

Concurrent Enrollment Credit: Considerations

By Cindy Walker

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Concurrent enrollment credit is given at the community college level for high school classes that are taught by a master's prepared high school teacher in the local high school. For instance, AP Language and Composition taught by a master's prepared high school teacher who is "on staff" at Red Rocks can earn your student a college grade and 3 college level English credits.

Sounds like a good deal right? College credit paid for by the school district. Your student doesn't have to sweat the AP exam. Most of the time it is a good deal. However, if you have an exceptional student who is thinking about graduate school or has an interest in prestigious scholarships, it may not be such a good idea after all. Though it is hard thinking eight years in advance for your 14 or 15 year old, you have to. Once you sign that concurrent enrollment agreement your "bright" student is stuck with whatever grade they earn.

If your GT student earns straight "As" then don't read any further. If your gifted student has bought into the "B" is an "A" mantra sold by counselors, teachers and principals to raise enrollment in AP courses there is huge potential for trouble.

The Red Rocks grade that becomes part of the college transcript is whatever the student earns in the second semester of the high school course. The first and second semester grades are not averaged.

Many prestigious scholarships for graduate school and research dollars require a minimum college GPA of 3.7 or higher to apply. If your student is saddled with a "B" (or two) from their freshman or sophomore high school years, their overall GPA the day they start attending college could already be a 3.7 or lower. That doesn't leave any room for error as they embark on their college career. (<http://gpacalculator.net>)

On the other hand, if the student takes the AP exam and gets a 4 or 5, they receive college credit on the pass/fail system with no associated impact to their college GPA. (Check the college's AP credit tables for score requirements.)

In addition, college merit scholarships generally require a student to maintain a minimum GPA to keep the scholarship. The rule of thumb is that your student's high school GPA will drop one point in college due to a higher level of difficulty in course work and distractions. Check with admissions to see how they calculate GPA. If the college separates the college GPA from the overall (which will include those community college grades) be sure only the college GPA impacts any merit money.

Bottom line; keep an eye on those first semester AP/concurrent class grades and do not sign the concurrent enrollment papers until the beginning of second semester. If your student has a low "A" first semester, remember the second semester of an AP class is harder and it might be in their best interest to pursue college credit through AP exams rather than concurrent enrollment. Cindy Walker is the parent of two GT students. She became an advocate for the gifted as a result of their needs. Her eldest was valedictorian at Conifer High School, '14, based on earning an "A" in 22 semesters of college level course work.