From Access to Opportunity:
Strengthening Dual Credit

Postsecondary Pathways for the Future of Texas

Event name

Date

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Agenda

1. **Who we are**
   LONESTA**RP3** and our research team
2. **Why this research**
   The problem, why it matters, and how we studied it
3. **What we learned**
   Key findings from the evidence
4. **What it means**
   What is at stake and what to do about it
5. **Questions**
   Your questions and discussion

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01 Who we are

LONESTARP3 and the research collaborative behind this work

1 **Who we are**

2 Why this research

3 What we learned

4 What it means

5 Questions

About LONESTARP3

LONESTA**RP3** is a statewide network that brings multiple perspectives together—connecting **researchers, practitioners, and policy advocates** in pursuit of shared solutions.



Researchers



Practitioners



Policy advocates

LONESTA**RP3**

Our research collaborative



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02 Why this research

Dual credit across Texas: what statewide trends and local perspectives tell us about access, participation, and opportunity

What is the problem?

42%

of rural high schools offer AP or IB, compared with 89% of urban high schools

1. **Growth is uneven**
   Dual credit has grown across Texas, but not with the same opportunities everywhere
2. **Rural students have fewer options**
   Rural schools offer little AP or IB, so dual credit matters most, yet they had fewer dual credit courses
3. **Local capacity varies**
   Staffing, transportation, scheduling, technology, and advising differ across schools and colleges

High participation does not always mean students can choose from a broad range of useful, well-supported courses.

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Why does it matter?



Dual credit is becoming a common part of high school in Texas

19% → 31% of students completed dual credit, 2015 to 2025

18% → 45% of dual credit students earned 15 or more credit hours

Policy Texas policies encourage this growth and make dual credit more affordable

The focus must be on what students can access, not only how many participate.

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What did we want to know?

Two questions guided our research

1. **Where is dual credit available, and who participates?**
   How do courses and participation differ across students, schools, and communities?

2. **What helps or limits schools in offering and supporting dual credit?**
   How do instructors, partnerships, transportation, advising, and other resources shape opportunities?

Together, they ask where opportunities exist, who uses them, and what shapes them.

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What did we do?



A decade

of statewide course data, plus 52 interviews in three Texas regions

1. **Statewide data**
   Which dual credit, AP, and IB courses schools offered, who took them, and how patterns changed
2. **Comparisons**
   Differences across students, schools, and geographic settings, including credits earned and course delivery
3. **Interviews**
   52 K-12 and higher education participants on partnerships, policies, staffing, advising, and support

Data show what is happening; interviews help explain why.

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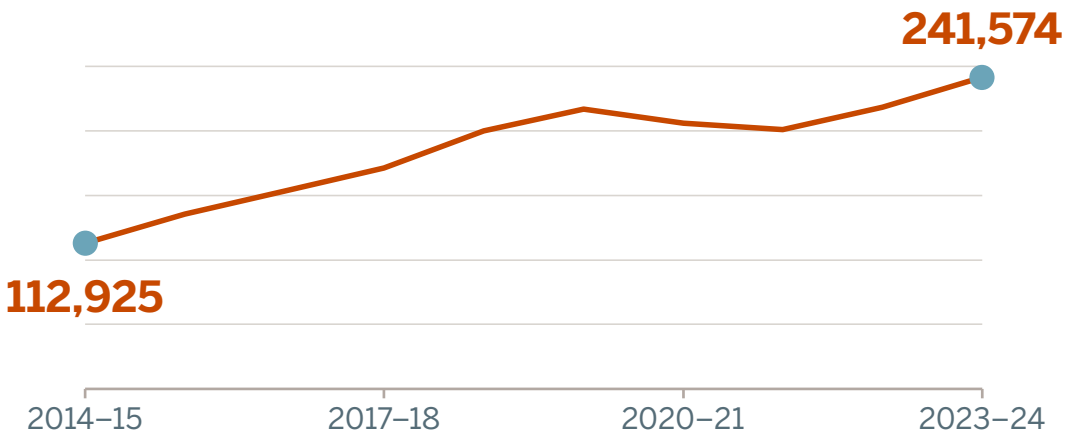
03 What we learned

Dual credit has grown, but opportunity depends on where students live

Since 2014–15, the number of dual credit students has more than doubled

The number of dual credit students grew from about 113,000 to about 242,000

Number of Texas students taking at least one dual credit course, each counted once



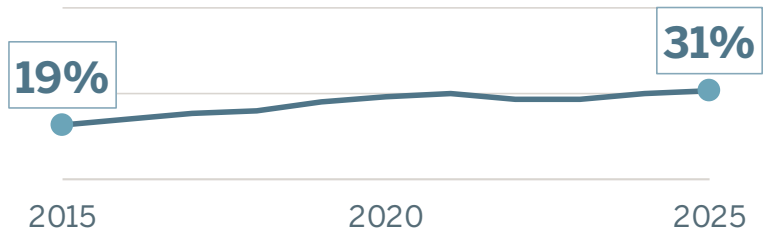
Source: Lee et al. (2026), using Education Research Center (ERC) data, 2014–15 to 2023–24.

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Dual credit is reaching more students, and they are earning more college credit

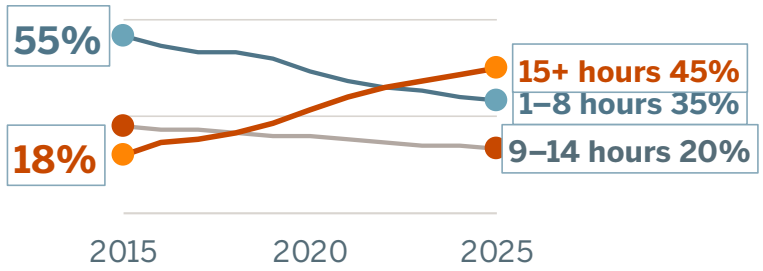
Students completing dual credit rose 12 percentage points

Students completing at least one dual credit hour



15+ hours have become the most common load

Dual credit students by college credit hours earned



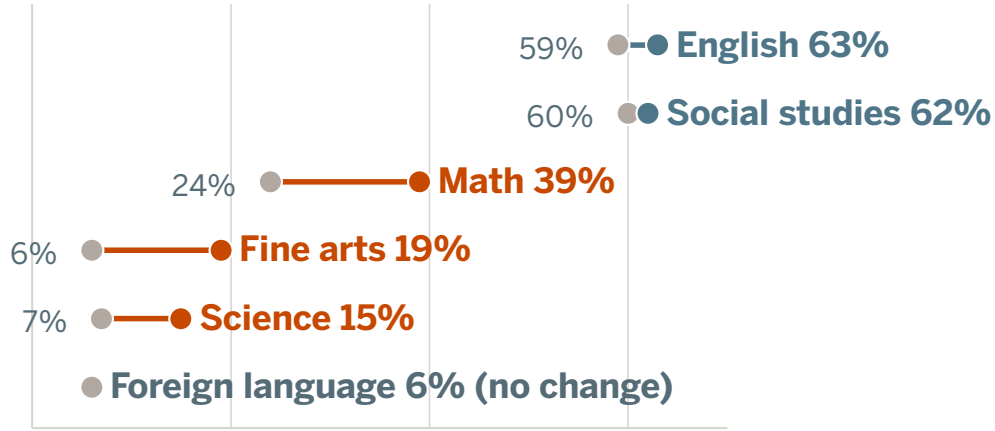
Source: Lee et al. (2026), using Education Research Center (ERC) data, 2015–2025.

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Since 2015, dual credit students are taking more math, fine arts and science

From 2015 to 2025, **math, fine arts and science** grew most; **English and social studies still lead**

Share of dual credit students completing a dual credit course in each subject: **2015 (left) and 2025 (right)**



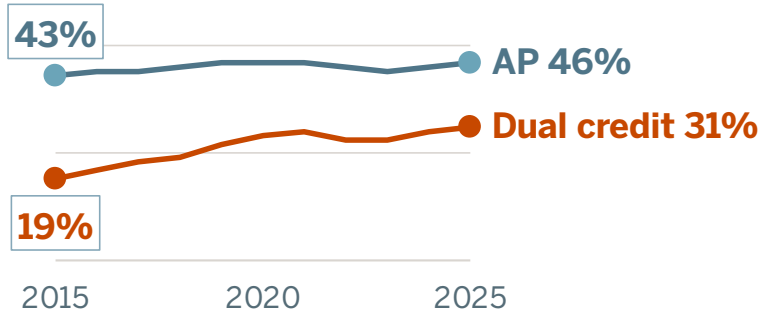
Source: Lee et al. (2026), using Education Research Center (ERC) data, 2015–2025.

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Since 2015, AP participation has held steady while dual credit has grown

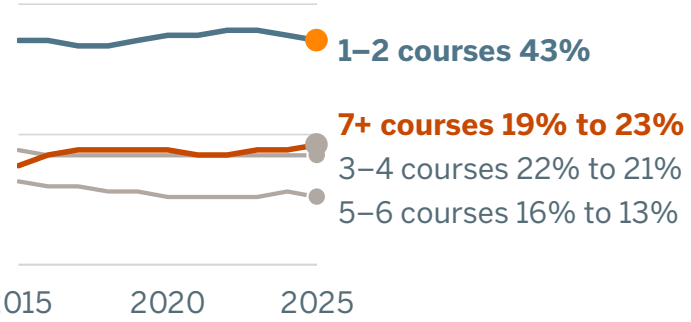
AP held steady while **dual credit** rose 12 percentage points

Students completing at least one course



AP course loads barely changed

Share of AP students by AP courses completed



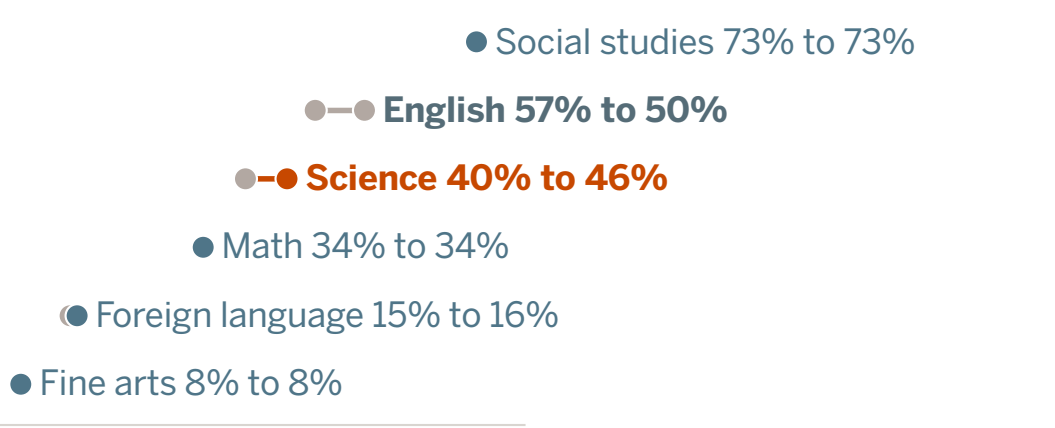
Source: Lee et al. (2026), using Education Research Center (ERC) data, 2015–2025.

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Since 2015, the mix of AP subjects has changed little

From 2015 to 2025, **English** fell and **science** rose; the rest held steady

Share of AP students completing an AP course in each subject, **2015 and 2025**



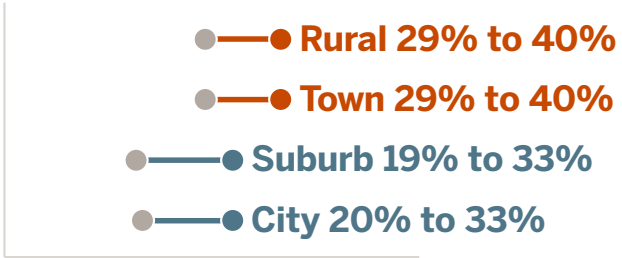
Source: Lee et al. (2026), using Education Research Center (ERC) data, 2015–2025.

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Rural and town students complete dual credit most; city and suburban students, AP

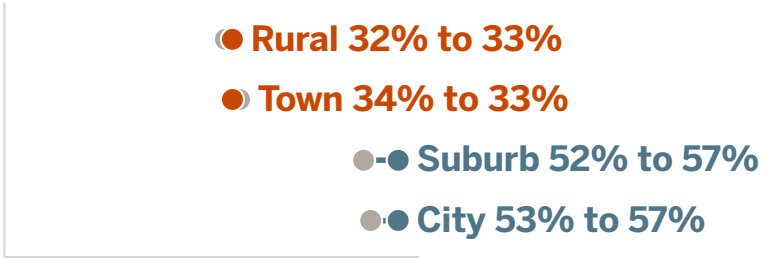
Since 2015, dual credit completion grew everywhere

Students completing dual credit, **2015 to 2025**



Since 2015, AP completion held steady, highest in city and suburb

Students completing AP, **2015 to 2025**



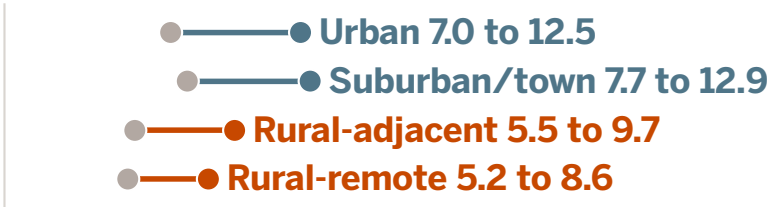
Source: Lee et al. (2026), using Education Research Center (ERC) data, 2015–2025.

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Access to dual credit courses has grown for rural students but still trails urban students

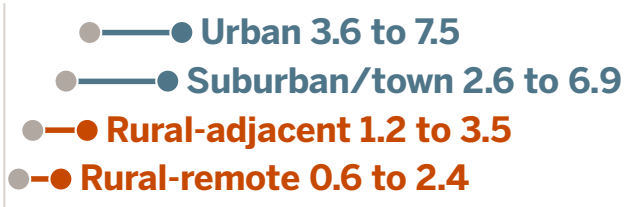
From 2015 to 2024, academic course access grew; remote rural schools still trail urban ones

Academic course access: **average per school**



From 2015 to 2024, career course access grew; remote rural schools still trail urban ones

Career course access: **average per school**



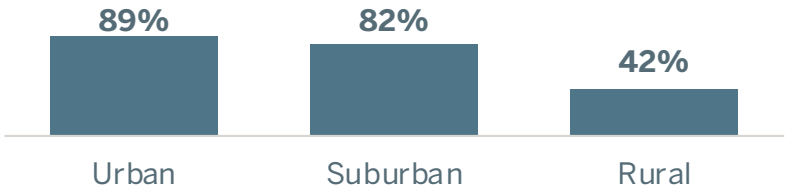
Source: Lee et al. (2026), using Education Research Center (ERC) data, 2015–2024.

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Rural students lean on dual credit; urban students lean on AP/IB

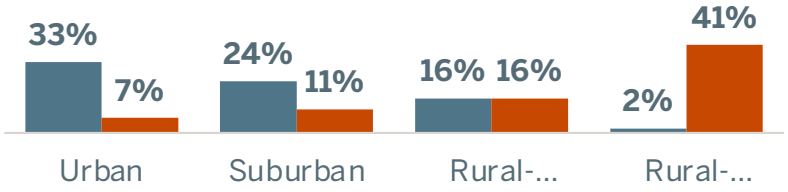
AP or IB is offered at most urban high schools but fewer than half of rural ones

Share of high schools offering **AP or IB**, 2023–24



Remote rural students are far more likely than urban students to take only dual credit

Share taking only **AP/IB** or only **dual credit**, class of 2023



Students' academic preparation explained little of this gap; what their schools offer explained much more.

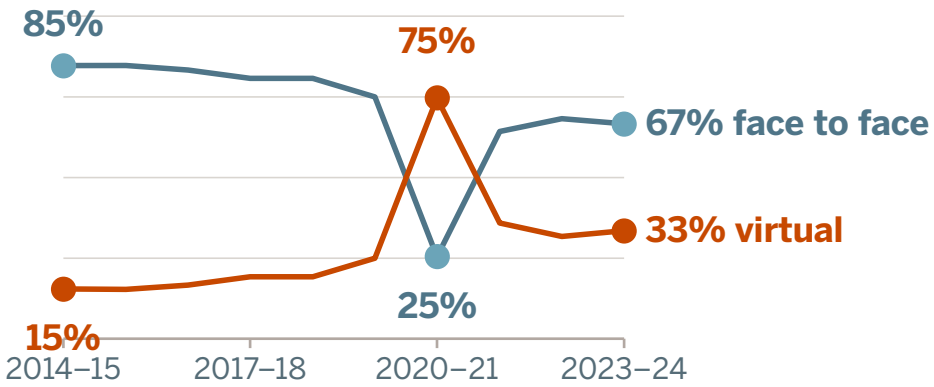
Source: Lee et al. (2026), using Education Research Center (ERC) data.

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Virtual courses are a growing share of dual credit courses

Face-to-face courses fell 18 percentage points, and virtual courses rose the same amount

Share of dual credit courses. Virtual means hybrid, online, video or other electronic delivery. The 2020–21 spike was the pandemic.



Source: Lee et al. (2026), using Education Research Center (ERC) data, 2014–15 to 2023–24.

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Staffing and logistics shaped which courses schools could offer

Statewide, higher participation did not always mean a wider range of courses.

1. Qualified local teachers meant more sections
2. Others depended on college partners' seats
3. Distance and scheduling limited choices

> **...[the college] only gives us 25 spots because they have to save the spots for their kids, so that limits us.**
>
> **High school counselor**

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Student outreach varied across schools

Statewide, participation differed across student groups.

1. Staff and students explained courses
2. Family nights and bilingual materials
3. Online posts alone missed some families

> **...for some families, getting that information back to the house is just, it's really challenging.**
>
> **K-12 district administrator**

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Eligibility requirements shaped which pathways students pursued

Educators described how students entered academic and workforce courses.

1. Some strong students struggled with testing
2. Workforce courses offered another way in
3. One college added support in courses

> Some of those students who need [dual credit] the most are not great test taking...
>
> **Community college administrator**

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Administrators emphasized in-person instruction and support

Statewide, virtual courses grew from 15% to 33% of dual credit.

1. Online courses expanded options
2. Credentialed teachers boosted success
3. Online students need knowledgeable staff

> **...a lot more successful when adjunct professors understand the developmental needs of our high school students.**
>
> **K-12 district administrator**

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The focus was not just on earning credits, but on how students could use them

Statewide, dual credit students are completing more college credit hours.

1. Courses had to count toward a degree
2. Some rethought credits with no clear place
3. Friends and family shaped choices

> **...just because dual credit is good, it doesn't mean that more dual credit is better. It has to be for a purpose...**
>
> **Community college administrator**

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Since 2014–15, dual credit has grown, but opportunity depends on where students live

1. Students completing dual credit rose from 19% to 31%
2. Students completing AP held steady, from 43% to 46%
3. Rural students lean on dual credit, urban on AP/IB
4. Rural students can access fewer dual credit courses
5. School offerings help explain rural–urban differences
6. Virtual dual credit courses grew from 15% to 33%

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Local capacity and support shaped students' dual credit options

1. Staffing and logistics shaped course availability
2. Outreach varied; online posts missed some families
3. Eligibility rules shaped which pathways students took
4. Administrators stressed in-person teaching and support
5. The focus was on how students could use their credits

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04 What it means

Putting the findings to work

What's at stake?

Statewide numbers can hide big differences in what students can access.

WITHOUT STRONGER LOCAL CAPACITY	WITH COORDINATION AND SUPPORT
Options depend on which school students attend	Schools coordinate courses and instructors
Some earn credits that do not fit their plans	Pathways are clear, with continued support
Some take online courses without enough support	Credits become progress toward a credential

The question is not just how many students take part, but whether their opportunities are useful and well supported.

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Policy recommendations

For state and regional policymakers

1 Expand flexible dual credit delivery

Bring faculty to local sites and pair online courses with support

2 Build regional dual credit networks

A regional partner, like an ESC, coordinates demand and instructors

3 Strengthen the rural teacher workforce

Continue investments like the Teacher Incentive and HB 2 PREP Allotments

4 Preserve multiple pathways into dual credit

College Connect for students not yet TSI ready, with advising and retesting

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Practice recommendations

For districts, colleges and regional partners

1

Coordinate dual credit access across the region

An ESC or other partner can help find course gaps and pool students

2

Create a shared course-to-pathway guide

Show how each course counts toward a degree and may affect financial aid

3

Build a dual credit instructor community

Bring high school and college faculty together before and during the term

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05 Questions

What would you like to know more about?

Thank you

Postsecondary Pathways for the Future of Texas

Questions? Contact

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