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Book Review - The Dual Enrollment Kaleidoscope

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BOOK REVIEW

Denecker, C. & Moreland, C. (Eds.).(2022). *The Dual Enrollment Kaleidoscope: Reconfiguring Perceptions of First-Year Writing and Composition Studies*. Utah State University Press.

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Do not make the same mistake that I did in assuming that *The Dual Enrollment Kaleidoscope* is only for professionals involved in first year composition (FYC) courses. In hindsight, grounding this important discussion in FYC makes sense because it is the most popular dual enrollment (DE) course nationally. As a gateway course, composition studies may have greater stakes than other content areas.

While the focus is on FYC, this carefully curated collection of evidence-based research and scholarship is relevant to all who research, who work in, are critical of, and who are champions of what is often referred to as the liminal space between high school and college.

The metaphor of a kaleidoscope is apt, as the chapters encourage readers to reflect on their own biases while presenting familiar DE themes in a new way through the lens of FYC. For example, as a leader and advocate of a DE program, my skepticism was heightened in the first few pages as editors Denecker and Moreland begin with the provocative claim, “To be honest, we are not entirely sure how we feel about dual enrollment” (2022, p. 4). But I soon realized that my own fears were unfounded, as each chapter offered a fresh perspective on equity, access, rigor, and partnerships

between secondary and postsecondary institutions.

The book is divided into four sections that emphasize a different perspective including the gap, alignment, legitimacy, and student success. For the most part, each chapter includes highlights from a research study. The variety and diversity of research methodologies adds value to the conversation, particularly because many feature the voices of students and high school teachers who are often underrepresented in DE research. The research studies in this book include complex data grounded in theory, in a format that is accessible and relevant to a wide range of audiences. The summaries below are not intended to be a complete synthesis, but are merely highlights that will hopefully entice readers to take a deeper dive by reading the book in its entirety.

Section One: Perspectives of the “Gap”: Theorizing the Divide includes thought-provoking critiques of DE that offer the opportunity for DE practitioners to critically reflect on their programs. Authors accurately identify unintended consequences that may occur when students do not have adequate support such as advising and academic monitoring, or if high school teachers do not have proper training about university-level expectations in FYC. These criticisms, while fair, are tempered with practical, thoughtful suggestions about how programs can be redesigned to avoid these pitfalls. Readers are reminded that DE offers new opportunities for collaboration that have the potential to blur the historical separation between secondary and postsecondary institutions.

Section Two: Perspectives of Alignment: Building High School-College Partnerships takes a deeper dive into the concept of liminality that high school teachers face as they navigate disparate expectations from high schools and colleges at the same time. Here, the constraints of the high school teacher are recognized as well as the importance of active two-way collaboration that gives teachers a voice and recognizes their experience and expertise. At the same time, authors suggest providing resources such as professional development in FYC that includes relationship-building and communities of practice.

In Section Three: Perspectives of Legitimacy: Is DE FYC really FYC?, the authors warn against the perspective of high schools as a deficit model. Authors explore reasons why students take FYC courses, including bending and shaping programs to fit their own needs. Faculty are challenged to consider what might be possible when DE students begin their college careers with higher-level writing skills. Gatekeeping, as a form of excluding those who are perceived to not belong, is admonished as educators at all levels are challenged to consider social justice work to mend the disparities in DE programming.

Section Four: Perspectives of Student Success: DE FYC for All? presents data

based on studies that include assessments of student writing, student self-efficacy in writing, and classroom observations and reflections. These approaches augment traditional studies that use longitudinal data to determine student success rates. Authors suggest that there is inconsistency in rigor and content of DE FYC courses, and remind readers that these issues are complex and cannot be attributed solely to the high school teacher.

Throughout the book, the notion of DE FYC as viewed through a kaleidoscope does, indeed, work well. Despite these multi-faceted lenses, several themes were pervasive and persistent. Authors repeatedly underscore the importance of rigor, program evaluation, assessment of student work, partnership, and collaboration. It is not surprising, then, that the accreditation standards developed by The National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) were mentioned throughout all four sections. As a former dual enrollment high school teacher and current higher education researcher and administrator, this book prompted me to critically reflect on issues my team is currently grappling with. I highly recommend this book to all dual enrollment professionals, faculty, and administrators involved in and affected by DE. As a simple turn changes the view through a kaleidoscope, it just might change your own perspective.