

Maine Council for English Language Arts

Position Statement on Dual Enrollment

Adopted August 27, 2016

Increasingly, students in Maine and throughout the nation are pursuing college credit while in high school. This option takes a variety of forms: Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and concurrent enrollment. Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs have a proven record of preparing high school students for the challenges of college writing; however, this position statement focuses on concurrent enrollment programs whereby students are dually enrolled in a high school English Language Arts course and a College Composition course. Generally, a sponsoring university or college certifies the high school ELA teacher as qualified to teach a college level composition course and confers credit upon successful completion of the College Composition curriculum at a reduced tuition cost.

The Maine Council for English Language Arts recognizes that significant cost savings are associated with concurrent enrollment, which makes this option attractive for students and parents. In an age of incredible student debt, accumulating college credit at a significant savings makes perfect sense. We also recognize that some high school students need the added challenge of college level courses to keep them interested in school, to further their goals, and to find the support that comes from a cohort of highly motivated learners. We also see the chance for professional development that dual enrollment courses offer high school teachers. The opportunity to work with their college and university colleagues in composition studies and curriculum development is a beneficial side effect of concurrent enrollment. Students also could benefit from being part of a cohort of learners who have similar goals and aspirations.

However, we also recognize that several risks are involved:

- Constraints – Dual enrollment programs can foster misunderstanding of college readiness including false conceptions of the college experience, conflation of the demands of high school and college writing, simplification of the demands of composition, and/or possible mismatch of expectations and learning outcomes. Seamless progression into college is a misnomer. The process of moving from high school to college is sequential, but not smooth, as college requires the self-directed integration of skills and approaches to learning often sponsored separately in high school.

- Time demands – Most colleges and universities employ a 15-16 week semester as opposed to a one year high school course where engagement in composition is interspersed with literature and other demands of the high school curriculum. High school students in dual enrollment composition courses may not be immersed in composition studies with the same depth and breadth of first year college students.
- Program oversight – The question of who is in charge of the dual enrollment program arises. Is it the sponsoring college or university or the superintendent of the participating district? These administrative issues could have effects on how composition is taught, what is emphasized, and how grades are awarded.

The Maine Council for English Language Arts believes that the development of literacy is a lifelong process. Concurrent enrollment programs that offer college credit, then, should embody this belief. Informed by position statements by the National Council of Teachers of English and the Conference on College Composition and Communication¹, we believe that effective programs must be composed of the following:

- I. Composition has a content that needs a singular focus, and although the other aspects of high school English Language Arts are important, composition deserves its own focus.
- II. Assessment calibration between college and high school faculty needs to be ongoing, particularly for end-of-course evaluations.
- III. The sponsoring university or college must provide to high school faculty course charters, sample syllabi, rubrics and other materials that outline the learning outcomes and expectations of a rigorous college composition course that is in line with norms recommended by professional organizations.
- IV. The sponsoring university or college should provide oversight of the dual enrollment course with frequent conversations and observations.
- V. Students enrolled in dual enrollment programs deserve the full privileges and services provided by the sponsoring university.

¹ <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/dualcredit>