



Reading to Get Ahead

How 7th and 8th Grade Students can Read their way to High School Credit

The term “dual enrollment” is certainly not a new one. For decades now high school students have been using dual enrollment to get a jump start on their college education. The intent is that a student while they are still enrolled in high school will take college credit courses, usually at the local community college and generally focused on core academic areas, to earn college credits that they can then transfer to whichever college they ultimately end up attending. The other benefit is that the high school they are currently attending will recognize the college credits as high school credits as well.

According to Northwest Iowa Community College, students listed the following benefits of dual enrollment.

- Less time required after high school to finish a college degree
- Provides students with a head start on the college experience
- Students may enjoy access to additional resources
- Grades earned become part of the student’s permanent transcript
- Students can explore fields of study that help them choose a major later

We see that the benefits of dual enrollment are enormous when high school students enroll in their local college, how does that impact a 7th or 8th grader? Can those same benefits be applied to a middle school student who takes high school courses?

The answer to those questions is a resounding YES! There are enormous benefits for middle school students earning high school credits. So, the next question that comes to mind is, why do we not see a high school dual enrollment program as much as we see college dual enrollment programs? The answer varies but ultimately it comes down to two things: money and logistics. Most states will pay school districts more money the higher their dual enrollment participation rate is. Secondly, it is logistically easier for high schoolers to take courses at a college than middle school students taking courses at a high school.

In the next few sections, we are going to examine how a middle school student can utilize our Directed Reading program to earn high school credits. Additionally, we will look at the benefits that are derived from a student earning high school credit while enrolled in middle school.



Three Book Rule for Middle School Students earning High School Credit

Our directed reading program as a very simple process for earning high school credit. Read 3 books in 4 months and earn 1 credit. This is the standard amount of work needed (rigor) to complete a high school directed reading class and earn 1 credit in most US public and private high schools. Each book or book equivalent should equal about 250 to 300 pages and take about 20 to 25 hours of reading effort to finish each book. The faculty provide the student a selection of books to choose from or the student can utilize books that they already have.

The effort of 250 to 300 pages can be in the form of a single traditional book or a book equivalent of a series of articles, research time or documentaries that all focus on a single subject area to achieve some degree of the mastery you are seeking for college, career or self-improvement.

Below is an outline of what a sample student's schedule would look like when they incorporate high school reading credits earned as a middle schooler.

Curriculum Map for High School

** Based on 24 credit Graduation*

7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
Directed Reading Course 1	Algebra 1	English 1	English 2	English 3	English 4
	Directed Reading Course 2	Geometry	Algebra 2	Math Elective	Elective 5
		Science 1	Science 2	Science 3	Elective 6
		World History	American History	Govt/Economics	
		Physical Education	Elective 1	Elective 2	
		Foreign Language 1	Foreign Language 2	Elective 3	
Accumulated Credits	1	3	9	15	21
					24



Dual Enrollment Benefits in a High School Reading Program

1. High School Requires Improved Reading Skills. A high school reading program improves reading skills, communication skills, expanded vocabulary, stronger memory skills and helps to organize thoughts, develop arguments, as well as, articulating ideas, better grades and less stress.

2. Improved Scores in High-Stakes Testing. Most students will begin their high stakes testing in their 10th grade year. This includes SAT, ACT, and potentially End of Course exams depending on which state you live in. By enrolling in a high school reading program in middle school you will be better prepared for these exams.

3. Greater Schedule Flexibility. Has we have shown above when a student comes into their 9th grade year with having already earned high school credit, it allows them greater flexibility in their schedule especially during the 11th and 12th grade years. This flexibility will allow the student to focus in areas such as dual enrollment, courses more fitting towards their major, AP courses, or CTE courses.

4. Finish School Early. For some students, the goal is to just get done with school as soon as possible. By earning high school credits while enrolled in middle school that goal can be achieved. When combined with credit earned in summer school or extra credits earned throughout a school year a student could have the opportunity to graduate a year early. This could mean getting started on your career one year earlier or enrolling in college one year earlier.

A college or career bound high school program should include a set of core course and elective. How you arrange these core and elective courses should be dependent on your after high school end game—college or career. **Consider how different high school would feel if you could study your passion and follow your dreams. You can do this with a tailored directed reading program.**