



A Homeschool Parent's Guide

to Increasing High School Students' Marketability in Higher Education and the Workplace – Part 1

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WHEN the vast majority of entry-level workers have earned their high school diplomas and college degrees, it can be difficult to stand out and be recognized for valuable skills and abilities. The job market and college enrollment are competitive, which drives admissions officers and employers to look for more skills and experience in their candidates. Beyond college acceptance and the entry-level job market, the competition only intensifies as the stakes are raised and the caliber of peers' credentials increases.

For students who are focused on securing successful and fulfilling careers, becoming a professional achiever must start in high school. There are several courses of action that you can take to encourage your homeschooler to develop his or her skills prior to collegiate and career pursuits, increasing your student's marketability to decision-makers. The following opportunities can be combined in a variety of ways to supplement your student's achievements, reinforcing successful areas and filling in any gaps. You and your child can analyze your child's performance in three major areas of marketability: academic achievement, professional development, and community involvement. Simply choose enrichment opportunities that correspond to any weak areas in order to increase your student's overall marketability and get the results you both deserve.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

This area of high school student marketability is especially valuable if your homeschooler is planning to attend college. It can help your child gain acceptance at the institutions of his or her choice, potentially qualify your child for scholarships and honors programs, and give your child an advantage over the competition when it comes to choosing classes.

Earning College Credit in High School

If your child chooses to earn college credit while still in high school, both you and your student can enjoy the benefits of this decision. When assessed by an admissions officer, your student will appear to be more motivated and academically

apt than peers who have neglected to put forth the extra effort to earn credits. Additionally, you will be able to save on college costs when your child earns credit for required courses and is released from the obligation to take these classes. Earning credits in high school also decreases the likelihood that your student will need to take extra electives to meet credit requirements for college graduation.

When choosing classes or tests to take for college credit, it can be helpful to assess the freshman course load at your child's preferred institutions. Even if your student is planning to defer college, you can check technical colleges to see what the general education requirements might be. Overall, classes that satisfy requirements like foreign language, freshman English, introductory math and science classes, and general humanities can help your child take more major-specific courses earlier in his or her college career. You will also be able to avoid the costs of general education courses, housing, and meal plans that would have been required without the benefit of earning college credit in high school. With the right classes and test scores, your child could earn an entire semester's worth or more of college credit long before arriving on campus.

There are many different options for earning college credit, but no matter which one you choose, it is important to make sure that your child's preferred institutions recognize and accept the credit your child earns. Different institutions may also have specific score requirements for earning credit, and high scores can even count as more than one college course (typically up to three). To find out about credit parameters at specific institutions, search college websites for the common terms "placement information" or "placement opportunities". You should then be able to find credit policies for specific test providers, exams, and scores. If not, contact the institution's admissions office.

Some of the most common tests for which credit is given are the IB, AP, DSST (formerly DANTEs), and CLEP tests. Some newer tests that are less familiar but are becoming more recognized by many institutions include the UExcel tests. It can be overwhelming to decide which test provider

to use and which exams to take, but if you follow these steps, you can get the information you and your student need to make the right decision.

1. Find out about the credit policies at your top three to five colleges.
2. Decide which provider you want to use and which exams you want to take.
3. Contact the appropriate service coordinator for the test provider(s) you have chosen. This will allow you to find the nearest location that offers the exams you want to take. Call no later than March 1 to make sure you get your exams scheduled.

AP: Call the service coordinator toll-free at 1-888-225-5427 or email apexams@info.collegeboard.org.

IB: Go to <http://www.ibo.org/general/ibexam.cfm>. On the left sidebar, select “IB Diploma Programme” from the “Programme(s)” drop-down menu. Select “United States” from the “Country” menu and your state from the “State/province” menu. After clicking “Find”, you will have a list of schools in your state that provide IB exams. Click on individual schools to get contact information on the right sidebar.

CLEP: Go to http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_clep/searchCLEPTestCenter.jsp and enter your geographic information to find a testing site near you.

DSST: Go to <http://www.getcollegecredit.com/search.html> and enter your geographic information to find a testing site near you.

UExcel: Go to <http://www.pearsonvue.com/uexcel/> and click on the “Locate a Test Center” button on the right side of the page. Enter your geographic information to find a testing site near you.

Another way to earn college credit in high school is to sign up for dual enrollment. This allows your student to take classes for credit at a local community college or online while still attending high school. Before you sign up for classes, make sure that any credits your student might earn will transfer to his or her institution of choice. You can do this by contacting the admissions offices of your student’s top college selections.

Taking Placement Tests

Passing placement tests at specific institutions might not result in credit, but it can enable your child to bypass classes that would be a waste of his or her time. If your child has not earned college credit in a certain subject, you might consider having your student take a placement test to avoid attending unnecessary classes. For example, your student might have English and Spanish credits, but nothing that could count