

Freshman and Sophomore at The Same Time? How To Help Your Child Balance High School and College Dual Enrollment

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Is Your Child Ready for College in High School?

Many parents are eager to get their high school aged children into the dual enrollment program. Once your child begins dual enrollment, they have a chance to prove they can handle college courses and that speaks as loud as volunteer hours and essays to many admissions officers. However, if your child does participate in this program, it is a good idea to know what to expect so you can fully support their endeavors.

Dual enrollment, honors, or early admissions programs were all designed to allow high school students who have shown aptitude to get ahead while they are still enrolled in high school by taking college courses. Each state across the nation has its own program with various qualifications and benefits, but the general idea is to allow students who are willing to put in the work, to get actual college credits.

The first thing you should do is honestly gauge if your child is ready. There are many benefits to this program for your student, but if they fail there can be real risks to their future educational career as well. If you believe your child is mature enough, and ready to put in the work, then be ready to support them in many ways as they navigate learning how to balance their new classes.

It's About Time

In more than one turn of the phrase, entering college while in high school is about time. Many of the sophomore and senior students certainly feel that this is "about time" and they are ready to fly into the next stage of life. But really it is vital to know that success when it comes to taking college courses in high school is really all about time. Managing time correctly will make the experience successful for your child.

Breaking any tendencies to procrastinate before that first college dual enrollment semester can save stressful late nights and low grades in the coming months. Help your teen to understand the perks of delaying gratification and you may be instilling a life skill that can help them find success for years after they graduate, according to [Psychology Today](#).

Time Managing Tips for First Year College Students

- For each hour spent in the classroom a student should spend 2-3 hours studying, reading, and doing their homework in college. Help your child understand the time investment needed for their grades in college.
- The rule of thumb is 3 hours of studying in a class each week equates to an A, 2 hours will earn a B, and 1 hour a C. So, if your student wants the best GPA, they will have to work outside the classroom more than they may be used to.
- Prioritize going in. You and your child should have a heart to heart before they are permitted to apply to the program. Let them know you will back them up and help them at home but as a college student the responsibility of good grades falls directly on their own shoulders.
- The program can be rigorous and college professors will expect them to be self-motivated. If your student has trouble speaking for themselves or studying without being forced to, it should be addressed before that first semester because a college professor will not "hold their hand" and help them earn their grades.

Benefit Vs Risk

There are many extra perks when it comes to attending college and high school at the same time. For one thing, many high school students do not have to worry about bills, full time jobs, and adult responsibility. This means that it may be the most ideal time to take college courses. However, it is not all roses because taking these college courses can impact the rest of the student's scholastic career for better or worse. This means that they have the potential to pay for mistakes made in high school because the lax grades will be on their permanent college transcript. It goes both ways. Knocking out several semesters worth of college before they are even 18 is nothing to scoff at, as long as the risks are weighed appropriately.

2 Plus 2 Can Mean Significant College Savings

Many states nationwide participate in the 2 - 2 program. This means that if a student earns their Associates Degree from a community college, they will gain admittance into a state college. It can mean over \$20,000 in tuition savings in some cases and takes a lot of stress out of adult learners who may have believed they could not gain admittance into their state college. The dual enrollment program can be a gateway to even more savings because more students are working hard to make sure they receive their AA around the same time they receive their high-school diploma. This means they only need 2 more years to get their Bachelors, only 2 years of costly state tuition, and only 2 years of dorm living. For parents who plan to pay for their child's college tuition this savings can really add up.

In some states (Florida for example) the college classes and books are entirely free to the dual enrollment student. In other states the fees are shared with the parent, and in some cases the classes are available to take for college aged students, but the tuition and books are the same as any other student. Even in the states where the cost is full, it is still less expensive than attending a state or Ivy League college for four years, by far.

Does Your Child Qualify?

If you are interested in enrolling your child in the dual enrollment program in your area talk to their guidance counselor. They will have the individual information you need for your state's qualifications. As the program is becoming more common nation-wide the state's qualifications are starting to line up.

If you are a homeschool parent, contact the college itself. Many colleges have a special adviser just for these high school students who want to attend college early. In most states the qualifications for home-school students is passing the college readiness test. This test is on math topics spanning Algebra to Calculus and English skills up to a college level. Math skills at Algebra One and 10th Grade English skills are required for admission.

Other Ways to Support Your Child's Educational Goals

- **Worry about the small things, so they don't have to.** If your child is balancing college and high school, plus extracurricular and possibly volunteering or working to improve their chances of admission to their college of choice in a year or two be sure to "have their back" the best you can. Little things like reducing their household expectations during finals or allowing them a pass as needed can go a long way.

- **Make sure they are eating well.** A balanced diet is something that people overlook when it comes to planning for scholastic success. However, the body is more than just the sum of its parts and a good breakfast and healthy snack options can mean more energy and stamina to accomplish important goals.
- **Teach them stress management techniques.** Whether it's Yoga, a long walk, breathing exercises, jogging or whatever works for your family, discover stress reduction techniques that work and pass them along to your child so when things get tough, they know how to unwind.
- **Make them take breaks.** Goal oriented people sometimes overlook the value of down time. However, a weekend away, or a day of doing absolutely nothing at all can be just what the doctor ordered when it comes to brain power. Everyone needs to fully relax and to allow themselves to be lazy, even the dual-enrolled, goal-oriented child.

What About Summer?

As many college students attend school year-round, it leaves the dual enrollment parent wondering where their child stands during summer months when most high school kids are free. Like most of college the answer depends on the individual student. Many college students see summer as a time to get ahead, to make up for classes they did not do great at, or to take a break. All these options are also open to your high school aged college student.

Keep in mind if they do choose to attend summer classes that they sometimes run a bit faster paced than the fall and spring classes, and to check with their adviser about the pacing before committing. Also, even if you and your child decide to enroll in summer courses to get ahead, it may be a good time to choose a light load so the summer months can be a break, even with a class or two.

Don't Forget to Enjoy the High School Years

Even if your child is a high achiever one of the best things you can do for them is to make sure that they also enjoy their final years of high school while balancing college. Remember that there is more to life than GPA in college and in high school (although it is important). Encourage your child to find their own interests and passions in life during this time. Push them to join clubs for the fun of it, and a side perk will be a richer, more unique college essay when the time comes to apply for their college of choice after graduation.