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By **Maureen Downey**

Dual enrollment vs. AP classes: Are Georgia high school students learning about both options?

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Rick Diguette is a local writer and college professor. Today, he takes up a topic of personal interest to me as a parent of two high school sophomores, dual enrollment.



Should more high school students be able to take classes like this one at Georgia State? (GSU Photo)

My twins have to decide in the next few weeks whether to apply for their high school's new International Baccalaureate diploma program, which locks them into six two-year courses over 11th and 12th grades. Their other option is to select a mix of IB and AP courses, which could possibly allow space for dual enrollment at a local college.

But I found out from the high school it falls on parents to pursue and enable dual enrollment. Parents whose children dual enrolled at Georgia State, Georgia Perimeter or Tech confirmed to me they spent a lot of time and energy making it happen.

Diguette says it should be easier for Georgia high school students to take courses at local college. But he says schools often promote AP classes to their students instead.

By Rick Diguette

It is no secret that the cost of a college education is greater today than ever before. And the cost just keeps rising. That is also why the debt college seniors incur by the time they graduate has continued to rise—by an estimated 6% every year since 2008. When they finally have that diploma in hand, better than 70% of America's college graduates have racked up almost \$30,000 in student loans.

Those are the cold, hard facts that most Georgia parents must reckon with sooner or later. Even parents of a child who can take advantage of HOPE know that Georgia's lottery-funded scholarship program isn't nearly as lucrative as it once was, especially if their child doesn't qualify for a Zell Miller Scholarship.

Since there is no reason to believe that college costs will begin to fall any time soon, parents and students must be resourceful as they plan ahead. However, one low-cost option that they sometimes overlook is Dual Enrollment.

High school juniors and seniors participating in Dual Enrollment can earn college credits while satisfying their remaining high school graduation requirements at the same time. Although this 2-for-1 deal has been around a long time, the savings it can generate have never looked more attractive.

Dual Enrollment students taking two college courses each semester during their junior and senior years can graduate from high school with 24 college credits. That is almost the equivalent of freshman year. And most of the costs associated with earning those fully transferable college credits will be paid for by the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

Another Dual Enrollment option available exclusively to public high school juniors and seniors is Move On When Ready. Students participating in the program must take all of their courses at a local college, but they can still take part in team sports and other non-curricular activities at their high school. The costs associated with courses taken as a Move On When Ready student are fully funded by the Georgia Department of Education.

If all of this sounds too good to be true, rest assured it isn't. But there is a hitch.

According to the Georgia Department of Education, beginning in the 8th grade all Georgia students should receive information about Dual Enrollment by April 1 of each school year. If your school's principal supports Dual Enrollment, you and your child will hear about the program.

But not all principals are sold on Dual Enrollment, and the same can be said for some teachers and guidance counselors. What they promote instead is Advanced Placement.

The Educational Testing Service has done a great job marketing Advanced Placement as a means of adding rigor to the high school curriculum. Teachers and guidance counselors advise parents and students that college admissions screeners look favorably on high school transcripts with a high percentage of Advanced Placement courses.

And yet in one of its very own reports, ETS acknowledges that "although most students attend a high school at which the AP program is available, few students actually take an AP exam even after taking an AP course, and only a fraction of those who do take a test score high enough to qualify for college credit or placement in the colleges and universities that offer such opportunities."

Participating in Dual Enrollment benefits high school students in many ways. Perhaps most important, it prepares them for the college environment which is

quite different from what they've grown accustomed to in high school. And it also allows them to save their parents some money.

Best of all, those 24 college credits earned by my hypothetical Dual Enrollment students are 24 college credits they won't have to pay for with student loans.

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About the Author



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Maureen Downey has written editorials and opinion pieces about local, state and federal education policy since the 1990s.



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