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The Lowdown on AP, CLEP, and Dual Enrollment

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Dear Friends,

Homeschool parents know how important it is to stretch available dollars as far as possible. Two for one deals (such as earning both college and high school credit for the completion of one course) or saving tuition dollars by testing out of certain courses are attractive options for homeschooled teens.

Some teens--but not all--may be up to the challenge of working hard and possibly earning college credit for coursework completed during high school. If your teen is not yet ready for these advanced courses and testing opportunities, don't feel badly or think that your teaching is substandard. The Lord created each of our children with a variety of talents and abilities, and teens should not be encouraged to take courses that they are not prepared to successfully complete. (You may want to reread one of the past newsletters entitled, "[Eureka! Average to the World but Special and Unique to God.](#)")

On the other hand, if your teen is capable and motivated, you may want to explore ways to maximize your dollars through completion of Advanced Placement courses and tests, CLEP, or dual enrollment courses. Let's take an in-depth look at these various ways of earning college credit while in high school.

Advanced Placement Courses and Tests

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are offered in more than 30 different subject areas. These rigorous courses are taken in high school but taught on a college level. Because there are stipulations placed on the content of the courses, we direct you to the College Board website for their helpful information:

- <http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=8231>
- <http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=8232>

In addition to covering the subject material in a yearlong or semester-long class, the student prepares to take the AP exam administered by the College Board on a specific date in May. If a student scores well on this test, it is possible to earn college credit. Each college determines which AP tests they will recognize, and the minimum score necessary to earn credit. The College Board has a [list of colleges](#) that accept AP test scores for credit on its website.

AP courses and related test scores are well-recognized by many colleges as objective indicators of the student's ability to do college level work. In addition, the grades and scores from these courses will help to validate your parent-issued grades in the eyes of college admission counselors. AP courses may be taught by the parent, taken online, or through an outside instructor. In the [curriculum section](#) of our high school website, we offer a sampling of course providers.

The designations, "AP" and "Advanced Placement" are trademarked by the College Board and may not be noted on the transcript unless the course syllabus has been [approved](#) by the AP Central Department of the College Board. AP tests cover specific material, so the instructor of the course should be aware of each test's content in order to prepare the student well for the exam. Because AP courses are challenging and time-consuming, most students do not take more than two or three AP courses in any given year. You may want to have your teen begin by taking just one AP course in order to become familiar with the amount of work these courses require.

Due to the rigors of an AP course, when computing a grade point average (GPA), the letter grade points are increased by one point. As an example, an "A" in a standard course receives four points, but an "A" in an Advanced Placement course receives

5 points resulting in a "weighted" GPA.

Homeschoolers should contact the counselor's office at a local public or private school to make arrangements for your teen to take an AP test. Since not all schools proctor every AP test, it's best to check with a school early in the fall to see whether or not the AP test your teen requires will be ordered by it. Your teen will use a special homeschool state code when registering to take the AP exam so that his score is not reported in the school's scores, but instead comes directly to you, the parent. The College Board has additional tips for homeschooled students wishing to take an AP test.

One complaint of homeschoolers regarding AP courses is that the course content is secular. If this is a concern to you, then you may want to choose a course developed by an instructor that will bring a Christian worldview to the material. Patrick Henry College Preparatory Academy will offer such a slate of AP courses beginning fall semester 2010. Members of HSLDA receive a discount for each course.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

Another way to accumulate college credits economically is by taking CLEP tests. While a typical 3-credit college course may cost upwards of \$400 and in many cases significantly more than this, doing well on a CLEP test may earn college credit with the cost of the test (\$75) being a great savings. It is advantageous for your teen to take the CLEP test as soon after studying the course material as possible while it is still fresh in his mind. There are many study tips and test prep help available to students prior to taking a CLEP test. Each test is about 90 minutes long and consists primarily of multiple choice questions. Homeschoolers register directly with one of 1600 test centers to arrange to take the test. To find a test center near you, visit the College Board website.

The College Board site also provides a summary of the descriptions and specific content for each of the 33 CLEP tests.

Before expending effort, study time, and money in taking CLEP tests, be sure to contact the colleges your teen is interested in attending to check if they accept CLEP credits, if there is a maximum number of credits that may be earned through CLEP, and any other restrictions on receiving CLEP credit. For example, Patrick Henry College accepts no CLEP credits.

Dual Enrollment Courses

When a high school student completes a college level course at a local community college or 4-year university, or completes a course online through a distance learning program, the course is called a dual enrollment course. The student typically receives both high school and college credit for completion of the course. (See a more in-depth explanation of dual enrollment credits in the Court Report article, "Dual Enrollment: A Two for One Deal!").

Before enrolling your teen in a dual enrollment course, be sure to assess whether he or she is ready to handle the work load. Does he have good study skills? Is he mature enough to be in a class with older students? Is she capable and motivated to handle the responsibilities of a college level course? Remember that the grades earned in dual enrollment courses will become part of your teen's permanent academic record. Some colleges have a minimum age requirement to enroll in classes--usually 16. Other schools give prospective students placement tests to ensure that they are ready to tackle college-level course work. Be sure to note any prerequisites that your teen needs to complete prior to registering for a college course.

A dual enrollment course is a great option for those high school subjects such as lab science or foreign language that some parents are reluctant or unable to teach. Although we believe that any parent is capable of teaching a high school course at home, circumstances may make this not feasible for one reason or another.

On the high school transcript, list the dual enrollment course by the course title as given by the college, asterisk the course, and note on the bottom of the transcript that the course was taken at "Name of College, Anytown, USA." This allows readers of your transcript to be aware that the course was a college level course. When noting credit awarded for the class, in most cases, a one semester college course will be equivalent to a yearlong one credit high school course.

In Conclusion

As we mentioned at the outset of this newsletter, it is of the utmost importance to assess your teen's maturity and academic levels before venturing into AP, CLEP or dual enrollment territory. If your teens are not ready for such courses, then know that

not taking these courses will in no way hinder them from following the paths and accomplishing the goals the Lord has prepared for them. Our intention is to merely provide you with helpful information on the various ways your teen may choose to earn college credit while a high schooler.

If you are a member of HSLDA and you have further questions regarding AP, CLEP, or dual enrollment, simply call us or send us an email and we will be happy to assist you. If you are not yet a member of HSLDA, we invite you to join and receive all of the benefits of membership. In June we look forward to discussing ways to prepare your teen for the next season of his life following high school graduation. What skills will aid him in being ready for the future?

Until then, in anticipation of Memorial Day at the end of the month, we send out our deepest thanks and appreciation to all of our readers who are military families. We are grateful for the sacrifices that you make on a daily basis. We encourage everyone to keep these families in your prayers.

With hearts full of gratitude,

Becky Cooke and Diane Kummer
HSLDA High School Coordinators



This resource is an article from the *Homeschooling Thru Highschool* newsletter (5/6/2010), and is provided by the Home School Legal Defense Association as a service to the homeschooling community.

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Author: [Becky Cooke](#)
[Diane Kummer](#)

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