

Dual Enrollment in Michigan: the new dual enrollment law

by Kelly Schultz

In 1996, the Michigan State Legislature passed a law requiring school districts to pay a portion of a student's foundation allowance towards classes at a postsecondary institution for high school juniors and seniors. That law became known as the Dual Enrollment law. Students who passed the merit exam (at that time called the MME) and wanted to take a class that met certain requirements were eligible for the placement. The classes that students could take had to be classes that they couldn't get at the high school, couldn't be recreational or hobby related, and couldn't be religion based. Students have been using that law for over a decade to take classes like Calculus, British Literature, Advanced Physics, Russian, or Psychology.

With the coming of the new state requirements and new state tests, the Dual Enrollment law was a little outdated. This year, the Senate introduced Senate Bill 0622 to update the law. The state has been encouraging high schools to offer all students opportunities to earn college credit or trade accreditation while students are still in high school. Most schools now offer several Advanced Placement or Education for Employment classes. This bill takes dual enrollment a step further. It allows all high school students (9th -12th grade) to take dual enrollment classes. The students do not have to have passed the current merit exam to take the courses, but they must have passed some readiness exams. The exact wording is:

To be an eligible student, a student who has not taken the Michigan merit examination must have achieved a qualifying score in all subject areas on a readiness assessment and a student who has taken the Michigan merit examination must have achieved a qualifying score in all subject areas on the Michigan merit examination. However, if the student has not achieved a qualifying score in all subject areas on a readiness assessment or the Michigan merit examination, as applicable for the student, the student is an eligible student only for the limited purpose of enrolling in 1 or more eligible courses under this act in a subject area for which he or she has achieved a qualifying score, in computer science or foreign language not offered by the school district, or in fine arts as permitted by the school district.

The new law does enact some limits. A student in 9th or 10th grade can only take 2 courses for their first year of enrollment. Students cannot take more than 4 courses during subsequent years. A student who starts dual enrollment in 11th or 12th grade cannot take more than 6 courses per year. Overall a student is limited to 10 courses during high school. A student must be enrolled in at least one class at the high school to be considered a student of that school.

There are a few interesting caveats contained in the accompanying bills. If the student does not complete the course at the postsecondary institution, the student is responsible for repaying the school district any money that the district does not get refunded from the postsecondary institution. For students in nonpublic schools, the school can get reimbursed from the state for classes that their students take at a postsecondary institution. However, the student can't get high school credit for the class unless it is counted as a nonessential elective (not as a core class). For example, a student could get high school credit (and college credit) for a Psychology course but not get high school English credit for an English course (the student could still get college credit).

To determine the amount of money a school district will pay towards a college course, take the foundation allowance for the student, divide it by two, and multiply it by the fraction of college courses taken with respect to the total number of courses that a student takes. For example, if the foundation allowance for the student is \$7209, the allowance per semester is \$3605. If a student takes one college course and has 6 classes per day total, then the high school would be required to pay $\$3605 \times (1/6) = \600.83 towards a college course. For 7 classes per day the total would be \$515, for 5 classes per day it would be \$721. This amount should cover a community college course but does not usually cover a college or university course. The school district could choose to pay more than this amount, but in hard economic times school districts have been cutting back on the amount that they pay. Schools are not required to pay any fees or pay for books.

Overall, the new dual enrollment law seems to be favorable to students. If you have a high school student to counsel, advise them that taking classes at a community college, college, or university may be exactly what they need.

References:

Michigan Legislative Website for Senate Bill 0622/0623
(<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/%28S%28bpb5z45oetujqz2qdtbhwzu%29%29/mileg.aspx?page=BillStatus&objectname=2011-SB-0622>)

Michigan Legislative Website for Senate Bill 0709/0710 (<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2011-2012/publicact/pdf/2012-PA-0134.pdf>)

Postsecondary Enrollment Legislation for Tuition/fee Assistance for Public Acts 159, 160 and 161,
Guidelines for calculation worksheet
(http://michigan.gov/documents/Guidelines_for_Calculating_the_foundation_allowance_137979_7.pdf)

Dual Enrollment Frequently Asked Questions (http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/9-12_Dual_Enrollment_FAQs_397781_7.pdf)