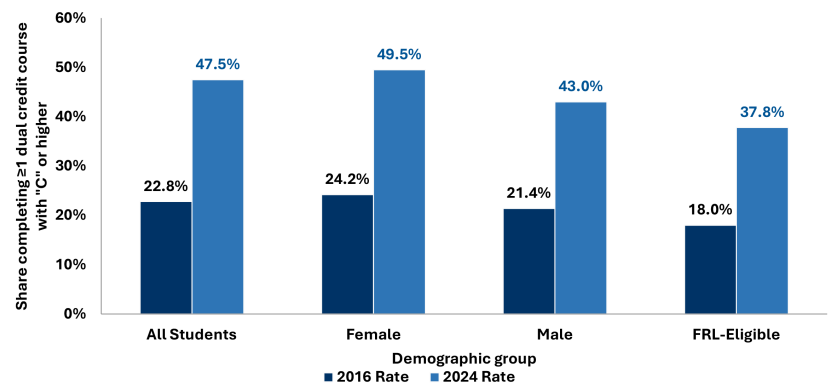
Students also are accumulating more credit. Participants now complete an average of about two courses by graduation, up from 1.5 in 2019. The

system generated 345,119 dual credit hours in 2024-25, representing substantial postsecondary momentum built before graduation. That momentum pays off only if the credits count. General education courses save time and money when they transfer and apply to a program, and CTE credit can accelerate entry into advanced coursework. Future reporting should therefore track not just credits earned, but the share of credits that apply to degree requirements after enrollment.

Career-Connected Credentials

In 2023, 7.5% of dual credit students earned an industry credential before graduating (up from 3.0% in 2019), positioning 1,736 graduates for advanced study or immediate entry into high-demand fields. Webster, Owen, Todd, Harlan, and McCreary counties led the state on this metric, showing that dual credit is not only a general education strategy; it also strengthens career pathways when course sequences, advising, employer demand, and program alignment line up. There is opportunity to expand these pathways without sacrificing credit transferability.

Figure 5. Successful dual credit completion by group, 2016 and 2024



Source: 2016-2024 Kentucky High School Feedback Report.



RESULTS

Statewide trends in dual credit completion (cont.)

Affordability and Time to Completion

The benefits of dual credit continue after college enrollment. In descriptive comparisons, graduates who attempted dual credit accrued roughly \$6,000 less student debt at graduation and completed degrees 0.3 to 0.7 academic years sooner, depending on the sector (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education 2026). These differences reinforce the importance of ensuring that dual credit courses are affordable, transferable, and applicable to students’ programs of study.

Regarding dual credit affordability, recent reductions in state funding for the Dual Credit Scholarship Program (primarily due to diminishing lottery

proceeds) have resulted in a fewer number of general education courses students can take for free. Moving forward, continued investment in the scholarship will be necessary to preserve the gains made in access and affordability.

Delivery Model and College-Going

How a course is delivered also matters. CPE’s modeling finds that most dual credit delivery models are associated with a higher likelihood of immediate college enrollment. The exception is fully online dual credit courses taught by college faculty, which produced a likelihood of immediate postsecondary enrollment not statistically distinguishable from students who took no dual credit. The strongest result is for a course taught by a high school teacher on a college campus (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Predicted probability of immediate college enrollment, by dual credit delivery model.	
Delivery Model	Predicted College Going
No dual credit (baseline)	53.6%
Fully online, taught by college faculty	58.1%*
Any one dual credit course	59.2%
At an area technology center (ATC)	62.3%
At the high school, taught by college faculty	62.8%
At the high school, taught by a high school teacher	63.7%
On a college campus, taught by a high school teacher	69.5%

**Predicted probabilities are from fixed-effects logistic regression of Kentucky public high school graduates, 2016–2019 (N = 183,653), holding student characteristics constant. The fully online estimate is not statistically distinguishable from having no dual credit. Source: Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education 2026.*

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Next steps in dual credit delivery

With a large, fast-growing dual credit delivery system, the task is no longer to simply expand participation but to ensure that system is coherent, accessible, affordable, and useful to students after high school. Five needs stand out.

Advising and communication come first. Students and families need clear information, ideally before course selection, about what dual credit is, how scholarship eligibility and any remaining costs work, how credits transfer, and how courses fit their goals. Early, consistent advising helps families recognize the opportunity and prevents students from stacking up credits that lead nowhere.

Course alignment is the natural companion. Dual credit should be matched intentionally to Kentucky's Statewide General Education Core (the block of general education courses guaranteed to transfer among Kentucky's public colleges and universities), high-demand pathways, and program requirements, so that students earn credit that counts and public scholarship dollars are well spent (Advance CTE, College in High School Alliance, and Jobs for the Future 2024).

Regional capacity is a real constraint. Access depends on qualified instructors, course variety, provider partnerships, and coordination between colleges and high schools. Some regions have strong demand but few instructors or a narrow course mix. A statewide audit of teacher capacity, course availability, modality, and provider coverage would show opportunities for future growth. Helpfully, nearly every Kentucky student lives within 30 to 60 minutes of a college campus.

Postsecondary institutions deserve a larger role in the story. Colleges and universities are not course vendors; they own academic quality, instructor qualifications, rigor, student support, transcribed credit, and pathway alignment. Scholarship participants help keep the system affordable through discounted pricing. Future reporting should make that role visible and show how strong partnerships drive student success.

Finally, the data itself can do more. Future versions of this brief should examine courses delivered, course modality, provider campuses, enrollment by campus, populations served, the most popular courses, credits earned by students who later matriculate, and how these credits apply after enrollment. The 2026 modality study, "Beyond Participation" (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education 2026), points the way; extending it would tie participation directly to the conditions that create value.

Kentucky is well positioned to meet these needs, because much of the necessary infrastructure already exists. The Statewide Dual Credit Policy establishes the framework; the Dual Credit Scholarship Program lowers costs; the Dual Credit Advisory Council convenes K-12, postsecondary, and state-agency partners; the Dual Credit Community of Practice gives more than 70 practitioners a place to share what works, and the dual credit dashboard provides data for policy makers and practitioners.

Finally, the state's college and career website, futuriti.org, provides a wealth of information about dual credit for students and families, including information about the Dual Credit Scholarship Program and the Work Ready Dual Credit Scholarship.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Next steps in dual credit delivery (cont.)

Kentucky has an opportunity to aim its dual credit structures and supports squarely at implementation improvement efforts. Five near-term recommendations follow directly from the data:

Keep the 50% attainment goal as the lead public measure, paired with stronger reporting on course success and credit applicability.

Identify high-value general education and CTE pathway courses that are broadly transferable and clearly tied to degree or credential requirements.

Expand advising for students and families around course selection, transferability, and alignment and consider check-ins before any dual credit scholarship funds are used.

Review regional instructor and course capacity, and prioritize higher-value, in-person delivery models where feasible while preserving online access for rural and under-resourced students.

Strengthen the data infrastructure so the state can see not just whether students took dual credit, but whether those credits helped them enroll, persist, complete, and reduce the cost of college.

Conclusion

Kentucky's dual credit system is in a strong position. The state sits within 2.5 percentage points of its 2030 goal, participation and credit hours are at record highs, access has broadened across regions and student groups, completion has improved for every group, and participants show stronger college-going rates, carry less debt, and complete degrees sooner (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education 2026). These are meaningful wins for students and for the Commonwealth.

The next phase will involve converting that access into value. Strong advising, aligned and transferable courses, qualified instructors, well-chosen delivery models, visible postsecondary partners, and better data on what becomes of credits after high school are what will turn enrollment gains into lasting gains in attainment, affordability, and workforce readiness. Sustained on these fronts, dual credit will remain one of Kentucky's most practical strategies for helping more students move confidently from high school into college and careers.

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