

13.3 Earning College Credit in High School

Everyone likes getting a head start, right? Well, what if you could help your students get a head start on their college careers—and help them save money on tuition too?

There are several different options for earning college credit and high school credit simultaneously. Not all of them are available to all students, but the possibilities might be more accessible than you think. Let's take a look at some of the options.

You've probably heard of Advanced Placement or "AP" classes. [website: <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/exploreap>] These are college-level courses offered in high school—the College Board develops the course descriptions and the exams students take at the conclusion of the class. Depending on the subject and the institution the student wants to attend, an AP exam score of 3 or higher could translate into college credit by exempting students from entry-level courses in that subject.

International Baccalaureate or "IB" is an international curriculum grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. [website: <http://www.ibo.org/>] It is a diploma program that requires students to take standardized courses in six required subject areas. Texas institutions of higher ed grant at least 24 hours of credit to entering IB diploma students who received scores of at least a 4 on these standardized exams—a great option for students who live in communities where the IB diploma program is being implemented.

Are dual enrollment or dual credit courses available to students in your area? If so, these are great opportunities for students to earn college credit in high school, whether through an early college or concurrent enrollment program, taking a course at a local college campus or taking an online course. [website: <http://www.txvsn.org/portal/>]

Let's listen to this student tell her grandmother about some of the advantages of her concurrent enrollment program, where she took college-level courses at her high school:

Student talking to her grandmother on the phone: *Hi Grandma! Yeah everything is going great! Do you remember that concurrent enrollment option I was talking to you about? Well, I went through it and graduated high school with an associate's degree. It helped me get a job at the hospital as a nursing assistant. Yeah, I like it and it pays pretty well. My plan is work for a year, get a ton of experience, and then when I go back to school in the fall to get my bachelor's degree, I'll be entering as a junior.*

No, I'll still be working – at least part time. It's going to work out perfectly. My counselor and I have already gone over my budget and it looks like when I go back to school I'll only need to take out loans for one year. But I might even be able to get a scholarship to cover that. Thanks, grandma. Tell grandpa not to worry. I love you too, goodbye.

Here's another student, talking about his experience attending courses on a college campus.

Student 1: *What are you thinking of doing after graduation, man?*

Student 2: *I don't know, I'll probably just keep working until something better comes up. You too, right?*

Student 1: *I don't know man. Last semester I took this engineering course at that community college. You know, the one Ms. Mason was talking about?*

Student 2: *Aw man! You actually did that?*

Student 1: *I did, and it was actually a lot of fun.*

Student 2: *Really?*

Student 1: *Yeah man, it was amazing. We got to build a ton of stuff. We got to assemble and design our own building models. The professor was awesome!*

Student 2: *I don't know man, it just sounds like a ton of work.*

Student 1: *Yes, it was a lot of math.*

Student 2: *And you hate math!*

Student 1: *It actually wasn't that bad. I took some tutoring classes at school and I finished with a "B".*

Student 2: *Nice!*

Student 1: *And you know what? I'm getting college credit for this! I'm almost through college and I haven't even graduated high school yet.*

Student 2: *I guess I it is one less class to pay for.*

Student 1: *Right!*

Student 2: *You've really got this all figured out, don't you?*

Student 1: *Whatever! All I'm saying is, you should check it out. I mean, you don't plan on working at that burger joint for the rest of your life, right?*

Sounds pretty good, right? And what's even better is that research has shown that students typically underrepresented in higher education who participate in dual enrollment programs earn higher grade point averages and are more likely to graduate from high school, to attend a four-year university, to test into credit bearing courses, and to persist in post-secondary education than their non-participating peers.

In other words, earning college credit in high school isn't just about saving money and getting a jump on college. It can improve a student's overall college and career readiness so they'll be more likely to succeed once they get there.