



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Dual College Credit Means Dual Responsibility

Spring semesters are enjoyable not only because of the warmer weather, but because high school students, including dual credit students, are generally excited about summer plans and graduation. However, I have also noticed that during this time my high school senior students tend to develop an ambivalent attitude towards assignment deadlines and attendance. The ambivalent attitude stems from students receiving their college acceptance letters and believing they are entitled to their diploma, even with impending assignments due.

Dual credit is an incredible opportunity for high school students to earn college credit. It also provides them with a preview of what to expect when they enter a college classroom. I've had the opportunity to teach several dual credit courses consisting of high school juniors and seniors. Because of these experiences, I have come to the realization that high school students often believe dual credit courses have the same standards and expectations as their regular high school classes.

Often there is a disconnect between dual credit course expectations, students' behaviors, and questions I receive from my students. For example, after mid-semester grades were posted, a student asked if he could correct his failed exam and complete missed assignments for passing grades, similar to what he would expect from his regular high school classes. During another spring semester class, I noticed that several of my high school seniors were not submitting assignments or participating in class. When I asked them why they were not participating, they responded with, "We're graduating in May and we've already been accepted to college." After the high school counselor and I explained and stressed to the students that the class did in fact "count" and they were not yet high school graduates, they realized the error of their ways and remained current with their assignments for the rest of the semester. As a result of discussing these issues with other professors who taught dual credit courses, I gathered that they were also experiencing similar issues with their high school dual credit students.

I offer the following suggestions for consideration about faculty can do to ensure students are successful in our dual credit courses:

- Do not lower expectations or standards. This is extremely important, especially if you teach high school full-time and teach a dual credit course.

High school students are used to high school standards that often allow greater flexibility such as correcting a failed exam or assignment for a passing grade. In addition, some students may not have a sense of the required time commitment. In other words, where some high school students may be able to pass a high school class by taking minimal notes or reading only a part of the homework reading assignment, dual credit course students must spend much more time reading and studying the material to be successful. Our job as dual credit instructors is to help them meet our institution's standards and not the other way around. For example, during a typical semester I give three exams. A student commented that there were "too many exams" because they were accustomed to taking only two exams at the end of their high school six weeks grading period. I reminded students that they were enrolled in a college-level course and not a high school course. In past years, I have had former dual credit students thank me for showing them what's expected in college. Once those students arrived on campus, they had little difficulty adjusting to the rigor of college-level courses or effectively managing their time since they had gained an understanding of what was expected of them.

- Environment is everything. Ideally it would be great if all dual credit students could travel to the college campus for their course. They would not only get a "feel" for the college environment, they could also attend classes with currently enrolled college students. If you are an instructor who teaches the course at a high school, remind those students at the beginning of every class that you are a college instructor and that they are college students. Also, frequently remind them about the higher expectations involved in college-level courses.
- Since we may only see students once or twice a week, information shared during class may not always be remembered. Reminders are students' best friends. Although we are already in the habit of repeating due dates, assignments, and other essential information, it may also be a good idea to provide email and other reminders throughout the week. One option is to become familiar with various education apps that can assist with this effort. There are several apps that allow you to send

anonymous text messages that remind students about due dates and upcoming exams.

- Work as a team with the dual credit liaison at your college, as well as the high school's dual credit counselor. Establishing relationships with these individuals is extremely beneficial, especially if you are new to teaching dual credit courses. For instance, these individuals can assist you if you are having issues with a student, such as a lack of class participation or attendance. I had a situation a few semesters ago with a student who began missing class due to a heavy extracurricular schedule. After contacting the dual credit liaison and high school counselor, they revised the student's schedule to avoid further conflicts with my class. It is advantageous to students when educators, counselors, and dual credit liaisons work together.
- Dual credit courses are important, especially since maintaining satisfactory academic progress is a condition to receiving federal aid. Students may have the impression that because they are enrolled in a dual credit class, they will receive college credit regardless of the amount of effort they put into their work or the grade they receive. I have told my students numerous times, "Dual credit means double the work," meaning they must work twice as hard to earn not only high school credit, but college credit as well. I emphasize that the academic requirements for dual credit courses are much higher, as are expectations regarding the quality of their work. In addition, I point out that the reading load and the time they need to spend studying may be more than what they are familiar with. It is important for students to know that some colleges will take the dual credit course grade and average it into the student's college GPA. As a result, a low final grade received in a dual credit class could adversely affect the student's financial aid eligibility.

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Conclusion

Dual credit courses are an excellent way for students to get a head start on completing the courses in their college degree plan. It is interesting to see that some institutions make these courses available to all high school students (even freshmen) if they meet certain requirements. Dual credit courses are a great way to orient high school students to the rigor and expectations of college courses. Therefore, it is our obligation as educators and administrators who work with dual credit students to ensure they are not only successful in our dual credit courses, but also well prepared for their journey through college and beyond.

What challenges have you faced when teaching dual credit courses? Tell us in the comment section or on [Facebook!](#)