



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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Footing the bill for dual credit courses

This week, the Senate Education Committee passed [SB 87](#) out of committee. Sen. Stan Humphries has done an excellent job bringing this bill back to the General Assembly --the bill passed the Senate in 2013. This legislation would support dual credit courses in our high schools.

Dual credit is defined in [KRS 164.002](#) (4) as a “college-level course of study developed in accordance with [KRS 164.098](#) (Council on Postsecondary Education standards) in which a student receives credit from both the high school and postsecondary institution.” Under SB 87, students could use Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship ([KEES](#)) money they had earned to pay for tuition of up to six college credits per year.

Below is an excerpt from a blog I wrote in 2012 about the need for dual credit funding.

The Need for College Credit for High School Students

Recently, The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) conducted a survey of school districts to ask about dual credit issues.

- more than 32 percent of school districts do not offer dual credit for career and technical courses
- more than 97 percent of school districts do offer dual credit for college general education courses
- more than 60 percent of the districts require parents/students to pay for tuition costs
- more than 60 percent of districts require parents/students to pay for textbooks
- more than 30 percent of districts utilize virtual learning for dual credit

As I visit school districts across Kentucky, I find many variations in the cost of dual credit. In some locations, the postsecondary institution has funding to offer dual credit at no cost to students. In other locations, students pay the full tuition costs that a college student would pay.

The results of our survey and my personal visits reveal a number of concerns about equity of opportunity across Kentucky for students to have equal access to dual credit courses. Why is dual credit a good idea?

A recent [study](#) from Jobs for the Future – *Taking College Courses in High School: A Strategy for College Readiness* – studied the impact of dual credit courses in Texas. Texas has had a strategy around college readiness and dual credit for a number of years. Here are some of the findings

- Students who take dual credit courses were 2.2 times more likely to enroll in higher education.
- Students who took dual credit courses were two times more likely to return for a second year of college.

- Students who took dual credit courses were 1.7 times more likely to complete a college degree.

I strongly support SB 87 for the following reasons.

- **Dual credit works.** As evidenced in my 2012 blog, students who take dual credit courses are more successful in postsecondary.
- **Funding will actually save money.** Providing KEES funding for high school students taking dual credit courses will actually save money in the long run. Students who receive dual credit tuition funding through KEES will be more likely to complete postsecondary degrees which will lead to better paying jobs and improved revenue for the state.
- **Funding for dual credit addresses inequity.** Students in Pikeville should have the same opportunity to take dual credit courses as students in Paducah and receive tuition support from the state. Our current system reveals huge inequities across school systems and higher education service regions. Why should one student pay \$190 per credit hour in one part of the state and another student receive the course for no cost?
- **There are no long term costs.** SB 87 would provide the funding for tuition through KEES funds, however, no student would get more KEES funding than they would have earned under the existing program. There will be a short term cost as the program is implemented for high school seniors in 2014-15 and high school juniors in 2015-16.
- **Funding will increase our college- and career-readiness rates.** In 2009, [Senate Bill 1](#) set a goal of 67 percent of KY high school graduates reaching college and career readiness by 2015. Students who successfully complete dual credit courses in either general education or career/technical education are twice as likely to reach college- and career-readiness as students who do not take dual credit courses.
- **Funding will enhance career and technical education.** Prior to 2012-13, there was no significant cost for many students who took dual credit career and technical courses. Since that time, enrollment has dramatically decreased due to students having to pay an administrative fee to take the courses. This decline in dual credit enrollment in career and technical courses will have a significant impact on students able to gain industry recognized certifications which in turn means Kentucky will have a less skilled workforce.
- **Dual credit benefits many students.** Dual credit is not just for our brightest students. More than 3,700 students earned in excess of 22,000 credit hours in 2012-13 and thousands more earned dual credit in general education courses. In many school districts, better than 40 percent of high school seniors graduate with six or more credit hours thanks to dual credit. In many of our early college models, students can graduate with 30 hours or more of dual credit.
- **Dual credit saves parents and students money.** By gaining dual credit through an early college program or career technical program, students achieve college- and career-readiness at higher rates meaning they should not have to take non-credit bearing remedial courses in college which will save parents and students money.

As a member of the board that oversees the KEES funding, I do recognize that we must work out the initial impact of SB 87; however, I do hope that we will not sacrifice long term benefits for our students, our postsecondary programs, and our economy for the sake of short term inability to provide adequate funding. I hope we can come together in the next few weeks to resolve the issues around SB 87. OUR KIDS CAN'T WAIT!!!

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Education Commissioner