

# Canadian Researchers Ask, Do Dual-Credit Programs Help Students Succeed?

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What will it take for students to succeed beyond high school? How are schools preparing students for the reality of college-level work?

One method that has gained popularity in the United States is allowing students to take college-level courses that apply toward their high school credits and can also be transferred to colleges, if they choose to pursue postsecondary education. This is known as a *dual-credit program*, and it is widely used and popular in the United States.

College professors Bonnie Watt-Malcom and Alison Taylor, of the University of Alberta, recently conducted [research](#) on dual-credit programs in Canada, where they are not as ingrained in educational policies. They examined programs in the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario to see how effective the programs are, what struggles educators face in implementing them, and what proves most effective for running a successful program.

In addition to offering dual-credit courses, British Columbia and Ontario have apprenticeship programs in which students can learn various trades and life skills, such as carpentry, welding, and being an education assistant. Some students earn income during their apprenticeships, adding another incentive to pursuing a career in their respective fields.

The researchers found that students who were enrolled in dual-credit programs were better prepared for postsecondary education. However, due to a lack of coordination among education systems, the programs aren't implemented as smoothly as many administrators would have hoped. In Canada, the federal government is not directly involved with each province's education system, which the researchers say may explain why Ontario or British Columbia have more dual-credit programs than other provinces.

Another challenge for provinces wishing to implement dual-credit programs is a lack of funding. "Really what it comes down to is money and who is funding the education programs," says Watt-Malcom, who lives in Alberta. She says that in her province, the topic is gaining momentum and dual-credit programs are being piloted.

The authors of the research concluded that for dual-credit programs in Canada to improve, schools, the government, and employers need better partnerships so that they can work together to make these programs successful. Dual-credit programs offer skills and education that can benefit students, educators, and employers, providing students with the skills they need to be productive members of society after they finish their schooling. Once everyone sees the benefits of a strong and functioning program, and once proper funding and support are in place, more and more programs could be launched.

"The thing with dual credit is that it shouldn't be something that is just a filler," Watt-Malcom says. "It needs to be something that is solid. That means the postsecondary and secondary school have to have great buy-in and believe in it in order for young people to believe in it as well."

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