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## Design a Dual Credit Program that Works

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## Design a Dual Credit Program that Works

### Abstract

"Designing an effective dual credit program that opens doors for your students is within reach."

Posting about opportunities for students to earn college credit while in high school from *CACE -The Center for the Advancement of Christian Education*.

*Designing a Dual Credit Program that Works*

### Keywords

Center for the Advancement of Christian Education, CACE, dual enrollment, Christian education, college credits

### Disciplines

Christianity | Education

# Design a Dual Credit Program that Works

Joe Bakker

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During the 2017-2018 school year, 82% of public high schools in the United States offered dual credit opportunities for their students. Here in 2021, most secondary students and their parents expect an opportunity to earn college credit while in high school. Christian high schools seeking to meet this expectation have decisions to make about whether to use in-state programs, send their students off-campus, bring in professors, or leverage online options.

Designing an effective dual credit program at your high school is daunting. You have to consider your students' interests and all the different colleges they could attend. You also must decide how the new courses will integrate with your existing program. After all, you already have a full catalog of core courses and electives. The choices you make will impact your school's overall program. Below are a few points to consider.

## Stick to Your Values

Administrators, students, and parents can easily get caught up in dual credit opportunities without prioritizing their value in a Christian education. I believe in the mission of Christian education and its eternal impact on students' lives. The dual credit choices you make for your school must support that mission. Look for options that provide students with opportunities to further their content-area education while also building their understanding of the truth revealed in God's word.

## Balance Opportunities

Whereas earning college credit is a great way to jump-start a college degree, dual credit courses do not negate the value of a strong high school education. Build a dual credit program that adds to your high school curriculum with core courses and electives that allow upper-level students to further their studies as they reach the end of your course catalog. Also, I recommend policies that ensure students completing a minimum number of courses at your high school. A policy should provide students with flexibility but maintain confidence in every high school diploma you award.

## Find a Partner That Treats You and Your Students Right

Search for an institution that cares about your students' best interests. A good indicator is whether the institution provides an academic advisor to help students navigate college credit and credit transfers. Similarly, a good **partnering institution** will provide a person assigned as a liaison to your school and asks you to supply one in return. Communicative relationships do not just happen. Effective, long-term partnerships flourish in an organized environment where regular, deliberate communication is the norm. Do not settle for being treated as a number.

## Encourage Students to Check Transfer Policies Early

Many high school students sign up for a dual credit course offered at their high school *assuming* that the course will help them in college rather than *checking* that it will. The result can be earning credit for a course that does not meet a requirement at their college of choice. The course transfers in as elective credit but does not move the student toward an educational program goal. Build a step into your process that encourages students and parents to contact their potential colleges before starting a dual credit course. The key question is this one: how does a specific course impact the institution's graduation requirements?

## Dual Credit vs. Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement (AP) is still an excellent way for students to earn college credit while in high school. A definitive answer to whether one option is better for students than the other would involve researching AP exam results compared to dual credit grades and then combining that data with the transfer acceptance rate of AP scores and dual credit at preferred colleges. However, the question has a simple answer for most parents and students. They would rather place their trust in academic performance over the duration of a semester than a single AP exam after the course is over. Designing an effective dual credit program that opens doors for your students is within reach. I recommend taking the initiative to proactively plan a program that works for your school instead of reacting to last-minute requests from students and parents. Programs such as Dordt University's **Partnership Program** can help you customize options that align with your mission.