



DUAL ENROLLMENT

Articulated Acceleration is a program that has been available to Florida students in public and private schools for many years. Dual enrollment is one of the ways to accelerate a student's progress. The Florida Statutes which address these programs are 240.115 and 240.116. In 1996, the Home Education Foundation was successful in lobbying the Legislature to include home educated students in this program. The home education portion is defined in F.S.240.116(7).

Many home education students have taken advantage of this opportunity, and several have earned an AA degree from a community college about the same time they graduate from home education. This is precisely what the program was designed to do, thus the name articulated acceleration. It was established by the Legislature to move students, who are ready, through the educational system at an accelerated rate. It is a great concept and most people recognize the advantages of this program. The problem is that the state pays both the community college and the high school to provide the courses to the students, thus making it a doubly funded program. I have been talking to Legislators and the Appropriation Committee Staff since 1994 about dual enrollment funding. There has been a desire, since that time, to eliminate the double funding issue. The Legislature likes this program and sees it as a way to move students through the system and save educational dollars. They have been frustrated that students are not being allowed to take full advantage of this program. The Legislature knows that if they eliminate the funding to public high schools then the high schools won't offer dual enrollment to the students.

Public high schools have generally offered dual enrollment to students on the high school campus, with the community college providing the teacher. The public schools argue that they deserve the FTE for the student because they provide the facilities and support necessary for their students to take these courses, and the students are enrolled in the public school for those classes. Community colleges rightly deserve the FTE for the student, because they provide the instruction. The public schools have controlled dual enrollment opportunities for public school students by allowing them to take only the courses offered on their campus or by allowing them to take dual enrollment courses after school or in the summer at the community college campus. Most of these decisions were made to avoid losing student funding, but there were other contributing factors. I discovered one factor in the law which penalized public school students who took dual enrollment courses. Florida Statute 232.2462 defined one full credit in high school as 150 hours of bona fide instruction and specifically stated that 6 hours of credit earned through dual enrollment would be counted as one full credit in high school. That meant that if a public high school student took French I and French II at the community college it would transfer to the high school as 1 credit. It was ludicrous to count two college courses as one high school credit, but that is precisely what the law stated. It did not affect home schoolers, except the ones that went into high school during the 11th or 12th grade, but it was an inequity in the system. Three years ago, I talked to the Division of Community Colleges about this problem. They did not want to tackle it. The next year I approached them again, and again, and again until they finally went with me to talk to the analyst in the Senate Education Committee. The Analyst said that no one was complaining, so apparently there was no problem and no way to equate the courses. The next year, the 2000 Legislature filed HB 2105 to address some of the problems with dual enrollment.

It required the school districts to offer dual enrollment as a choice to students. It also addressed the credit problem. It required that the state Articulation Coordinating Committee compare course content of high school courses and community college courses and award credit for a high school diploma and community college credit for courses that meet both requirements based solely on course content and not on seat time. The Legislature wanted to make dual enrollment more accessible to public school students. HB 2105 was intended to make dual enrollment student-driven and allow public school students to accelerated their education, just like home education students are currently doing.

The position of the Division of Community Colleges has always been to support home education students. The Division has always told community colleges that the law requires them to provide the same opportunities that are available to public school students, but there is nothing in the law that prohibits the community colleges from providing greater opportunities. Initially, everyone was apprehensive about home education students coming to take college courses in the 10th or 11th grade, because they were unfamiliar with our students. However, once home educated students began taking classes, the community colleges could see that these were the type of students that they wanted to attract. Now community colleges are actually recruiting home-educated students for dual enrollment, because these students usually stay to complete their AA degrees. The community colleges are financially rewarded by the Legislature for the number of students who complete their AA degrees.

During the 2001 Legislative Session, HB 1813 was introduced to address the double funding issue of public school students. The Senate did not cut the funding of dual enrollment students to public schools, but the House did, initially. The House was trying to eliminate the funding to public schools for dual enrollment, but they knew this was an issue that would have to be negotiated. This bill only related to the funding that PUBLIC SCHOOLS receive for dually-enrolled students. It did not affect community college funding, nor the dual enrollment funding for home-educated students. During the negotiations between the House and the Senate, the public school funding for dual enrollment was put back into the budget.

For the first time since 1992, community college funding was based on a model which included enrollment as a factor. This means that any student, including dually-enrolled students, taking a course at the community college will be counted in the funding model. There was an increase in the program funds, to the community college budget, this year of approximately \$24 million.

Community colleges have an open door policy which requires them to admit any qualified student. If your local community college limits dual enrollment to home educated students in the upcoming year it will be a local decision by the community college board of trustees. There may be a legitimate cap on certain classes, a lack of understanding of the laws related to home educated students or a misunderstanding of the budget. If you have any problems with getting home educated students into dual enrollment, call me. I will try to help you work it out.

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