



Teaching Dually-Enrolled High School Students

Over the past few years, Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) have developed a working relationship with Harford Community College (HCC) to provide high school students with the opportunity to enroll in college courses while still being enrolled in high school. Teaching dually enrolled students can be challenging and rewarding. In this *Innovation Abstracts*, I share some of the challenges and rewards I have experienced as a dual-credit assistant professor at HCC.

Dual Enrollment at HCC

Currently, students who are in their junior and senior years at HCPS are permitted to enroll in online dual-credit college courses at HCC. Students work on their HCC coursework while attending HCPS and receive high school and college credit for successfully completing the college course. Students who are dually enrolled at HCPS and HCC are expected to meet the requirements and expectations of both educational institutions in order to remain in the dual-credit program.

In HCC's online dual-credit program, students complete their dual-credit assignments on computers while being in designated high school classrooms at scheduled times. The high school dual-credit teachers are only present to oversee the classrooms, proctor tests and quizzes, and answer questions students may have. The high school teachers do not instruct the dual-credit course; the course instruction is provided by the college educator via the online course.

Insights Into Dual-Enrollment Programs

Working with dually-enrolled high school students over the past five years has yielded insights that I would like to pass on to colleges that may be considering offering online dual-credit programs.

First, I have discovered that high school students enrolled in the online dual-credit program at HCC want to actually meet their college instructors. Second, these students need support, guidance, and ongoing direction from their high school teachers in order to be successful in the dual-credit program.

Meeting the College Instructor

When I developed the dual-enrollment program at HCC, I learned that most high school students had never previously participated in an online class, and that they

found it difficult to do the online work not having met their instructor. Recognizing that the students wanted to meet their college instructor, I began to visit the high schools where the students were dually enrolled. I arranged meet and greet sessions with the students who were enrolled in my college classes. During these meetings I reviewed course expectations, met with students individually, and shared information about myself that students would normally learn if we were in a traditional classroom setting. The meet and greet sessions were immediately followed by face-to-face question and answer forums that allowed more interactions between the students and me. By visiting the students and answering their questions, the students became more comfortable with me being their teacher and with taking an online course.

Support From High School and College Instructors

High school students need continued guidance and direction throughout dual-credit courses. This guidance needs to come from the college faculty member and the high school instructor. I learned early on when teaching a dual credit course that students need and want weekly announcements from me with important reminders posted to our learning management system, as well as reminder emails sent to their student email accounts. Additionally, I found it very helpful when the courses' corresponding high school instructors followed up my announcements with reminders at the beginning of the high school class meetings or with information posted on a classroom bulletin board. While it is important to treat high school students like college students, it is also critical to support them while they are becoming familiar with the demands of college courses.

I also noticed that high school students really want someone they can go to when they have questions about their college course. Several of my dual-credit students emailed and called me, but many other students referred to their high school teachers when they had questions. It is important that the high school teachers are able to provide students with answers to their questions when the college instructors are unavailable; there needs to be a collaborative communication plan between the high school and college instructors for addressing students' questions. For instance, if the high school teacher notices that many students are asking similar questions about a course topic, then the high school teacher should inform the college instructor so he or she can address students' concerns. College and high school instructors should also meet once a month to enhance the communication between themselves and to review students' questions.

These collaborative meetings contribute to the success of a dual-credit program. During those meetings, the college and high school instructors are able to discuss what's working and what's not working with the program and what changes are necessary to ensure student success.

Conclusion

In dual-credit courses, high school students are completing the same course as traditionally-enrolled college students. Any fear high school students may have when pursuing their college degree is significantly reduced by their success in a dual-credit program. Students' successes in dual-credit programs rely heavily on the support they receive from their college and high school instructors. While dual-credit programs have several challenges, there are several rewards, including seeing high school students build the confidence needed to pursue their higher education degrees.

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