



# **REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**

## **ESSB 5187**

### **2025 CTE Dual Credit Legislative Report**

### **JANUARY 2026**

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# Executive Summary

Washington's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dual Credit system is an important opportunity for advancing educational equity, preparing students for high-demand careers, and supporting long-term workforce vitality. As the largest and most demographically diverse dual-credit option, CTE Dual Credit serves more than 65,000 students annually—representing 76% of all dual-credit participants—with especially high participation among Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, multiracial, and low-income students.

Despite the strength of student engagement and access, the program faces longstanding challenges stemming from fragmented policies, inconsistent implementation, limited infrastructure, and the absence of an adequate funding model. To address these gaps, the Washington Legislature established a two-year CTE Dual Credit pilot program (ESSB 5187) for the 2023–2025 biennium. Led by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) in collaboration with OSPI, the pilot engaged four community and technical colleges and 35 K–12 districts across the NWESD 189 region. The initiative, supported by a \$700,000 legislative investment, aimed to implement a regional approach to CTE Dual Credit through strengthening articulation processes, improving data systems, enhancing student support, and more clearly aligning courses to industry-recognized credentials.

## Context and Rationale

The CTE Dual Credit landscape has undergone significant changes over the last fifteen years. After the dedicated federal Tech Prep funding was incorporated into a broader budget cut in 2010, combined with state budget reductions during the same period, many of our community and technical colleges were unable to sustain their prior commitment and staffing to support CTE Dual Credit. While some colleges continued to use Perkins funds, many redirected them toward other CTE priorities, creating inconsistencies in how programs were staffed and supported. Meanwhile, the state expanded funding and guidance for other dual credit models (Running Start, College in the High School, exam-based credit), widening the resource gap and reducing equitable access to CTE Dual Credit opportunities.

As noted earlier, student participation and interest in CTE Dual Credit courses have remained strong; colleges and school districts have navigated these changes to successfully serve students. The challenges of administering these programs have not impacted access. Instead, the impacts have been experienced through erosion of policies, practices, instructor collaboration, and meaningful student transitions from K–12 to postsecondary career pathways.

## Major Accomplishments and Findings

The past two years of dedicated effort have strengthened CTE Dual Credit initiatives among the proviso partners, helping to reduce barriers and create regional agreements. Through the pilot, we have made the following progress:

- College faculty collaborated to develop an articulation tool, a course articulation rubric to aid high school teachers in determining course outcome alignment.
- Communities of Practice were established, resulting in six new Computer Science (CS) and Information Technology (IT) articulations. We successfully launched Washington's first high school CTE-approved Data Science course, further demonstrating the system's capacity for innovative pathway development.
- The pilot revealed critical system infrastructure issues, particularly the inadequacy of the statewide Student Enrollment and Registration System (SERS) platform, which lacks integration with college systems and cannot reliably track articulations or transcription data. SBCTC, through a funding partnership with the Gates Foundation, secured the services of a technology consultant to analyze system needs and recommend steps to adopt a modern, unified, cloud-based data system for ensuring reliability, transparency, and equitable access.
- Credit transcription remains a major barrier for students. Unlike other dual-credit programs, CTE Dual Credit does not automatically transcribe earned credits, leading to confusion and lost opportunities. Statewide automation, uniform grade thresholds, and standardized course equivalencies are needed to prevent credit loss. The proviso colleges launched a new admission and enrollment pilot in fall 2025 to test revised business processes.
- Advising gaps hinder students' ability to fully utilize earned credit. New pathway maps and advising tools created through the pilot improve transparency by linking high school coursework with college programs, industry credentials, wages, and job opportunities.
- Pathway alignment efforts confirmed the importance of focusing on high-demand, high-wage fields such as CS/IT and Advanced Manufacturing. Collaboration with industry partners strengthened relevance and clarified connections to career pathways. This work is being continued and strengthened through a new partnership with Jobs for the Future.
- The pilot produced measurable improvements in articulation consistency, transparency, and regional coordination. Standardized tools reduced administrative burden and improved clarity for districts and colleges.
- The report also highlights financial barriers associated with Industry-Recognized Credentials (IRCs). OSPI and SBCTC agree that these opportunities should be offered at no cost to high school students and believe this work has helped to refine program priorities in need of sustained resources.

## Future Directions and Policy Recommendations

To build a coherent statewide CTE Dual Credit system, this report recommends development of consistent statewide standards, modernization of data infrastructure, enhanced advising systems, and establishment of stable funding for program operations and student credentials. Partnerships with philanthropic organizations have supported expansion of this work to additional regions and will help accelerate statewide adoption of best practices. However, efforts to stabilize these initiatives are ongoing.

Overall, the pilot demonstrates both the transformative potential of CTE Dual Credit and the urgent need for modernization. A coordinated, well-funded, and data-driven statewide system will ensure that Washington students, especially those from historically underserved communities, gain equitable access to pathways leading to post-secondary credentials, high-demand careers, and long-term economic mobility.

# Introduction

“An education system reimagined for the 21st century engages youth of all ages in the power of career-connected learning and provides every student with the opportunity to gain real-life work experience, earn college credits, and make progress towards an industry credential before they graduate high school.” - U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona (2022)

Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways at both the secondary and postsecondary levels are instrumental in growing a diverse, inclusive, and highly skilled workforce that fuels local, regional, and statewide economic vitality. CTE programs prepare students for high-demand sectors and provide opportunities to earn CTE Dual Credit and industry-recognized credentials (IRCs), supporting credential attainment and gainful employment.

As Career Technical Education is a high school graduation requirement and a graduation pathway option, continued investment in these in-demand programs is crucial to ensuring students have a variety of options and access to high-quality equipment, materials, and instruction. CTE Dual Credit is particularly impactful because it can satisfy core high school CTE requirements, offer dual credit options in several graduation pathways, and align with statewide CTE course equivalencies to meet other core subject learning standards.

CTE Dual Credit serves diverse participants. In the 2024 cohort participation rates exceeded 75% for Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, multiracial, and low-income students, 66% for American Indian/Alaska Native students, and 74% for White students ([ERDC](#), 2024). In comparison, Running Start and College in the High School participation by race/ethnicity was highest for Asian students at 33% and 51%, respectively, with White student participation being the next highest participating. As the Legislature weighs new investments, it is important to recognize CTE Dual Credit’s unique reach and equity impact and to ensure students can fully utilize credits and credentials to advance postsecondary and career goals.

## Purpose

This report is submitted by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to the Washington state Legislature in fulfillment of RCW 43.01.036, which reads in part: the State Board, in collaboration with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, must issue a final report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature. The final report deadline was extended to January 31, 2026, to accommodate receipt of a consultant’s report and the integration of that work into this document.

The funding provided by the legislature to begin this work in 2023 has made a significant contribution to deepening our understanding of the work required to build a more stable, equitable, and sustainable CTE Dual Credit program.

# Background and Importance

In 2022, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) concluded an intensive two-year study of Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dual Credit policies. This work documented innovative practices and compiled information and resources into a report and guidebook that included recommendations to improve program consistency statewide. A key goal of the study was to support equitable student participation and outcomes, including credit transcription and utilization in CTE Dual Credit, reflecting SBCTC's vision and commitment to advancing racial equity.

The second phase of this initiative involved chartering an advisory committee with broad stakeholder representation to review current CTE Dual Credit operations, policies, and procedures; assess statewide program practices administered or monitored by SBCTC and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); identify internal policy, organizational, and process changes necessary to improve the CTE Dual Credit experience for students and partners; and jointly develop recommendations to inform SBCTC and OSPI leadership, as well as future legislative and funding conversations.

An important finding of SBCTC's earlier work was that CTE Dual Credit program support is more difficult to sustain than other dual credit models that receive dedicated state resources. Historically, CTE Dual Credit—formerly known as Tech Prep—was a required program element under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act and was supported through a distinct federal funding stream. In 2010, this required use of Perkins' funds was eliminated, allowing states to consolidate Tech Prep funding into their broader basic state grant allocations. Since this shift, colleges and districts have struggled to respond to evolving industry needs, grow and maintain articulation agreements, provide consistent enrollment and advising support, and ensure timely transcription of earned college credit.

During the same period, the state has made targeted financial and policy investments in other dual credit models—including College in the High School, Running Start, and exam-based dual credit—through grants and direct budget allocations administered by OSPI and the Legislature. In contrast, state-level support for equitable access to CTE Dual Credit has declined. As a result, districts have fewer resources to offset costs associated with establishing articulations, covering student registration and transcription fees, purchasing program equipment, providing instructional supports, and sustaining other essential components of high-quality CTE Dual Credit programs—further widening the gap between CTE Dual Credit and other dual credit options with more stable funding structures.

## 2023-2025 Proviso Language

In June 2023, the Washington Legislature provided a CTE Dual Credit proviso (ESSB 5187) to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to administer a pilot program to increase career and technical education dual credit participation and credential attainment in professional technical programs. The proviso directed the State Board to select community and technical college partners to participate in the pilot program during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years. The colleges, as required by the proviso, are all

located within the Northwest Educational Service District 189 (NWESD) service area, which covers Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties.

The proviso further identified the following priority topics to be included in the final proviso report, which have been integrated into all aspects of this initiative:

- Course articulation and development of model articulation agreements
- Data collection and reporting
- Credit transcription and transfer
- Student advising and career guidance supports
- Alignment of career and technical education dual credit programs with credential pathways and in-demand career fields
- Funding for industry-recognized credentials
- Identification of priority courses and programs
- Evaluation of the statewide enrollment and data system, and recommendations for improvements to or replacement of the system to reflect articulation agreement data, student data, and transcription information to support data validity, credit portability, and program improvement

The legislative proviso established SBCTC as the authorized agency to guide this work, ensuring stakeholder engagement and project deliverables. SBCTC entered an interagency agreement with Career Connect Northwest at Northwest Educational Services District 189 to serve in a project management capacity to support key elements of the CTE Dual Credit Proviso.

## Project Implementation

The two-year pilot—coordinated by SBCTC, OSPI, and Career Connect Northwest (CCNW) at NWESD 189—engaged four colleges (BTC, EVCC, SVC, WCC) and 35 districts. Governance, roles, and deliverables were established early in the project.

Year one emphasized foundation-building: documenting articulation practices, mapping regional pathways, identifying high-wage/high-demand sectors, developing shared tools, and creating Communities of Practice (CoPs). Year Two focused on piloting/refining tools (articulation templates, outcome-alignment forms, shared calendars), deeper pathway alignment, expanded CoPs (CS/IT and Manufacturing), and a technology review of admissions, registration, and transcription workflows. Ongoing student, educator, and other stakeholder input informed iterative improvements.

## Project Management

SBCTC recognized the importance of building upon the successful CTE Dual Credit initiatives already taking place across the state, as identified in prior CTE Dual Credit research. Since the proviso language specifically required a regional approach focused on the service district of NWESD 189, Career Connect Northwest (CCNW), hosted at the NWESD 189, was selected as the regional project manager to work closely with SBCTC on project priorities and deliverables.

## Proviso Partner: Career Connect Northwest (CCNW)

Career Connect NW serves Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties. The region consists of 35 K-12 school districts, Tribal Education Compact Schools, and several private schools. The NWESD is a well-known regional educational partner that provides a centralized point for services and information relevant to K-12 education in the five Northwest counties.

NWESD has an established history of offering comprehensive, quality services to all K-12 school districts in the region and has leveraged its relationships to engage local school districts in this initiative.

SBCTC and CCNW at NWESD convened leadership from the partner colleges to discuss project scope and expectations. Multiple stakeholder meetings were held with teams representing Bellingham Technical College (BTC), Everett Community College (EVCC), Skagit Valley College (SVC), and Whatcom Community College (WCC). To ensure comprehensive input, many stakeholder engagement activities comprising faculty, staff, and agency representatives were held to guide and inform this work. During this project, CCNW, SBCTC, OSPI, and regional CTE directors convened to focus on several critical objectives:

- Develop a shared vision and strategy aimed at creating robust CTE Dual Credit pathways leading to postsecondary enrollment.
- Forge deliberate connections and articulations within several career pathways, scaling college pathways that culminate in Industry Recognized Credentials aligned with high-paying, high-demand industries.
- Design and implement standardized tools, processes, and approaches to establish seamless regional and statewide articulations.
- Ensure equity and student success are integrated elements throughout this project.

## Pilot Colleges

SBCTC and NWESD met to define specific roles, commitments, and deliverables for partners involved in the proviso, aiming to set clear expectations and ensure college partners fully understood their roles and responsibilities. These commitments, along with the scope of work, were shared with BTC, WCC, SVC, and EVCC. SBCTC also convened with institutional leaders to confirm alignment and identify key contacts from each college who would participate in the proviso efforts.

- Support efforts to increase CTE Dual Credit articulations and course offerings, as described in legislative proviso.
- Implement project-identified processes and procedures to address shared challenges of the existing CTE Dual Credit program.
- Implement uniform/required tools, templates, and practices for regional and statewide articulations that are purposeful and intentional.
- Standardize processes, templates, and documentation for key functions, including outcomes, assessments, grading criteria, etc.
- Provide regional and aligned workshops to secondary partners to guide and support articulation process and curriculum alignment.
- Provide the required reporting and data as requested by the project management team.

- Identify and engage key college personnel to achieve project deliverables:
  - Commit to shared understanding, vision, and strategy to develop meaningful CTE Dual Credit pathways that lead to postsecondary enrollment.
  - Create intentional articulations in identified career pathways that include course equivalencies, credit transfer agreements, and Industry Recognized Credentials.
  - Engage SMEs in review and alignment for CTE Dual Credit procedures.
- Develop program pathway maps and advising tools to help students understand how dual credit courses connect to pathways, align and sequence secondary and postsecondary courses, and fulfill certificate/degree requirements. Pathway maps include secondary coursework, dual credit options, labor market information (job titles and salaries), industry certifications, postsecondary degrees, and credentials.

Establishing these strong relationships and clear expectations allowed the project to build momentum throughout the proviso-funded efforts.

## Budget and Resources

The CTE Dual Credit Proviso was funded with \$700,000 from the Workforce Education Investment Account for the 2023-25 biennium to administer a pilot program to increase career and technical education dual credit participation and credential attainment in professional-technical programs. The resources were allocated to project partner organizations in years one and two as identified in the table below.

Organization	FY24 Allocation	FY25 Allocation
NW Educational Services District 189 (NWESD 189)	\$75,000	\$90,000
Bellingham Technical College and Whatcom Community College Consortium (BTC/WCC)	\$75,000	\$80,000
Everett Community College (EVCC)	\$75,000	\$80,000
Skagit Valley College (SVC)	\$75,000	\$80,000
SBCTC	\$20,000	\$10,000
Reserve	\$30,000	\$10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$350,000</b>	<b>\$350,000</b>

## Outcomes/Observations

The pilot produced measurable improvements in articulation consistency, transparency, and regional coordination. Standardized tools reduced administrative burden and improved clarity for districts and colleges. Six new articulations were developed in Computer Science/Information Technology, and faculty aligned learning outcomes for Introductory Programming (CS&141) with Advanced Placement Computer Science. The first CTE-approved high school Data Science course was launched, demonstrating the capacity for innovation through aligned cross-sector collaboration.

Data analysis illuminated regional disparities in access to articulated courses and highlighted inconsistencies in how articulated credits connect to credentials. The pilot

revealed areas where students face barriers to participation, credit transcription, and credit transfer. These findings reinforced the importance of standardized statewide processes and modern data systems.

Stakeholder feedback underscored the value of communities of practice in fostering faculty engagement, curriculum alignment, and increased awareness of pathway opportunities. Outcomes also included deeper understanding of system limitations, such as outdated data tools, inconsistent transcription processes, and heavy reliance on voluntary faculty labor.

## Summary of Progress on Legislative Priorities

The Washington Legislature identified eight priority areas of focus for this pilot and reporting. This section provides an overview of the actions, progress, and recommendations to support the modernization, growth, and sustainability of CTE Dual Credit in our state.

### Course Articulation and Model Articulation Agreements

Washington lacks a modern statewide framework for CTE Dual Credit articulations. Without common criteria and timelines, students encounter uneven access, variable standards, and unclear portability of credit across the CTC system. Articulation is the hinge that connects high school CTE coursework to college credentials; clarity and consistency directly affect student momentum and equity.

**Actions:** Established shared purpose and outcomes; mapped current workflows; piloted standardized tools (articulation request, articulation rubric, syllabus template), and a regional calendar/process map; developed a course articulation rubric; advanced CoPs in CS/IT and Advanced Manufacturing.

**Progress:** Six CS/IT articulations; aligned learning outcomes for CS&141 with AP CS; improved transparency and predictable sequencing; surfaced review bottlenecks (6–9 months).

**Recommendations:** Adopt statewide policy with minimum requirements and quality standards; require universal templates/rubric; set predictable timelines aligned to district catalog deadlines; integrate articulation review into faculty workload/compensation; ensure all articulations map to credential-bearing, degree-applicable courses.

### Data Collection and Reporting

Accurate, standardized data is foundational for equity, accountability, and continuous improvement. Today's fragmented datasets and manual processes hinder statewide visibility into who participates, who earns and uses credit, and whether articulations align to credentials and labor market demand.

**Actions:** Regional analysis of offerings/enrollment/outcomes with extensive manual preparation; reviewed SERS and ctcLink; engaged a technology consultant; piloted a regional online transparency database; gathered requirements for role-based dashboards.

**Progress:** Documented data weaknesses (missing class-level data, inconsistent naming, unreliable transcription records, no link from agreements to student records); prototype database improved visibility for families and informed statewide requirements.

**Recommendations:** Replace/modernize the statewide platform with an integrated, role-based system that houses articulation artifacts, outcomes, enrollment, and transcription; standardize identifiers/data elements; automate event-based capture (e.g., transcription upon meeting grade threshold); publish dashboards aligned to equity/pathway metrics and integrate with Guided Pathways and High School and Beyond tools.

## Credit Transcription and Transfer

Unlike Running Start or College in the High School, CTE DC students are not in college registration systems, so earned credits are not automatically transcribed. The result is confusion, lost momentum, and inequitable recognition of college-level work.

**Actions:** Elevated transcription challenges; assessed streamlining options across admissions/registration/transcription; proposed standardized grade thresholds and equivalencies.

**Progress:** Piloted process tools clarifying eligibility and next steps; increased awareness of automation needs.

**Recommendations:** Adopt uniform statewide transcription standards and automate transcription when a qualifying grade is met; standardize numbering/equivalencies for portability; publish public lists of transcribable courses and equivalencies.

## Student Advising and Career Guidance Supports

Focus groups show students often learn about credit opportunities informally and remain unclear on credit claiming, portability, and pathway implications. Consistent advising is essential for equitable participation and efficient use of earned credits.

**Actions:** Reviewed and identified required elements for pathway maps/advising tools connecting sequences, credentials, degrees, job titles, and wages; facilitated workshops/CoPs; launched Explore IT!; expanded family/counselor/teacher materials.

**Progress:** Enhanced teacher capacity and cross-sector coordination; clearer pathway visualizations; identified critical information gaps affecting student advising and decision making.

**Recommendations:** Embed CTE Dual Credit in statewide advising, leverage High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) platform; deploy standardized pathway maps; implement counselor/teacher PD on dual-credit/transcription; use shared CRM/platforms to track outreach and follow-up.

## Alignment with Pathways and In-demand Career Fields

To maximize return for students and the state, articulated courses must stack into credentials and lead to high-wage, high-demand jobs. Alignment ensures content rigor, relevance, and efficient progression to certificates and degrees.

**Actions:** Prioritized CS/IT and Advanced Manufacturing; aligned to program/industry standards; integrated labor-market insights and industry tours (e.g., PACCAR, Hexcel).

**Progress:** First CTE-approved high-school Data Science course; new articulations in programming, networking, and data science; stronger wage/demand focus.

**Recommendations:** Define statewide pathway viability criteria (demand, wages, ≤2-year credential feasibility); require stackable, degree-applicable articulations; maintain a statewide repository of pathway maps linked to labor-market data.

## Identification of Priority Courses and Programs

Focusing on high-value courses and programs increases impact. Prioritization should consider labor market outcomes, credential applicability, portability, student demand, and equity.

**Actions:** Conducted regional gap analysis and selected CS/IT and Advanced Manufacturing for focused work; used CoPs to accelerate programming, networking, cybersecurity, and data science alignment; created shared evaluation tools.

**Progress:** Six CS/IT articulations initiated; improved coherence for introductory programming/networking; identified underserved districts/pathways for expansion.

**Recommendations:** Publish an annually updated statewide priority list using transparent criteria (wage/demand, credential applicability, portability, equity); target resources to low-participation regions and high-value courses.

## Evaluation of SERS and Recommendations

The current statewide system (SERS) is dated, minimally supported, and poorly integrated with college systems; it cannot reliably reflect articulation agreements, student data, or transcription information. A modern platform is essential for validity, portability, and system improvement.

**Actions:** Assessed SERS and related processes; hired a technology consultant; piloted transparency database; defined functional requirements (articulation repository, outcomes, identifiers, workflows, dashboards, reporting).

**Progress:** Consensus on need for an integrated, role-based platform to standardize data and automate workflows (registration, grading, transcription).

**Recommendations:** Replace SERS with a unified system that stores articulation artifacts; integrates admissions/registration/transcription; enforces common identifiers/data elements; provides dashboards for K-12, colleges, students, and families; and supports portability and continuous improvement.

## Funding for Industry-Recognized Credentials (IRCs)

Identifying options for covering or eliminating fees charged by credential services, colleges, and high schools for Industry Recognized Credentials (IRCs) for high school students earning dual credit in Career & Technical Education is important because it removes financial barriers that prevent many students, especially those from underserved backgrounds—from accessing career advancing certifications. Without fees, more students can fully benefit from dual credit programs, complete industry aligned pathways and enter the workforce with validated skills that meet employer needs. The removal of fees, as enacted by the legislature for low-income Running Start students and College in the High School participants, has expanded participation by those students who are least able to afford these programs. This same approach, if enacted to support CTE Dual Credit, would result in increased CTE enrollment and completion, improved school performance metrics, and stronger local economies by expanding the pool of work ready graduates—all while offering a high impact, cost-efficient investment in students' futures.

**Actions:** In partnership with OSPI, reviewed the 2025–2027 operating budget [decision package](#) focused on increasing equitable access to dual credit and reducing barriers to credential attainment, including IRC costs.

**Progress:** Shared agreement that IRCs and dual-credit opportunities should be free to high-school students; a statewide funding discussion and solution is required.

**Recommendations:** Pursue sustainable state funding for IRCs and CTE Dual Credit operations tied to pathway outcomes; establish a shared list of IRCs that bridge existing pathways and emphasize in-demand, living-wage occupations.

## Next Steps and Recommendations

Washington's CTE Dual Credit system faces longstanding structural challenges that erode consistency, equity, and student access. Significant variability exists across colleges and even within departments regarding how articulations are reviewed and approved. In the absence of statewide expectations, the process has become highly subjective, dependent on individual faculty or administrator interpretation, and difficult to manage within required timelines. These issues stem from a broader lack of shared purpose, policy guidance, tools, and oversight.

The following section highlights efforts, beyond the scope of the initial legislative investment, that will help to advance this work.

## 2025-2027 Proviso Continuation

In April 2025, 2SHB 1273 extended funding for the pilot and directed SBCTC, in consultation with OSPI, to report recommendations to improve state dual-credit policies. Required focus: statewide articulation agreements, improved data methods, streamlined transcription/transfer, robust counseling that accurately represents dual-credit pathways (including CTE Dual Credit) and alignment to postsecondary/apprenticeship opportunities, deeper alignment with career-connected learning and apprenticeship/credential pathways, and identification of additional priority CTE Dual Credit courses (including those aligned to RCW 43.330.090 targeted sectors). Recommendations must include input from a statewide CTE organization and other stakeholders and identify potential statutory and rule changes to ensure equitable access and program effectiveness.

## Public – Private Partnerships

In recognition of limited state resources and a sincere interest in building on the funding provided by the legislature, SBCTC sought financial support from philanthropic organizations to expand the pilot program to three additional regions and to engage the services of a technology consulting firm. These efforts are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

### Expansion of Pilot Sites: Jobs for the Future Partnership

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and Jobs for the Future (JFF) entered a multiyear partnership to expand from one pilot region to four total regions. This partnership is focused on advancing a “Big Blur” vision for seamless education to career pathways in Washington state, building on the state’s CTE Dual Credit proviso funded by the Washington State Legislature in FY23 and renewed in FY25. This partnership between SBCTC, OSPI, and JFF began September 2025 and will continue through December 2027.

The project, led by JFF, builds on and supports the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dual Credit pilot program with an intent to increase CTE dual credit participation and credential attainment. The proposed project activities are informed by the successes and lessons learned in the first two years of the proviso and are designed to support and accelerate identified next steps, such as the development of pathway maps and regional strategic implementation plans.

The vision, articulated in [The Big Blur](#), is an integrated education-to-career system that prepares all young people for productive adulthood. By eliminating systemic silos and creating equitable, learner-centered pathways, the proposed work will streamline the transition from high school to postsecondary education and careers, ensuring economic mobility and lifelong learning for underserved populations in Washington. More specifically, the initiative will:

- Support state leaders in the design and implementation of a more equitable statewide system for dual credit and pathways, with a focus on CTE Dual Credit.

- Strengthen and expand opportunities for thousands of Washington's secondary students to access high-quality, in-demand postsecondary credentials, accelerating movement towards the state's goal that 70% of adults complete a credential.
- Intentionally integrate existing statewide initiatives.
- Strengthen regional ecosystems to address labor market demands and drive economic growth.
- Build a replicable model for regions in Washington that are committed to advancing The Big Blur.

To accomplish these goals, JFF will lead the key elements of the project which include the completion of a Washington state landscape analysis, development of four state-level pathway and competency maps, development of regional asset maps, and development of regional strategic action plans for regions participating in this initiative. SBCTC, OSPI, and participating colleges and partners will collaborate with JFF on these key project activities.

## **Technology Consultant: Gates Foundation Partnership**

Commissioned by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the consultant examined how students, families, educators, and college staff experience the current CTE Dual Credit technology solution and where the structure creates confusion, missed opportunities, and unnecessary workload. This report presents a statewide study of the conditions that shape dual-enrollment and dual-credit pathways across Washington's community and technical colleges and high schools. Teater Crocker served as the research lead, drawing on extensive experience in statewide planning and cross-agency collaboration.

The analysis synthesizes insights from focus groups, interviews with district and college leaders, a review of Washington-based research studies, and national evidence on modern dual-credit design and student transition practices. The study reflects the voices of the people who navigate and support these pathways every day and highlights the themes that emerged across regions and roles.

The purpose of this report is to help state leaders consider the structures and supports needed to guide the next phase of dual credit in Washington. As the coordinating agency for the community and technical college system, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is positioned to lead improvements that strengthen student readiness and help communities prepare for a changing economy. By examining access, articulation practices, transcript processes, conversion rates, and data movement across systems, the study identifies the conditions required for a more connected pathway from high school into postsecondary opportunities.

The findings are intended to support informed decision-making. They show where students and families need clearer information, where educators and college staff need aligned workflows, and where statewide systems need shared definitions and consistent data. Together, these insights provide the foundation for a modern dual-credit approach that reflects Washington's commitment to expanding opportunity and preparing learners for the futures they choose.

An overview of the consultant's key findings was provided to SBCTC for their review and consideration and included:

- Washington's dual credit system is currently fragmented – not because of missing tools, but because of missing statewide alignment.
- Students and families face inconsistent rules, deadlines, unclear steps, and preventable credit loss, while educators and colleges manage duplicative manual work due to misaligned definitions, workflows, expectations, and data movement across existing systems the state has recently invested.
- Before investing in new platforms, the state must establish two foundational conditions: (1) statewide governance for dual credit definitions, workflows, and communication, and (2) a secure, cloud-based data and credential exchange ecosystem that connects existing systems (e.g., SchooLinks, ctcLink, transcripts, etc.) into a coherent pathway from high school to college and workforce.
- The final report recommends strategic alignment of K-12 and community and technical colleges. This would be accomplished through a phased roadmap for the state to modernize dual credit, reduce staff burden, improve transcription accuracy, articulation processes, and ensure students consistently receive the college credit they earn statewide.

## Policy Recommendations

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must jointly develop and implement standardized, statewide policies governing CTE Dual Credit to ensure consistent, equitable, and high-quality implementation across Washington. The following elements must be part of these conversations:

- Adopt a shared statewide vision and goals for CTE Dual Credit with clearly defined purpose, outcomes, and its role in postsecondary attainment and workforce pathways.
- Define required program elements and roles for secondary/postsecondary partners, covering articulation, advising, student messaging, and communication.
- Set uniform articulation criteria: alignment to specific postsecondary courses; credit must be credential-bearing, degree-applicable, and pathway-aligned.
- Limit articulations to courses aligned to existing postsecondary pathways to ensure momentum within programs rather than isolated credit accumulation.
- Clarify eligibility criteria (e.g., CIP alignment, instructor qualifications) and establish uniform grading standards and universal thresholds for awarding credit.
- Ensure students who meet qualifying grades are notified of eligibility and provided clear steps to claim/transcript credit.
- Mandate statewide use of standardized articulation templates and related forms approved by SBCTC.

- Embed CTE Dual Credit advising requirements in high schools and skill centers; publish approved CTE Dual Credit courses and linked resources.
- Pursue statutory/regulatory changes necessary to align expectations, clarify roles, and support consistent, high-quality statewide implementation.

## Conclusion

Washington's CTE Dual Credit system stands at a pivotal moment. The findings of this legislative report demonstrate both the enormous potential of CTE Dual Credit to advance educational equity and workforce readiness, and the longstanding structural barriers that have prevented the system from fully realizing that promise. The two-year proviso pilot has shown that meaningful progress is possible when the state, regional partners, colleges, and K-12 districts work in coordinated and intentional ways. Through standardized articulation tools, clearer pathway alignment, strengthened advising resources, and deeper collaboration across sectors, the pilot region has created a more coherent and student-centered model that is ready for broader statewide adoption.

However, the pilot also illuminated persistent gaps that must be addressed for Washington to deliver a truly accessible, equitable, and effective CTE Dual Credit system. Fragmented statewide policies, inconsistent transcription procedures, outdated data infrastructure, and insufficient, unstable funding continue to impede students' ability to earn, retain, and apply college credit toward high value credentials. These challenges, while significant, are solvable with clear statewide governance, modernized systems, and sustained financial investment.

As Washington moves forward, the work ahead is not merely administrative; it is a matter of educational equity and economic opportunity. Students across the state—particularly those from historically underserved communities—deserve a system that consistently recognizes the rigor of their learning, supports their transition into postsecondary education, and connects them to living-wage careers. The recommendations outlined in this report provide a roadmap for building such a system: one grounded in shared standards, transparent data, aligned pathways, and long-term stability.

The success of the pilot confirms that Washington is well positioned to lead nationally in designing a seamless, career-connected education system. By acting on the insights and policy directions presented here, the Legislature can ensure that CTE Dual Credit becomes not only a powerful statewide strategy for workforce development but also a cornerstone of Washington's commitment to equitable opportunity for all learners.

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