

# Accelerated Programs for High School Students: Dual Enrollment in Florida<sup>1</sup>

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Dual enrollment can provide an opportunity for students to graduate from high school while also receiving college credit. However, many students and families are not aware of the program or do not understand how it works. This publication aims to help inform potential students and their families about the dual enrollment program in Florida. The document provides information about program specifics and procedures as well as additional resources. This publication supports Extension efforts related to youth development and family financial well-being.

## What is dual enrollment?

Florida is one of many states that offer acceleration programs to high school students. An acceleration program is one that offers high school students the opportunity to take post-high school level classes so they can simultaneously earn credit toward both a high school diploma and a career certificate, an industry certification, or an associate or baccalaureate degree at an eligible college or university (Florida Department of Education, 2022). Dual enrollment is one type of acceleration program that entails enrollment in college-level courses to satisfy both high school and college requirements. Florida has one of the oldest dual enrollment programs in the nation.



Figure 1.  
Credits: Getty Images

## Why is this important for high school students?

Students who participate in dual enrollment (DE) save both time and money by earning college credit before they graduate from high school. Based on data from the Florida College Access Network, students who are part of a DE program have higher graduation rates, are more academically prepared, and have higher degree attainment (Ceballos, 2021). Students do not pay for tuition, laboratory fees, or books when participating in the program. The average cost of tuition per year at a Florida community college is \$3,280, so participating in DE can lead to significant

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cost savings (Community College Review, 2023). This can be particularly helpful for students who come from low-income families (Ceballos, 2021).

## What are differences between dual enrollment and other acceleration programs?

There are many types of acceleration programs for high school students that allow them to earn college credit.

The most well-known programs are Advanced Placement courses (AP), the International Baccalaureate program (IB), Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE or Cambridge), and College Level Examination Program (CLEP). The largest difference between the programs listed and dual enrollment is how students earn college credit. Students take full yearlong courses for AP, IB, and AICE, but they can only earn college credit if they successfully pass an end-of-the-year assessment. With dual enrollment, students attend and complete a college-level class that is only a semester long, and a C or better in the course will qualify as college credit. For dual enrollment, the course grade earned will be calculated into the student's high school and college GPAs.

## What are the requirements to participate in a dual enrollment program?

Students must attend a public, private, or charter school, or be registered as a home education student in Florida. Students may begin in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and must have a 3.0 unweighted high school GPA to participate in the dual enrollment program. If students are in 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they must have taken at least one high school-level course to generate a high school GPA. They must take one of the following tests and meet college readiness requirements: SAT, ACT, or PERT (Postsecondary Education Readiness Test).

## What are the potential pros and cons of participating in the dual enrollment program?

There are definite advantages to taking dual enrollment courses. Parents save money on college credits and students can save time by satisfying high school requirements along with college requirements with dual enrollment credit. Dual enrollment courses are given additional quality points in

the cumulative weighted GPA that is used for high school class rank (Broward County Schools, n.d.). Taking classes through dual enrollment can be impressive on college applications because it shows that the student is capable of college-level coursework. Students gain critical thinking skills, experience a little bit of college life and academic expectations, and can have a boost of confidence (Charski, 2020). Furthermore, it may be beneficial to have an introduction to college coursework while the support of parents and the high school structure are still present.

Nevertheless, there are other things to consider when contemplating dual enrollment. Even though the student is still in high school, courses taken through a community or state college will begin the student's college transcript, which will be requested by any college or university attended after high school. The courses taken and grades earned through dual enrollment will create the college GPA, and can affect admission into a college or university. Dual enrollment students are held to the same standards, policies, and procedures as other college students, which could differ from the rules and policies of their high school. Furthermore, while DE credits are often able to transfer to colleges and universities, this is not always the case. Students must check with their preferred college or university to ensure that DE credits will transfer. Some schools outside of Florida and/or private colleges do not accept dual enrollment credit. Additionally, some credits may transfer, but might not match the requirements of the student's intended major.

## What should students expect if they participate in dual enrollment?

Students should expect rigorous coursework in a college environment, and should understand that their college transcript and the grades for the courses they take in dual enrollment will follow them throughout their college career. They should also expect that, in a college class (whether in person or online), they will be around adult learners from many walks of life. Faculty members will treat a DE student as they would any other college student when it comes to content, rules, and curriculum. Students should communicate with their instructors about expectations or issues. Students should also meet with both their high school counselor and the advisor or counselor at the institution where they are taking courses to ensure that the courses meet their intended pathway.

## What should parents consider and expect regarding dual enrollment?

Parents should take into account their students' interests, maturity, and college readiness before considering the dual enrollment program. Parents must be aware of their students' out-of-school time commitments, their degree of self-direction, and whether the students will be able to successfully complete a college-level course. Parents must allow their students to be the primary communicators with faculty, deans, and other college staff at the DE institution. Parents should provide a support system for their children throughout the dual enrollment experience. If a child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or has a documented disability that may require accommodations, the high school does not automatically transfer that information to a postsecondary institution. Students must self-identify and contact the postsecondary institution's disabilities services office for accommodations. Parents should become familiar with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). While FERPA can allow parents access to their students' K–12 educational records, those rights are transferred to the students when they turn 18 or enroll in an institution beyond the high school level (US Department of Education, 2021).

## Where can one find more information about the dual enrollment program?

The Florida Department of Education maintains a comprehensive site related to dual enrollment, [Dual Enrollment \(fldoe.org\)](https://fldoe.org), where one can find course equivalency lists, articulation agreements with local school districts, and frequently asked questions. One may contact the local school district or the community or state college in one's county ([Florida Community Colleges | State of Florida](https://fldoe.org)) for additional information.

## Summary

Dual enrollment can provide significant benefits for students and their families. However, this program might not be a good fit for all students. Understanding the way the program works, as well as the potential pros and cons of participation, can help students and families evaluate whether this program would be beneficial.

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