

Dual Credit vs. Early College High School: What's the Difference?

	Dual Credit	Early College High School
Definition	Dual credit is a process by which a high school junior or senior enrolls in a college course and receives academic credit from both the college and high school.	Early College High School blends high school and college in a rigorous yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first two years of college.
Availability	Dual credit opportunities typically are available only to high school juniors or seniors.	Early College begins with 9th-grade students (and sometimes sooner) to prepare them for the rigors of college. Dual credit courses may be offered beginning in 9 th or 10 th grade.
Legislative Policy	Indiana law requires each high school to offer a minimum of two dual credit courses to all students to ensure they have the opportunity to gain college-level experience.	Early College goes beyond the state minimum requirement to offer enough dual credit courses that students can complete up to an associate degree or the first two years toward a bachelor's degree while in high school.
Cost	Students or families may be financially responsible for participating in dual credit courses beyond the state minimum guarantee.	Early College schools generally absorb the majority of college course costs rather than transferring those expenses to students or their families.
Degree Pathways	Dual credit classes often do not directly apply toward a particular course of study and do not comprise the majority of a student's coursework.	Early College offers up to two years of dual credit coursework toward specific postsecondary degrees (e.g., Liberal Arts, General Studies, Health Careers).
Postsecondary Partnerships	Dual credit may be offered through multiple higher education institutions.	Early Colleges establish partnerships with one or more postsecondary institutions to enable students to accumulate credits toward a degree from the partner institution(s) or transfer them to another college.
Target Audience	Dual credit is open to any high school student.	Early Colleges are open to all students, but are tailored for first-generation college-goers, minorities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students underrepresented in postsecondary education.
School Culture	Dual credit gives students a taste of college through a few select courses.	Early College blends the high school and college curricula into one academic program using multiple courses leading to specific degree pathways. The model creates a college-going culture by integrating student's high school and college experiences intellectually and socially.
Support Systems	Dual credit courses often do not include additional supports outside of those offered with traditional courses.	Early College provides students with a structured system of enhanced supports to accompany the increased rigor of college classes.