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Dual-Credit Courses and the Road to College: Experimental Evidence from Tennessee

Background

- Dual-credit courses expose high school students to college-level content and provide the opportunity to earn college credits, in part to smooth the transition to college.
- While akin to advanced placement (AP) classes, they are designed to include more than the highest achieving students.
- There is very little research on how or if these dual credit courses are effective.

Study Overview

- In this paper, the authors partnered with the state of Tennessee to conduct the first randomized controlled trial of a state-created, dual-credit mathematics course.

Learn More

- Hemelt, S.W., Schwartz, N.L. and Dynarski, S.M. (2020), Dual-Credit Courses and the Road to College: Experimental Evidence from Tennessee. J. Pol. Anal. Manage.. doi:10.1002/pam.22180
- https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22180

Key Takeaways

- The authors found that the offer of this dual-credit course did not dissuade top-performing students from enrolling in AP math courses.
- Rather, the dual-credit advanced algebra course attracted a range of students, including sizeable numbers of students from the middle and upper-middle parts of the statewide baseline achievement distribution—suggesting that AP courses and state-created dual-credit courses could function as complementary strategies.
- The offer of the dual-credit advanced algebra course altered students' math course-taking trajectories during late high school, shifting students away from remedial or lower-level options and toward more advanced math courses.
- When it comes to college performance, the authors found limited evidence of improvements in early math courses.